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Bahá'ís participate in meditation ceremony in Portugal

The 47th Congress of International Association of Lawyers took place in Lisbon from 30 August to 3 September 2003. The closing session was a “Ceremony – Meditation for Peace”. The Association asked the Catholic Church for suggestions about who should participate and the following religions were appointed: Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Greek Orthodox, and Bahá'í. When representatives of the religions consulted about the order of the devotionals, it was decided to have the readings unfold in chronological order, based on the time of the coming of the Manifestations of God from each religion.

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

French women's group has member on International Women's Council

At the beginning of September, the General Assembly of the International Women's Council met in Perth, Australia. The Council elected the president of the Bahá'í Women's Association of France as member of the International Women's Council, and she will serve as president of the international commission on “Arts and Letters”.

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

Mayor visits Bahá'í summer school in Ireland

On Tuesday, 12 August, the mayor of Waterford, Alderman Tom Cunningham, welcomed hundreds of Bahá'ís to their annual residential summer school at Waterford city's Newtown School.

The mayor, wearing his chain of office, was met by the vice-chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Waterford, Mr. Mathew Kennedy and was introduced by the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly, Mr. Brendan McNamara.

The mayor issued a warm welcome to the adult attendees gathered in the school's main hall where he received an enthusiastic reception in return.

Alderman Cunningham, the first citizen of the city, spoke quite warmly about the Faith and the Bahá'í community in Waterford and hoped that next year a delegation from the school would be received by the mayor at the Town Hall. He also expressed appreciation for a gift presented to him—David Hofman's biography of the distinguished Irish Bahá'í, George Townshend.

The mayor then briefly toured the school with Bahá'í

representatives guiding him. They viewed the wide choice of Bahá'í books on display in the school's bookshop and went on to look in on some of the children's classes.

They then visited a project being carried out by the junior youth (11–14 years), the construction of a rope bridge under the supervision of Bahá'ís with scouting skills. The mayor even rolled up his sleeves and assisted with the sawing of some logs.

The visit attracted press attention and was covered by the local cable TV programme, a local radio interview, two national and three regional newspapers.

Some 450 people, including visitors from other countries, attended the summer school, which took place from 10 through 17 August.

More than thirty such summer schools have been held in the Republic, and over twenty in Waterford. Participants took part in classes, mini-seminars, sports, and craft activities.

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

Bahá'í view on human rights on television in Italy

Bahá'ís were invited to give their views on human rights on a national television show in Italy.

A Bahá'í from the Italian community took part in the weekly show, “Protestantism” on Rai Due (Rai 2) on 22 and 23 June 2003.

The show focused on a bill on religious freedom currently being discussed by the Italian Parliament.

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

Oral hygiene for children in Turkey

In the Spring, Bahá'ís took part in an oral education hygiene project with the prime minister's Directorate of Social Services and Institution to Protect Children.

Some 120 children at the Sincan disabled children's dormitory took part in the oral hygiene project, and were each given new toothbrushes and toothpaste.

The training included a stage show with costumes and music that demonstrated proper use of the brushes and other aspects of oral hygiene.

Mr. Ali Riza Sahindokuyucu, the principal of the school, sent a letter of appreciation to the Bahá'í community in which he thanked them for their “interest, donations and participation to our children”. “We wish success in your further activities and extend our best regards,” he wrote.

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

Belgian business leaders hear address on spirituality and ethics

Businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) heard the Bahá'í view on spirituality and ethical values as part of a luncheon sponsored by the European Bahá'í Business Forum (EBBF).

On 12 June 2003 the EBBF, which represents 350 business people in 40 countries, invited its members, business leaders and NGOs, as well as European Commission representatives, for a lunch at a fashionable restaurant in Brussels.

Keynote speaker Professor Suheil Bushrui, holder of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland and an international expert in cultural integration, conflict resolution, and Khalil Gibran, addressed guests on the "Ethics of Globalisation".

He talked about the need for business leaders to integrate spiritual and ethical values into their increasingly globalised operations in order to contribute effectively in the long term of society's prosperity.

Twenty-five enthusiastic listeners participated in a lively discussion following the address.

Prof. Bushrui was in Brussels to speak at a meeting on the ethics of globalisation in connection with an exhibition of the Bahá'í International Community at the European Parliament on social cohesion, spiritual and multicultural values, education for peace, and specific development projects.

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

Youth transformed in Bahá'í inspired project in Bulgaria

Some 50 young people were trained in human rights in a Bahá'í-inspired project in Bulgaria.

The project, conceived and organised by Ms. Rumiana Koicheva, a Bahá'í from Sofia, aimed to teach teenage orphans about their human rights using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Two schools for orphans were chosen for the project. In both schools, a group of about 25 youth between the ages of 16 to 18 were trained. A team of university and high school students trained the younger youth by visiting the institutions fortnightly for four months, from March to June 2003.

The youth learned about their responsibilities towards other people and society (how to be good citizens) in line with Bahá'í principles.

The youth responded well to the project and to the team that implemented it, particularly to the love shown by the facilitators. The team will keep up these contacts with the youth and already have many social activities planned, such as trips to the theatre or McDonald's.

Ms. Koicheva and her team plan to submit a proposal for a similar project to be held at the national level.

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

Journalist wins prestigious media award in Croatia

A Bahá'í reporter has been given Croatia's highest award in journalism in the Spring.

Mr. Robert Zuber, who works for the BBC, was given the Croatian Journalist Society's award for the best interview of the past year.

His documentary on the Bosnian situation included an interview with Mr. Wolfgang Petrich, former governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It talked about coexistence and tolerance in Bosnia today.

The Society noted that the film was one of the best explanations of modern-day Bosnia.

(For further information please contact the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Slovenia and Croatia)

Interfaith event at Spanish games

An interfaith devotional gathering helped celebrate Barcelona's Police and Firemen Olympics in the last week of July.

Members of each of the country's ten major religions gathered in front of the Cathedral of Barcelona to mark the event. In the ceremony, each representative lit a candle from a flame that had been burning during the games, and read from their holy writings. Inside the cathedral, heads of the police and fire authorities, the directors of Olympics, and political organisations attended a concert.

Informal networking in the cathedral followed the formal events, and was attended by Bahá'í representative Ms. Tareixa Enriquez. Ms. Enriquez the only woman among the religious representatives.

Organisers thanked the religious representatives with a commemorative medal and four of the games directors and authorities went out of their way to praise the beauty of the Bahá'í writings.

The gathering ended with a reception at the Palau de la Generalitat, where guests were received by the interior advisor.

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

Triumph of Voices of Bahá choir in Budapest

Prominent people were among more than 1,000 people attending a concert by the international Bahá'í choir "Voices of Bahá" in Hungary on 3 July 2003.

The choir performed in the Budapest Congress Centre for an audience of more than 1,100, including members of the diplomatic body, parliamentarians, and musicians. The choir is made up of 120 singers from 21 countries. Performances include a range of styles, from classical to traditional Persian and African-American gospel-style music.

They were accompanied by the Symphonic Orchestra of Budapest and directed by choir founder Mr. Tom Price, a Bahá'í composer from the United States.

The event coincided with the historic 90th anniversary of 'Abdú'l-Bahá's visit to the city.

Most of the proceeds from the event went to a project for the advancement of the native Roma women of Hungary. The choir continued on a tour of Prague, Warsaw, Berlin, Wernigerode, and Frankfurt.
(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Hungary)

Bahá'í preparations for 2004 Parliament of World Religions in Spain

Bahá'ís have started to plan for next year's Parliament of the World Religions in Barcelona. The dialogue will be held in the Spanish city in July 2004, and bring together the most diverse inter-religious periodic gathering in the world. Participants of the assembly will explore the ways in which religious communities can contribute to answering current problems of humanity. The religious leaders will work together with NGOs, scientists, artists, journalists, experts, educators, businessmen, and youth.

Spanish Bahá'ís Dr. Luis Cirera and Dr. Miguel Gil have been included in the organisers' Honour Committee and an experts group respectively.

The National Spiritual Assembly has set up a commission to organise and coordinate the Bahá'í participation and activities throughout the five-day Parliament.

The event will include numerous participants from European countries, the Mediterranean and Latin America, and may shape the content and the character of this year's dialogue.

Next year's Parliament will be the first to be held in Europe and in a non-English-speaking context, marking a step forward in the expansion of the international inter-religious movement.

It will be preceded by an assembly of religious and spiritual leaders from all over the world on the West Indian island of Montserrat from 5 to 7 July.

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

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 October 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.

Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information – Paris

45 rue Pergolèse, 75116 Paris, France

Tel.: +33 (0)1 45 00 49 32 • Fax: +33 (0)1 45 00 49 35 • Email: opiparis@club-internet.fr