

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)

News release 22 November 2010

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IFOR welcomes new members, appoints new governing body

Alkmaar, NL: Over seventy representatives of the world's branches, groups and affiliates of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) met in Baarlo, Netherlands, November 13 - 21, 2010, for its Council meeting. Several significant new members from Sudan, Chad and Bangladesh were welcomed. The gathering also elected a new International Committee, which serves as the fellowship's governing body between Council meetings.

Through its newest members IFOR experiences a major shift of its constituency and fellowship to the Global South. IFOR is made up of groups, networks and organizations whose priority is on advocacy and training for active nonviolence, justice and peace, in communities as well as on regional and national levels. IFOR's newest members specialize in education and training in human rights, direct nonviolent action and nonviolent communication, advocacy and capacity building.

The newly appointed IFOR International Committee (ICOM) is composed of Hansuli Gerber from Switzerland, President, Davorka Lovrekovic, Germany, Vice-President, David Mumford, UK, Treasurer, and members-at-large Lili Baxter, USA, Itaka Kyoko, Japan, Jean-Pierre Massamba, Congo-Brazzaville, and Lucas Johnson, USA. The ICOM will serve a four-year term until the next IFOR Council meeting in 2014, which will be held in the German-Swiss border area of Konstanz, where the first IFOR meeting took place in 1914.

In his address as new IFOR president, Gerber said: "Violence, very much like fear, is a reality outside of love. As love casts our fear, love casts out violence." In regard to IFOR's work, he said: "The time has come for nonviolence to make its way, because it is the future and people increasingly look for ways out of violence. Never before in human history has violence been so strongly denounced and war so utterly discredited as in our time." Gerber encouraged IFOR members to "use this decisive, dangerous but incredibly hopeful time to promote nonviolence."

In regard to IFOR's profiled Women Peacemakers Program (WPP), the Council decided to embark on a five-year process during which the programmatic and formal dimensions of the relationship between the IFOR Secretariat and WPP would be adjusted so as to make room for the program's growth and potential while achieving greater coherence and transparency. WPP works for the integration of a gender perspective in peacebuilding; with its activities focusing on Education and Training; Regional and Global Networking; Documentation and Dissemination; as well as Gender Mainstreaming.

IFOR has 85 branches, groups, and affiliates in 51 countries on all continents. Its membership includes adherents of all the major spiritual traditions as well as those who have other spiritual sources for their commitment to nonviolence.

Founded in 1919 in response to the horrors of war in Europe, IFOR has taken a consistent stance against war and its preparation throughout its history. Perceiving the need for healing and reconciliation in the world, the founders of IFOR formulated a vision of the

human community based upon the belief that love in action has the power to transform unjust political, social, and economic structures.