

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF UNITARIANS AND UNIVERSALISTS

Minutes of the Council Meeting

5 - 9 November 2005, Montserrat, Spain

PRESENT:

Executive Committee: *President, Gordon Oliver*
Vice-President, John Slattery
Secretary, Pearl Greene Marbaniang
Treasurer, Barbara Beach
Members-at-large: Christine Hayhurst, István Kovács,

Antje Paul

Delegates from Member Groups:

<i>Australia/New Zealand, Derek McCullough</i>	<i>India, Carleywell Lyngdoh &</i>
<i>Derrick Pariat</i>	
<i>Canada, Mary Bennett & Brian Kiely</i>	<i>Poland, Czeslaw Glogowski</i>
<i>Czech Republic, Iva Fišerová</i>	<i>Romania, Dénes Máthé & Árpád</i>
<i>Szabó</i>	
<i>Denmark, Marianne Noerregaard</i>	<i>Russia, Anastasia Yaritsina</i>
<i>EUU, John Keating</i>	<i>South Africa, Gordon Oliver</i>
<i>Finland, Antti Pelkola</i>	<i>Spain, Karen Neller</i>
<i>Germany, Eike Moeller</i>	<i>UK, Christine Hayhurst & Cliff Reed</i>
<i>Hungary, Botond Elekes & Sándor Léta</i>	<i>United States, Bill Sinkford &</i>
<i>Will Saunders</i>	

Representatives of Provisional Member Groups and Emerging Groups:

<i>Argentina, Lilian Burlando</i>	<i>Burundi, Fulgence Ndagijimana</i>
<i>Bolivia, Olga Flores</i>	<i>Mexico, Francisco Lagunes</i>
<i>Brazil, Bruno Maroneze</i>	
Staff in attendance:	<i>John Clifford, Polly Guild,</i>
<i>Rita Lazar</i>	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (mostly due to unsuccessful visa applications):

<i>Indonesia, Aryantes Nugroho</i>	<i>Pakistan, Inderias Bhatti</i>
<i>Philippines, Henry Legaje</i>	<i>Sri Lanka, Fernando Suranga</i>

Member Group not represented: *Nigeria*

Also present were 61 other guests and observers from nine countries, listed at Appendix 1.

Many attended the business meetings of the Council and participated in its discussions.

The Council Meeting was held over five sessions, with slightly changing attendance and delegate status.

1 **WELCOME**

1.1 The President opened the meeting with words of welcome and an act of worship.

2 **LEADERS' PANEL MEETING**

2.1 Leaders of member groups and emerging groups had met on the previous day, in special session, to share their views on the future of ICUU. Bill Sinkford (UUA President), with representatives of the Leaders' Panel, presented highlights of their discussion and input from interviews he had had with them and others before the start of the Council Meeting.

2.2 He noted the enormous diversity of circumstance in evidence among ICUU membership, including economic systems (developed/developing/transition post-communist) and that the development of U*Uism also varied from deep and settled to very new imaginings, with different stages of development in between. ICUU was not separate from the world - the English language dominated and created some tensions (self-definition, etc).

2.3 Leaders had affirmed the current direction in priorities of the Executive Committee (communication, leadership development, and youth) but noted that they had not taken deep root in all our communities.

2.4 Jeff Teagle, General Secretary of British Unitarians, who was present at the founding meeting in Essex, Massachusetts in 1995, was happy to note that since its inception, the ICUU had grown from strength to strength and many developmental activities had been organised. It was right to have founded the ICUU, he concluded.

2.5 Lilia Cuervo introduced herself as a possible coordinator for Latin American work. She had been a minister since 1979, currently living in Colombia, and had previously worked with Latin groups in the US.

2.6 Brian Kiely, President of the Canadian Unitarian Council, while pointing to the challenges of our diversity, discovered at the same time some values that transcended them. He wondered if the Executive Committee should start a process to articulate common values. In this connection, Will Saunders expressed his vision of the 'glue' that holds us together as 'yearning'.

2.7 Iva Fišerová, Executive Officer of the Czech Unitarians and former Administrator of ICUU, while commenting on the founding vision of the ICUU as an umbrella organisation for U*Us around the globe to meet and work under, listed the various activities undertaken by the ICUU around the world, including creation of the website and task forces, and the publications issued. She pointed out that the founding meeting in 1995 was 15 strong. In 1999 there were 40 people present; in 2003 there were 60; the present Council Meeting had almost 100.

2.8 Árpád Szabó, Bishop of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, stressed that spiritual resources, above all else, were essential for our religious identity, and that the ICUU should have its own spirituality within its global context. He spoke of U*Uism not only as a religion that binds us together, but also as a worldview on the purpose of humanity. He urged member groups to walk the extra mile in spreading U*Uism to the grassroots internationally, by publishing introductory leaflets about themselves in the languages of other national groups.

2.9 Responses to the Panel presentation included:

- appreciation of the fact that the organisation's circumference had been top priority, rather than a hub, which was now emerging from within
- confidence that bilateral relations between groups could work well
- delight at the opportunity for the UU-UNO Office to deal with the hub of a global community.

2.10 Suggestions and aspirations for further consideration included:

- putting books and translations of ICUU materials on the website
- converting "Friends of ICUU" into a formal category of "Individual Members"
- making better grassroots connections, including networking, exchange visits and story-telling
- strengthening member groups to help spread our special message to the world
- drafting visions for the next 10 years.

2.11 In thanking Bill Sinkford and Panel members, the President mentioned his own longing for U*Uism to be a significant influence in a troubled world. He outlined his "big dream" that would involve strengthening ourselves and defining how the organisation could best present itself to the world.

3 CREDENTIALS REPORT

3.1 Antje Paul, on behalf of the Credentials Committee, reported that there were 22 delegates present, representing Member Groups in 16 countries, with 3 absences due to visa problems.

4 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4.1 The agenda was adopted with the proviso that some items might need to be re-ordered.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETINGS

5.1 Minutes of the meeting held in Prague in May 2003 (Doc CM0305/01) were approved following clarification of the erroneous pagination, which was subsequently rectified.

5.2 Minutes of the Special General (electronic) Meeting held on 8th April 2005 (Doc SCM0504/01) were approved.

6 MATTERS ARISING

6.1 There was none.

7 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

7.1 Report of the Committee

7.1.1 The President reported on behalf of the Committee, which had met on two occasions since the last Council meeting - at Klingberg, Germany in December 2003 and at Fintry, England in April 2004. Activities of note were:

- definition of three strategic priorities as a basis for action and resource allocation (communication, leadership development, and youth), facilitated by Olivia Holmes
- leadership training in Latin America in January 2005
- summer activities for grassroots U*Us in Germany and Transylvania
- presidential visit in February 2005 to the Khasi Hills, India
- plans for the Special General (Electronic) Meeting in April 2005, to amend by-laws
- the Secretary's visit to the UUCP's commemorative celebration in the Philippines
- Istvan Kovac's visit to the emerging group in Indonesia
- the excellent work of the Curriculum Task Force, whilst the work of other Task Forces was more patchy
- development of a questionnaire for enquiring groups
- further website development
- publication of *The Global Chalice* and chalice-lighting words
- plans for launching "Friends of ICUU"
- the Khasi Hills Leadership Training in January 2006
- the 2nd Theological Symposium, scheduled for the summer of 2006.

7.1.2 He also reported the resignation of Iva Fiserova, as Administrator, in July 2005 and the subsequent appointment of John Clifford in September 2005, on a half-time basis. John would work from his home in Wales. Thus ICUU would have a 'virtual' office, based on electronic media.

7.1.3 He was grateful to all members of the Committee for their support and expressed special thanks to the organisers of this Council Meeting - Elizabeth Breedlove, John Clifford, Christine Hayhurst and Antje Paul.

7.2 **Report of the Executive Secretary** (Doc CM0511/04)

7.2.1 The report was noted with thanks and with appreciation of Iva Fiserova's contribution to the work of ICUU.

7.3 **Report of the Treasurer** (Doc CM0511/02 Report; Doc CM0511/03 Accounts & Budget 2004 and 2005)

7.3.1 In submitting her report, the Treasurer commented that audited accounts would be available presently. She highlighted the following points from the report:

- savings had been made by eliminating of one meeting of the Executive Committee and by closure of the office in Prague
- member subscriptions and grants from the UUA's International Funding Panel were essential in enabling ICUU's work to develop
- ICUU's US registration as a not-for-profit organisation would be renewed, to gain tax benefit from fundraising
- the \$15k reserve fund had been maintained over the two year period.
- there was a need to find a new home for the ICUU archives.

7.3.2 The above-noted budget, having been presented as headline figures early in the meeting, was superseded by a revised document, dated 8 November 2005, which the Treasurer presented line by line. Key points were:

- a desire to increase the number of 'Friends of ICUU' as ongoing supporters
- only modest provision for website development despite our aspirations
- reliance on funding from the UUA and on grants from its International Funding Panel
- the Executive Committee should review grant applications to avoid competing proposals.

7.3.3 This budget was accepted with thanks and acclamation, and with special tribute to Rita Lazar, the new accountant, who was attending her first meeting of the Council.

8 **REPORTS FROM TASK FORCES**

8.1 **Curriculum Task Force** (DocCM0511/05)

8.1.1 The report was presented by Meg Roberts, who stressed that Marilyn Walker and Melinda Sayavedra had done most of the work. The curriculum was in web-based format for ease of distribution. It would also be available for sale on DVD, and would include brief introductions to Member Groups. A DVD about the Khasi Hills and Chennai would be produced, for demonstration at Member Group Assemblies in early 2006, as a prototype for other groups and as a support for funding applications.

8.1.2 It was noted that the latest version was already on the website; adding photos was the next step. The value of having this resource included knowing that it was being used. In some cases the authors of individual sections may not have checked their text with their internal authorities and it was suggested that the various Leaders should check their own sections, with any corrections being sent to Meg.

8.2 **Communications Task Force**

8.2.1 The challenges of communication had been a subject of lively discussion at the Prague Council meeting. The role of the website as the prime vehicle had been examined and questions had been raised as to whom we were reaching out to and what the key messages were. A subsequent questionnaire to those enthusiasts had yielded little feedback in terms of strategic direction. Further efforts would be made at this meeting since communication was a strategic focus for the Executive Committee.

8.2.2 Subsequent Task Force discussions reiterated the centrality of the website in the communications strategy. Suggestions for further development included:

- timely information about upcoming programmes and archiving of past events
- pamphlets, books, items for reflection and *The Global Chalice* accessible online
- language options on the home page
- online payment facilities
- process for mass mailings with headlines and links
- dedicated areas for delegates, 'Friends of ICUU' and other subscribers
- a group (including a member of the Executive Committee) to review site content
- outsourcing for technical items, but not the whole site
- reciprocal links between Member Groups' sites and ICUU's
- small ads with our website address to attract more visitors

8.2.3 *The Global Chalice* was much appreciated as a publication, but reached too few people within Member Groups. Having it available only on the website, or on CD, or transferring production to local groups, were worthy options but problematical in some parts of the world.

8.2.4 The ICUU pamphlet was a quick and easy way of reaching grassroots. It could be updated, sent to Member Groups for adaptation, translation and free distribution to their members.

8.2.5 The Task Force had a list of volunteers who were willing to take forward some of these ideas. Thanks were expressed to the Task Force, and to Polly Guild and Lorella Hess especially for their considerable work on the website and *The Global Chalice* respectively.

8.3 **Africa Task Force**

8.3.1 Shortage of personnel had resulted in little action. Gordon Oliver and Fulgence Ndagijimana would seek others to join the Task Force.

8.4 **Latin America Task Force**

8.4.1 It was pleasing to note the presence of several U*Us from Latin America, who would be making a presentation on their groups' activities later in the week.

8.5 **North America Task Force**

8.5.1 This group had not functioned in recent times. Nothing was known about the impact of its recommendation, in 2003, that ministerial training should include a module on U*Uism internationally.

9 **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS**

9.1 **Sociedad Unitaria Universalista de España (SUUE)**

9.1.1 Full Membership was warmly AGREED for this hitherto provisionally recognised group.

9.2 **Jamat Allah Global Indonesia (JAGI)** (Indonesian Global Church of God)

9.2.1 Founded in 1994 and registered in 2000, JAGI had applied in 2003 for full membership. As part of the application process, István Kovács had visited them and written a detailed report, recommending provisional membership. In considering the application, questions were raised about the absence of 'Unitarian' and/or 'Universalist' from the Church's title. However, it was acknowledged that these could be problematic in the political context in which the Church operated, and their use was not a requirement of membership. It would also be a violation of our principles to require such a change.

9.2.2 A proposal from the floor to accord Full Membership was defeated. There was a view that Provisional Membership should always be the first step and this was accorded to JAGI for a period of two years.

9.3 **UU Group in Burundi**

9.3.1 This group was recognised as an Emerging Group.

9.4 **UU Church of Cuba**

9.4.1 It was noted that this group would be submitting an application for membership in due course.

10 **PROPOSAL TO RESTRUCTURE DUES** (Doc CM0511/07)

10.1 John Slattery outlined the challenges of financing an international organisation such as ICUU, which was dependent on membership dues from organisations of varying means and ability to pay, and with different categories of membership. Discussion of the proposal yielded suggestions many and various from the floor, which were considered in more detail in a working group later in the week, comprising Lilia Cuervo, Barbara Beach, John Slattery, Istvan Kovacs, Dávid Gyerő, Evelyn Frain and Brian Kiely.

10.2 John Slattery later presented the report of the working group, whose recommendations were to:

- continue with the 2-tier arrangement on an individual member basis of US\$0.50 and US\$0.05 per member
- issue pledge forms annually to each Member Group
- handle any special circumstances in discussions between the Group and the President
- issue invoices as reminders, in preparation for the 2006 fiscal year, once figures were agreed and do likewise for 2007
- encourage non-full members to contribute according to their ability

- present accounts in future in Euros rather than US\$, in recognition of the fact that expenditure was predominantly in Euros
- rely on the national body to resolve issues of dual membership.

10.3 The report was received and the recommendation to continue with the \$0.50 and \$0.05 two-tier structure was agreed.

11 PROGRAMME PROPOSALS BY REGIONAL GROUPS

11.1 The role of Regional Groups was to recommend, develop and implement ideas that would take forward the strategic priorities of ICUU on a more local level, within budget limits set by the Executive Committee and Council.

11.2 North America Group

John Slattery presented highlights of the report, namely:

- development of partner-like relationships on a bilateral basis
- improved communications, especially the websites
- an ICUU advocate in each congregation
- booths at UUA & CUC Annual Meetings and workshops there to include overseas leaders
- promote 'Friends of ICUU' campaign
- list of possible members & Chair.

11.3 Latin America Group

Lilia Cuervo reported. The seven participants had discussed matters theological and philosophical. She wanted to plant U*U seeds in various places and acknowledged the need for publicity. She advocated exploring Latin American identity, recognising European roots but exploring a contemporary contribution.

11.4 Australasia Group

Four Member Groups were not represented because of visa problems. The Group envisioned a 10-year goal of developing the ability to train ministers. They proposed:

- communicating by web and email
- increasing their visibility in ICUU
- accreditation of ministers by other ICUU groups.

However, verification of the legitimacy of Australasian groups is a necessary first step since the current status of some was in doubt. A list of potential Committee members was to be drawn up.

11.5 Africa Group

The Group's Committee would comprise Gordon Oliver, Fulgence Ndagijimana and Jill McAllister. Their goal was to re-establish contact with individuals; the group had focused on Congo for the past year. There was a need for a leadership development programme by 2007. There was also a great need for fundraising for what would be expensive programmes.

11.6 Europe Group

Gevene reported that Europe was in a good situation to be a Regional Group, with good communications and transport, though communication within the Group was a problem. Minutes of the meeting would be circulated, and John Clifford was asked to issue automated reminders to all groups, asking for details of upcoming events. A list of volunteers was provided, with an indication of specific skills and interests.

12 REGIONAL GROUP MANDATE PROPOSAL (Doc CM0511/08)

12.1 The proposal to create Regional Committees was adopted in principle; it was left to the Executive Committee to flesh out the details. It was acknowledged that the North America Regional Committee would need co-chairs. Gordon Oliver would chair the Africa Regional Committee. Since there was no budget available at this stage, initial discussions would need to be conducted electronically.

13 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT (Doc CM0511/09)

13.1 Executive Committee

13.1.1 Cliff Reed, as convenor of the Committee, commented on the difficulty in getting member groups to nominate people in good time to enable the Committee to bring a complete slate to the Meetings. Having solicited endorsement of some candidates from the floor, he presented the following slate of nominations:

President	Gordon Oliver
Vice-President	John Slattery
Treasurer	Barbara Beach
Secretary	Pearl Greene Marbaniang

Members-at-large - four nominations for three positions

:

Istvan Kovács	Celia Midgley
Jaume de Marcos	Antje Paul

13.1.2 It was noted that Walter Jayawardene had been nominated by the Member Group in Sri Lanka, but no seconder had been forthcoming.

13.1.3 Candidates each outlined their reasons for seeking election or re-election. The officers were re-elected on a show of hands whilst a ballot was held to elect three Members-at-Large. Successful candidates in the ballot were Istvan Kovacs, Jaume de Marcos and Antje Paul.

13.1.4 The new Executive Committee was installed towards the close of the Council Meeting, in a ceremony devised by Joy Silver.

13.2 Nominating Committee

13.2.1 There were three candidates for three positions and Arpad Csete, Iva Fiserova and David Usher were elected on a show of hands.

14 THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM

14.1 Istvan Kovacs briefed the Council on the Symposium to be held in Transylvania in the summer of 2006 and solicited papers from U*Us around the world.

15 **LOCATION PROPOSALS FOR NEXT COUNCIL MEETING**

- 15.1 The President invited delegates to submit suggestions for the next Council Meeting venue to John Clifford.
- 15.2 It was suggested from the floor that the Council should meet every three years, rather than every two, and that between Councils there should be meetings of the Executive Committee and National Leaders. The President ruled that the proposal should be considered by the new Executive Committee since it involved bylaw changes.

16 **PRESIDENT'S CLOSING ADDRESS**

- 16.1 In his closing address, the President commented that the meeting had been productive and that much ground had been covered. He appealed for a renewed commitment to liberal religion and remarked that it was encouraging to see approval of the strategic goals brought to the Council meeting. The three strategic goals - communication, leadership development, and youth - would embrace the following:
- an update on membership
 - increased congregational involvement
 - focus on collaboration with other groups within the limits of resources of money and time
 - improved communication between Leaders and the Executive Committee
 - continuing links between delegates.
- 16.2 The Executive Committee and the Executive Secretary would be in frequent touch, and conscious efforts would be made to maintain accurate contact information throughout the organisation, not least by means of the proposed member survey.
- 16.3 He welcomed the high levels of participation there had been at workshops and encouraged participants to keep up this dialogue with the Executive Committee. There was much to do and everything would be guided by the strategic goals.
- 16.4 He expressed his thanks to everyone, thanks for the trust reposed in him, and thanks for the Executive Committee and their support.

17 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 17.1 **UUA Resolution on Darfur** (Doc C0511/15)
- 17.1.1 The Council had expressed its best wishes to Bill Sinkford and Danielle Sinkford in their further travels to Chad. Iva pointed out that the Secretariat had already collected national Unitarian responses to the situation in Darfur, and it was agreed that Member Groups be made aware of both the UUA Resolution on this matter and the information on the UU-UN website.

18 **MOTIONS OF THANKS**

- 18.1 The President expressed thanks to Christine Hayhurst, who was leaving the Executive Committee; to Member Group Leaders for their input at the Leaders' meeting and the Council meeting; and to Joy Silver, for devising the installation service
- 18.2 Special thanks were reserved for Elizabeth Breedlove, who had worked unstintingly to organise the Council Meeting and make it the success that it was. She had been supported in this by Christine Hayhurst, Antje Paul, Iva Fiserova, John Clifford and Bob Bach (online registration), to whom thanks also were expressed.

Guests and Observers

<i>Canada:</i>	Mark Allstrom Louise Allstrom Ellen Campbell Douglas Campbell Eryl Court Evelyn Frain	Phillip Hewett Tudy McLaine Meg Roberts Joy Silver Thelma Smith
<i>Czech Republic:</i>	Jindriska Talpová.	
<i>Denmark:</i>	Lene Shoemaker.	
<i>EUU:</i>	John Eichrodt Gevene Hertz	John Hertz Orloff Miller
<i>Germany:</i>	Wolfgang Jantz Ingrid Möller	Manfred Paul
<i>Romania/Transylvania:</i>	Dávid Gyerő, Sándor Máthé.	
<i>Spain:</i>	Helen Adamson Elizabeth Breedlove Jaume de Marcos	Bettie Ringma Mary Undercoffler
<i>United Kingdom:</i>	Jopie Boeke Richard Boeke Barbara Clifford Brian Cockroft Lesley Harris	Celia Midgley John Midgley Alan Ruston Jeff Teagle David Usher.
<i>United States:</i>	Di Allen-Thompson Pam Allen-Thompson Linda Banez-Kay Kim Beach Emilie Boggis Carolyn Brown Janice Brunson Fred Cox Lilia Cuervo Fadel Erian Matt Fick	Lorella Hess Randi Hetrick Todd Jones Amy Jackson Jay Kay Jill McAllister Michael McGee Jim Nelson William Ranken Danielle Sinkford Mary Wellemeyer.