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# EUROPEAN PUBLIC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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## **13th European Public Information Management Seminar**

Preparations are under way for the 13th European Public Information Management Seminar scheduled to be held from 8 to 11 June 2006 in Budapest, Hungary.

The focus of this Seminar will be media relations and the development of websites, two major subjects for the advancement of the public information work of the Faith in Europe. There will also be a few short introductory subjects for new participants and a new format which will take into account some of the suggestions of previous years.

Interested individuals are kindly requested to coordinate their participation in the Seminar with their respective National Spiritual Assemblies.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI Paris)

## **Participation at international congress**

Bahá'í interfaith involvement in Bilbao led to an invitation to address the "International Congress on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue", held in the Spanish town of Bilbao from 11 to 13 September 2005.

Mr. Pedro Urquijo, who works with the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í Community of Bilbao spoke about the "Keys to overcome religious antagonism". His talk, which included a discreet but unmistakable proclamation of the figure of Bahá'u'lláh and of His Message to mankind, was attended by some 50 people. The meeting was organised by Pax Romana, the international movement of Catholic intellectuals, and Etxea, the Basque branch of UNESCO, together with the sponsorship of the World Council of Churches and the World Jewish Congress.

The Congress aimed to promote dialogue, foster mutual understanding among cultures, recognise conflicts among traditions throughout history and identify the risks and opportunities posed by present day migratory movements.

The Bahá'í Community of Bilbao was invited to attend after participating in the town interfaith dialogue round table discussions.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain)

## **Interfaith dialogue attracts interest**

Bahá'í participation in an interfaith dialogue in Cyprus

provoked a number of questions and led to media coverage.

"The Religious Groups in North Cyprus", a panel discussion held on 8 December 2005, was attended by 400 people including the Minister of Education and the First Lady of Cyprus.

A PowerPoint presentation on the Faith captured the attention of the audience. It included pictures of historical figures, Houses of Worship, maps, and information about Bahá'í beliefs and principles and the UN Office of the Bahá'í International Community. As the newest and least known religion, many questions were asked about the Bahá'í Faith such as the relationship with Islam, the reason for Bahá'u'lláh's exiles, miracles, types of prayers, proofs of the Bahá'í Faith being a religion after Islam and the relation of the Faith to other religions.

The fact that the Bahá'í community's diversity demonstrated that "unity and tolerance" is a way of life for Bahá'ís was commented by some of the audience.

A live 1 hr 45 min radio interview was aired on the Faith as were two live interviews of about 2 hr 15 min on national television.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Cyprus)

## **Bahá'í presents message on tolerance**

A Bahá'í presentation on tolerance was welcomed by participants at a European symposium in Belgrade.

Mrs. Christine Samandari-Hakim, the BIC-OPI Paris representative, was invited to address the seminar on National and Inter-Ethnic Reconciliation and Religious Tolerance in the Western Balkans, held on 28 and 29 October 2005 in Belgrade, Serbia, and organised by the European Centre for Peace and Development (ECPD), a branch of the UN University for Peace.

The symposium brought together some 50 academics and public figures from the Balkans and countries outside the region, and international organisations. The President of Serbia, Boris Tadic, made the opening speech.

Mrs. Samandari-Hakim's talk on 'The Ways of Achieving Inter-Confessional Tolerance', was based on the Universal House of Justice's 2002 message to the World's Religious Leaders.

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Several participants, public figures and academics congratulated the Bahá'í representative for the presentation and shared positive comments. The President of the session, Professor Darko Tanaskovic, Ambassador of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro to the Holy See, Rome, thanked her for the contribution to the discussion for its "intensive, wise and optimistic" content.

The prestigious ECPD has a special significance to the countries of South-Eastern Europe. It was established in Belgrade in 1985, "to organize and carry out post-graduate studies, research projects and dissemination of knowledge, which contribute to the promotion of peace, development and international cooperation".

The October 2005 symposium was organised with the Japan Foundation, as part of a larger ECPD international research and educational project entitled, "The Balkans in the 21st Century – The Paths to Building Peace and Stability".

It aims to contribute to the reduction in tensions and reconciliation among the peoples of the region as well as the promotion of religious tolerance in this part of the world.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI Paris)

#### **City hosts Birth of Bahá'u'lláh celebrations**

Almost 100 people attended the Lisbon Bahá'í community's musical celebrations of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh at the Multicultural Centre of the Town Hall on 12 November 2005.

After an opening historical lecture about Bahá'u'lláh and His life, selected Hidden Words were read accompanied by harp music.

Artists from the National Music School of Portugal gave Musical performances, and in one of the most awaited moments of the evening Fedross Imani played

a traditional salterio.

To close the musical performances harpist Kathy Fiero and her musician husband José Oliveira played songs from Mexico, Portugal, the USA and Austria.

Mário Mota Marques, the secretary of the Office of External Affairs, addressed the audience, underlining the importance of the celebration and explaining the activities of the Bahá'í Community of Portugal.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Portugal)

#### **Interview with environmentalist**

An interview with leading environmentalist Arthur Dahl on ways of addressing the economic, ethical, and environmental development of the world is available on the internet.

The interview was recorded on 27 January 2006 while he was a guest of the World Science Forum in Budapest.

Dr. Dahl, a specialist in environmental education and social and economic development, outlines and assesses in this interview a way forward for sustainable development.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Hungary)

#### **Staff changes at OPI Paris**

The Office would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Alison Eames and Ms. Gloria Arjomand for their devoted and precious service to BIC-OPI Paris. We are also delighted to announce the arrival of Ms. Violetta Zein from Congo, who served at the Bahá'í World Centre from 2002 to 2005 in the Office of Master Reference Files, and of Andrea Ugo Dall'O from Italy who is completing a year of service.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI Paris)

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*The EPIB reports on recent Public Information activities in Europe. Please send all news concerning Public Information to be published for the next issue directly to BIC-OPI, Paris no later than the 25th of each month (25 April 2006 for the next issue) to the attention of Jessica Dacey. The Office of Public Information may edit articles received and decides on the publication of all submitted material.*

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