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BIC-OPI Paris organises 10th European Public Information Management Seminar in Budapest

Public Information Officers and youth representatives are invited to attend the upcoming European Public Information Management Seminar in Budapest from 4 to 6 July 2003. This year's seminar will address the role of Bahá'í youth—university students in particular—in public information work.

The aim is to integrate Bahá'í youth in the field of public information, co-ordinating their work with that being developed by National Public Information Officers and public information offices. The seminar hopes to inspire Bahá'í youth in the field of public information by emphasising to them, through their National Spiritual Assemblies, the importance and implications of activities in public information; to identify areas and forms of youth activity in the field of public information; and to provide specific training to Bahá'í youth in the field of public information.

In addition to the usual seminar, a third day will be offered that will cover essential training in the field of public information to assist new individuals serving in public information committees and offices, or those with an interest in this field, who possess little or no previous knowledge or experience in this realm of service.

(For further information please contact your National Spiritual Assembly or BIC-OPI Paris)

Exhibit for European Parliament in Brussels extends to Strasbourg

Organisation continues for the exhibit at the European Parliament in Brussels, to be held from 9-13 June 2003. The exhibit aims at presenting to the Parliamentarians and staff information concerning European Bahá'í Communities and their activities with a particular emphasis on promotion of peace, understanding and development under the overriding theme of Unity in Diversity. National Spiritual Assembly representatives within Europe have been invited to contact their respective Members of the European Parliament, in preparation for invitations to the official opening Vernissage. Press releases and media coverage are foreseen.

Furthermore, a second Member of the European Parliament has contacted BIC-OPI Paris to express that he “will be delighted to sponsor an exhibition [in Strasbourg, the second seat of the European Parliament]...in 2004.” This exhibition is likely to take place early next year.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI Paris)

French newspaper reports on call for dialogue

A regional French newspaper printed an article on the appeal of the Bahá'ís for interfaith dialogue and the end to sectarianism. The article in the 31 December 2002 edition of *Nice Matin* included a photograph of the Bahá'ís, reported a brief history of the Faith and mentioned two public meetings being held in January.

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

Rome's authorities co-host Bahá'í celebration

City authorities in Rome collaborated with the local Bahá'í community for a reception celebrating the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh on 12 November 2002. More than 150 individuals attended the celebration, including members of the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Hindu religions. Members of the Italian Parliament, the Association of American Women, the International Home for Women, the Pontificium Institute for Islamic Studies, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) were also present.

The municipality of Rome and the Bahá'í community sent a joint invitation to prominent people and others listed in the municipality's address book for the event. Press releases advertising the event, held at the Capitolium Palace, were also sent.

Representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly gave an introduction to Bahá'u'lláh, while the delegated counsellor for multi-ethnic politics Ms. Franca Eckert Cohen addressed the audience stressing how Bahá'u'lláh's words on peace and justice were welcomed by the Roman municipality.

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

Institute for Ethics and Law in Medicine of the University of Vienna invites religious views to be shared

In October 2002, a Bahá'í statement on ethics was included in a university publication. The paper was prepared by German Bahá'í Dr. Udo Schäfer and explained the Faith in terms of its views on science and religion. It was part of a project initiated by the Institute for Ethics and Law in Medicine of the University of Vienna that included investigation of the position of religions on the government's ethical views of biological and health issues. Submissions also included views from the Catholic and Protestant Churches, as well as the Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist communities.

A scientist of the Institute for Ethics and Law in Medicine, M.A. Jürgen Wallner, responded with thanks for the “valuable support” and expressed the hope that the Bahá’í community “will continue to participate so intensively and with such high quality on the bio-medical ethics debate.” The work will be sent to political authorities in the field of health and research to “sharpen their sensitivity for the importance for religious respectively ecclesiastical considerations on bio- and health-ethics with the hope for a broadening dialogue in these issues, which are so important for our society.” In their statement the institute pointed out that “the engagement and the intensive occupation of the Bahá’ís with ethical questions and problems should certainly not go unused for a discourse in the society; it is admirable in regard to the law of the state-churches, how a small religious community is fulfilling its contribution towards the civil society regarding the solution of the current questions.”

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

Rome signs protocol on religion

The Italian Bahá’í community joined other faiths in signing the Agreement Protocol on the Establishment and Functioning of the Council of Religions of the City of Rome on 16 December 2002. This Council, an initiative of the Mayor of Rome, is intended to promote equal dignity and peace among all religions that are part of the city. The protocol was signed by the director of the Office of the Mayor for Multi-Ethnic Policies and representatives the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy; the Seventh Day Adventist Church; the Evangelical Baptist Churches of Rome; the Methodist Church; the Valdese Church; Christian Science; the Roman Jewish community; the Lutheran community; the Ethiopian Orthodox Creed; the Salvation Army; the Bahá’í Faith; the Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai; the Italian Buddhist Union; and the Italian Hindu Union Sanatana Dharma Samgha. Local press and television covered the signing.

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

Debate in Germany on the role of religions towards peace

In November 2002, over one hundred people gathered at a German university for an inter-religious debate titled “Jews, Christians, Muslims and Bahá’ís: The Common Responsibility of World Religions towards World Peace”. The debate at the Friedrich Schiller University was organised by the Intercultural Association of Germany, a group founded in 1994 by commercial, governmental,

and nongovernmental organisations to promote social integration. The debate aimed at learning how religions can carry out their responsibilities to promote peace both within their own communities and in the world. Among the participants were Mr. Salomon Siegl, Rabbi of the Saxe Jewish community; Dr. Hans Mikosch, head of the Lutheran Church of Gera; Prof. Udo Tworuschka of the Chair of Science of Comparative Religion at the University of Jena; Dr. Nadeem Elyas, president of the Central Muslim Council of Germany; and Mr. Christopher Sprung, representing the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany.

Each of the representatives offered views, with Mr. Sprung suggesting that the Bahá’í model of unity could be an engine for religious peace: recognition that the same spiritual truths exist for each religion leads to a true acceptance, rather than mere tolerance. The representatives asked questions about the concept of communal spiritual teachings and called for mutual respect and dignity, finally deciding to hold educational classes on the theme of world religions.

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

A month of media activities in Hungary

Activities in Hungary attracted media attention during the month of January. On 14 January 2003, a weekly newspaper in German printed a long article on the official opening of the National Bahá’í Centre in Budapest and covered the teachings and activities of the Bahá’í Faith with a very positive tone. On 24 January 2003, two Bahá’í representatives were invited to a live programme on a national television channel to talk about the Bahá’í Faith. The coverage was seven minutes long and showed images of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa in addition to the interview footage. The same day, commercial religious cable channel PAX TV had a meeting with a Bahá’í representative to discuss a series of programmes about the Bahá’í Faith. They agreed to feature documentary films such as “The Prisoner of Akká”, and to do interviews and reports every month. The weekly tranquillity zone in Budapest has also been advertised in popular weekly magazines, which have attracted people to the meetings.

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

Erratum

In the previous edition the word “pueblo” was translated to say the “village”. “Pueblo” in this instance actually referred to the “people”, in the article about Spain's involvement with the Roma community.

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

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