

Minutes from IFSW General Meeting 2012 in Stockholm

International Federation of Social Workers
Fédération Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux
Federación Internacional de Trabajadores Sociales

GENERAL MEETING STOCKHOLM

[Kungsgatan 28a, Stockholm](#)

7th of July 2012 from 9am to 6pm

8th of July 2012 from 9am to 3pm

Countries Present: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China (apologies received), Cuba, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong (apologies), Ireland, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Malta, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA

(Note: Representatives from Nigeria, South Africa, Japan and France arrived on the second day. Representatives from the USA were not present on the second day.)

Countries represented by Proxy: Faeroe Islands (proxy held by Denmark), Iceland (proxy held by Denmark), Italy (proxy held by Malta)

1. Opening of the General Meeting

1.1. Opening of the General Meeting

The President called the meeting to order at 9:45am and welcomed participants. Apologies were received from our Chinese member and from Suzanne Dworak-Peck, IFSW Ambassador, as her husband John is not well. She sent her sincerest apologies and best wishes for success at the meeting.

1.2. Roll call of member organizations

The Secretary-General undertook a roll-call of countries and distributed voting cards.

1.3. Welcome

Representatives of the two membership bodies formally and warmly welcomed all participants to Sweden.

1.4. Introductions, including observer organizations

The Secretary-General welcomed delegates and introduced the Executive Committee.

1.5. Voting rights at the General Meeting

It was noted that countries present and correctly paid-up should use their voting card, one vote per country. The tradition is to write name of the country on the back of the card.

1.6. Appointment of Secretary(ies) for the meeting

Michael Cronin, Nigel Hall, Ruth Stark, and Marion Crosser were appointed by the meeting.

1.7. Appointment of Parliamentarian

Terry Bamford was appointed as Parliamentarian for the meeting.

1.8. Work structure and proceedings during the meeting

This was agreed.

1.9. Appointment of teller(s) for the meeting

The following tellers were appointed: Barbara Molderings (Germany) and Lucy Sanford -Reed (New Zealand). It was noted that there were 37 voting members which meant the quorum requirement was satisfied.

1.10. Lunch breaks etc.

These were agreed.

2. Approval of agenda and timetable

Agenda and timetable for the meeting were agreed

Moved: Australia

The seconder was not recorded

Carried unanimously

3. Previous minutes

The Minutes from the General Meeting in Hong Kong 2010 were approved and accepted by the General Meeting.

Moved: Austria

Seconded: Switzerland

Carried unanimously

4. Andrew Mouravieff-Apostol Memorial Medal

The president noted that the award of this medal in recognition of the former Secretary-General Andrew Mouravieff-Apostol is an important IFSW tradition. The General Meeting accepted the recommendation of the Awards Committee that in honour of her diligence and commitment over many years, including long hours of translations, that Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol be awarded this medal. Laura Acotto President Latin America and Caribbean Region also provided words of appreciation to Ellen. Ellen thanked the President and Laura and all in attendance. She spoke of her work on birth registration (over 16 years) which has been a major concern for her. All in attendance gave Ellen a standing ovation.

5. Election of Officers and Executive Committee

5.1. Report from the Elections Officer

Bob Lonne the Elections Officer, provided his election report. He noted that all nominees had met the requirements for IFSW elections and these had been reviewed by the Elections Committee. As Alternate Election Officers Suzanne Dworak-Peck and Claudia Kuzma were unable to attend the General Meeting, the President moved that David Jones act as alternate election officer.

Carried by affirmation

5.1.1. Motion to clarify the terms of office (*Interpretation of the Constitution regarding maximum length of office for Executive Committee Members*)

The Elections Officer in the interest of clarifying the constitution raised the following issue.

The maximum number of continuous terms is 3 (of 4 years each =12 years).

A complication arises when a position is held for half terms – do these count as full terms or just for the time period served?

Following discussion the motion was put forward that the General Meeting supports the interpretation of the constitution as allowing a maximum of 12 years continuously (and this can be a combination of 2 year and 4 years terms and can be for no more than 2 IFSW Executive positions) .

Moved: United Kingdom

Seconded: Kenya

33 in favour

2 against

3 abstentions.

Motion is carried

5.2. Break into regional groups for voting

Regional groups met to vote for candidates for the vacant positions on the Executive Committee

5.3. Announcement of Elections

Elections for the following candidates were announced as duly elected by the Elections Officer:

Regional Presidents

African Region

Regional President: Daniel Asiedu

Asian Region

Regional President: John Ang

European Region

Regional President: Cristina Martins

Member-at-Large: Maria Moritz

Latin-American and the Caribbean Region

Member-at-Large: Rodolfo Martínez

North American Region

Regional President: Jeane Anastas

Member-at-Large: Morel Caissie

Treasurer

(Note: No nominations were received for this position and the matter was referred for the Executive Committee).

The President thanked the elections committee for their work.

6. IFSW Membership

6.1. Membership applications and renewals

It was unanimously agreed that membership applications forms and requests to associations to renew their membership should indicate that the association agrees to abide by the IFSW Ethics Statement and Constitution. It was also requested that information about applicant organisations include numbers of individual membership and date of foundation.

6.2. Applications for membership

The Secretary General reported on the following applications for membership:

6.2.1. Africa Region

- Botswana
- Djibouti
- Madagascar
- Morocco (for reinstatement)
- Sénégal
- Zimbabwe

The outgoing Africa Regional President Charles Mbugua noted the diversity of applications from Africa and reported on the above applications for membership. The General Meeting was pleased to note these applications, but some delegates requested their preference to have applicants present at the meeting, or possibly contact via some other means such as Skype. The President agreed to take these recommendations under advisement.

Motion to accept these countries

Moved: Germany

Seconded: Switzerland

34 in favour

0 against

2 abstentions

Motion is carried

6.2.2. Asia-Pacific Region

- Bangladesh (for reinstatement)
- Iran
- Indonesia
- Macau (special independent region of China)
- Vietnam
- Yemen

The Regional President John Ang presented these countries for membership to the General Meeting. Discussions centred on the need for more information on each application, particularly on the numbers of members in each country. John Ang indicated that this information can be made available later, but the point was stressed that this should be noted in the application form and available to the

General Meeting at the time the application for membership or reinstatement is presented.

Motion to accept these countries

Moved: Australia

Seconded: Philippines

33 in favour

0 against

2 abstentions

Motion is carried

6.2.3. Europe

The Regional President Nicolai Paulsen reported on two associations:

- *Austria*: the current Austrian member has agreed to form a coordinating body with a municipal workers' trade union which will work with current Austrian member. A representative was present at the meeting.
- *Hungary*: Hungarian Association of Social Workers is now linked through an umbrella body, the Organisation of Social Professionals, consisting of 10 member organisations. A representative was present at the meeting.

Motion to accept these coordinating bodies into membership:

Moved: Philippines

Seconded: Finland

36 in favour

0 against

0 abstentions

Motion is carried

It was noted with regard to Serbia that two applications from organisations were received in 2008 and work is continuing to develop the coordinating body.

6.2.4. Latin America and the Caribbean

The Regional President Laura Acotto reported on two membership applications:

- Costa Rica (not present)
- Puerto Rico (not present). Laura Acotto reported that this association is the only national social worker organization in this country and has been in existence since 1940. Social workers cannot practise in Puerto Rico without being registered with this association and currently 7000 social workers are registered with it. Documents were distributed previously regarding this application.

These applicants were both endorsed by 11 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) organizations who support both of them. Puerto Rico requests membership as an independent country separate from the USA.

Delegates from the USA registered its objection to voting on the two LAC countries as one vote. The point was made that Puerto Rico is a territory of the US and has not approached NASW USA regarding joining through a coordinating body.

A discussion then took place on whether the Puerto Rico application should be considered as an association independent of the USA or whether it should be viewed as part of a coordinating committee within the USA.

A motion was then proposed (by the UK, seconded by New Zealand) to separate the issues of Costa Rica and Puerto Rico and consider the two issues separately, and this was agreed by delegates.

However a procedural motion to defer decision making to allow for further discussion between the parties involved was then made and voted on.

Moved: Singapore

Seconded: Ghana

9 in favour

25 against

4 abstentions

Motion defeated

Following the defeat of this procedural motion the tabling of the votes to consider admission of both Costa Rica and Puerto Rico separately then took place.

Vote to admit Costa Rica to membership

36 in favour

Proposed: UK

Seconded: New Zealand

0 against

0 abstentions

Costa Rica admitted

Vote to admit Puerto Rico to membership

Proposed: Malta

Seconded: Portugal

26 in favour

3 against

6 abstentions

Puerto Rico admitted

The President emphasised that this debate and the vote should be seen as a way to move forward together – not that USA has ‘lost’ or Puerto Rico has ‘won’, but that we should all work together to deal with the real issues that face us in the world today.

7. Biennial Report of Activities 2010-2012

7.1 President’s Report

The President delivered his report to the General Meeting reflecting on his work as President over the past two years and also identifying his thoughts and observations about the challenges and opportunities facing all of us in IFSW and as members of the global social work community. He particularly thanked the new Secretary-General who has provided strong leadership and a vision of where IFSW should be to the members and for making an important contribution to IFSW in a short period of time. The President also acknowledged and celebrated the work of some of our very dedicated members, some of whom are stepping down from their positions and others unable to be with us.

7.2. Secretary-General’s Report

The Secretary-General delivered his report to the General Meeting. He noted that international social work is in a mayor stage of change. He referred to the significant increase of new regional voices in global debates and cited the examples of strong growth of social work from the African Region and also the initiatives for a new Global Definition of Social Work led by colleagues from the Latin American and Caribbean Region. These new voices and the newly formed partnerships for the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development require us to rethink and reposition social work to ensure that new parties are included, that longstanding members can still identify with the Federation and that our work is relevant to the international context and maintains keeping with our principles, he noted.

The Secretary-General reported on an extremely successful Week of Action comprising World Social Work Day and Social Work Day at the United Nations. In this week social workers celebrated the theme of the Global Agenda in every region and in many countries the Agenda Commitments document was presented to governments.

In the next two years ahead he noted the need to expand income streams to consolidate working functions of the Federation to complete the Definition of Social Work Process and to shape the organisational culture to generate clear and specific outcomes.

He proposed the development of a Publications Unit and creating an online forum that would enable social workers from throughout the world to hold discussion forums, access social work resources/education and to create campaigns. Comments welcomed this initiative and several country delegates noted how useful the Global Agenda has been. The meeting accepted the Secretary-General's report. The President thanked the Secretary-General for his hard work.

8. Finance 2010-2012

8.1-8.5 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer submitted her report. In discussion afterwards the United Kingdom felt that we had stagnated in our membership over the last five years and we need to find ways to increase our capital. Discussion centred on this issue and it was generally agreed that we should try to do this and to ensure that the IFSW fortune does increase into the future.

Motion to receive the accounts

Moved New Zealand

Seconded Germany

36 in favour

0 against

0 abstentions

Accounts received

The United Kingdom noted that the Treasurer has done an excellent job and presented the accounts well. The UK believes strongly that our Secretary-General should have adequate resources to allow him to do what the General Meeting would

like to be carried out. The UK noted that it would be useful to have a working group on this topic. The Treasurer noted that no one had engaged in this process after Hong Kong and that this needs to be directed by the Secretary-General.

The outgoing European President noted that the Budget for 2012 has been approved but may need some revision. He was concerned about the decision not to present a new budget beyond 2012; however he accepted the decision this time. The President noted that this is not a practice to be continued. Germany also questioned the financial plans for the new Action Plan for 2012-14. The president noted that regional members will be informed in due course.

9. Regional and Representatives' Reports

9.1. Regional Report for Africa

The outgoing African President Charles Mbugua presented a brief report, noting in particular a successful Summit on Social Work Leadership was held in Nairobi on 14-16 May 2012 with over 200 participants including delegates from Uganda, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, funded by IFSW and the Danish Association of Social Workers. He also noted that the number of national associations in African Region had grown from nine to 16 in the last five years, although more work needs to be done on ensuring that fees are paid in a timely way.

9.2. Regional Report for Asia-Pacific

A brief report was presented by the President for Asia-Pacific, John Ang. He noted that more involvement of the membership is needed in the region and ways of dealing with this are being looked into. Singapore and Japan have signed a Motion of Understanding to facilitate exchange visits, social worker contacts and mutual support. John Ang would be happy to facilitate any other relationships. He noted that we are moving towards more projects based in developing associations. In 2013 the Asia-Pacific Conference will be in Manila and all are invited to the Philippines. John noted that funds are still needed by social workers impacted by the tsunami and earthquakes and perhaps this is an area that IFSW can consider.

9.3 Regional Report for Europe

The outgoing President for Europe Nicolai Paulsen highlighted that IFSW Europe's views are welcomed at EU level and noted that IFSW Europe is also more involved with other partners at a European level through the anti-poverty network, and Social Platform work with the European Union. In the last months IFSW Europe has appointed a local representative to Brussels. With regard to regional conferences the region would like to involve more practitioners and meet in smaller centres in diverse countries. Europe would also like to make language more inclusive. Europe also had a special announcement – they have produced a social work song on CD for US\$8. Finally Nicolai noted that this is a time of transition with three new people on the European Executive Committee.

9.4 Latin America and Caribbean

The President for the Latin America and Caribbean region presented her report to the General Meeting. She noted that at the regional conference in August 2011 – also attended by Rory Truell and René Schegg – in Mendoza, 400 members participated and a CD with all the presentations was prepared. There is enough

material here to prepare a book. The debates in the workshop were of a high quality and are on the IFSW website. Later 300 colleagues participated at a Conference in Rio and through Mercosur developed procedure to further include regional associations. All together there were nine Mercosur meetings. Two particular concerns are the wish of the region to change the Definition of Social Work and to lobby for Portuguese (which 220 million people in the world speak) to be an official IFSW member language.

9.5 North America

There is a lengthy report available on the website with the only addition a new member agreement between the USA and Canada. The IFSW North American region has been actively engaged in addressing some pressing problems, such as the economic recession, the increasing challenges related to poverty and the unemployment crisis. Both Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and National Association of Social Workers (NASW-USA) look forward to continued collaboration and a strengthened presence within their region.

9.6 UN New York

There is a six page report submitted, but nothing more to add. The report covers the activities of the New York Representative Team to the United Nations headquarters in New York. This proactive team of four representatives and interns, with Michael Cronin as the main UN Representative, covers a wide variety of substantial issues of interest and concern to the profession of social work.

9.7 UN Geneva

Klaus Kühne, Main Representative to the UN in Geneva, took over from Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol in 2011 noted that it will be hard to comply with the standards she set. He also noted that his report had been tabled and emphasised the work of the representatives towards the UN Social Protection Floor and the birth registration issues. Malta requested whether it was possible to notify the member organisations when these reports are completed and he confirmed that this will be done.

9.8 UN Nairobi

This report highlighted the collaboration between UN-HABITAT, as well as the co-ordination of multiple stakeholders during UN-HABITAT`s special events and Governing Council sessions. The partnership is firmly founded on the long-standing relationship with UN and also the IFSW`s national, regional and international network and connections with diverse civil society groups.

9.9 UN Bangkok

The Bangkok report was not available

9.10 UN Vienna

The report was presented by Georg Dimitz on behalf of the IFSW Vienna team. Key points highlighted were IFSW`s relationship with the CONGO Board (the umbrella organisation for all worldwide NGOs in relationship to the United Nations) and our contribution to three committees – Narcotic Drugs, Ageing and the Status of Women.

9.11. UN Santiago de Chile

This report noted the good work that had been carried out with UN bodies such as UNDP. The initiative to develop stronger social protection such as through the Social Protection Floor initiative was discussed.

9.12. UNHCR Report

An overview of developments concerning UNHCR, including various initiatives of interest to IFSW were presented in this report previously sent by IFSW's representative to the UNHCR, Tobias Roosen. These included the suggestion that UNHCR create the post of Special Rapporteur on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), working with refugees in urban settings and how to reduce the problem of statelessness.

9.13 WHO Report

The WHO Report is on the website where Sabine Bährer- Köhler, the IFSW WHO Representative reports on the work undertaken to integrate social dimensions into the classification of mental illness.

9.14. Amnesty International

The report by the IFSW Representative to Amnesty International Terry Bamford was presented to the General Meeting. This highlighted the current UN Conference on the Arms Trade treaty which is supported by IASSW.

9.15. IFSW Ambassador

Although Suzanne Dvorak-Peck could not be at the meeting, she provided a full report of her role and activities as Ambassador which is on the website.

9.16. IFSW Friends Report

The Friends Coordinator Andrea Trenkwald-Egger described the current situation with the Friends programme. There are currently 979 Friends, with 127 Friends joining last year and with 13 renewals. Renewals is a problem and there is need to develop new systems to keep in contact with the Friends – one idea is an interactive website but this has been delayed by the development of IFSW's new website. Andrea extended an invitation to Friends to the Friends Reception at the Rica Talk Hotel in Stockholm.

10. Introduction to new website and *IFSW Connect*

The Secretary-General informed the General Meeting that a new website has been designed which will provide a more professional and informative service about IFSW. He also explained a new service – *IFSW Connect* – which will enable social workers to create professional networks with their peers from around the world. *IFSW Connect* will enable members to form discussion groups, engage with networks and share resources with colleagues.

11. Policy

11.1. Effective and Ethical Working Environments for Social Work: the Responsibilities of Employers and Social Workers

David Jones and Anthea Agius explained the background to this policy paper which proposes a new IFSW policy on creating an effective and ethical environment for the

practice of social work, identifying the role of employers. This recognises that the ability of social workers to practise ethically is affected by the employer and the working situation they are in. This all relates to the general arrangements in the workplace, etc.

Laura Acotto suggested that this document should be translated to know the full meaning and the President indicated that IFSW will endeavour to make sure this is done. Anthea Agius noted that if this paper is approved the authors will undertake to review any comments that arise following the translation. Australia thanked David and Anthea for this work and suggested more international literature should be acknowledged in the paper. Nigeria indicated that they would reflect on the paper and forward any comments. Following further discussion the meeting moved to a vote.

Motion to approve the Statement as proposed to become a Policy Paper
The majority supported this.

11.2. Future agenda and other policy matters

11.2.1. Policy on sexual abuse of children

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) had developed a resolution which was put forward as a policy matter. Ian Johnson from BASW asked the meeting to acknowledge that in every sector of society significant numbers of children are sexually abused, and that the majority of such children go unrecognised as most children are too frightened to tell people about sexual abuse. BASW called upon IFSW to produce and publish a set of guiding principles on this area.

Moved: United Kingdom

Seconded: Russia

Discussion of the motion centred on whether it would be preferable to widen the concept of abuse to include all forms of abuse, not just sexual abuse as children are subjected to a wide range of different types of abuse around the world, while the alternative viewpoint maintained that it would be preferable to maintain the focus of the motion as it stands.

Amendment to motion (to broaden the focus of abuse)

Moved: Ireland

Seconded: Nigeria

Voting for the amendment: Yes 3

Voting against: the majority

Amendment to motion defeated

Consequently the original motion was approved

12. Reports from Commissions and Projects

12.1. Report on Human Rights Commission

Ruth Stark, the IFSW Human Rights Commissioner, reported that the Human Rights page of the IFSW website had been the most downloaded in the previous year. Her report highlighted cases of abuses regarding social workers who had been harmed

or abused because they were working to help people achieve change in their lives. She noted that we should support our colleagues more and we need advice from all of our members on how to do this.

12.2. Report on Ethics Commission

The report was presented by Richard Hugman, Secretary to the Permanent Committee on Ethics. The report highlights requests for advice from the Committee and also indicates ongoing discussions about a possible merger between the Permanent Committee on Ethics and the Human Rights Commission, which is still being considered. Richard also would like to encourage reports from other parts of the world.

12.3. Report on the Review of the Definition of Social Work

The paper reviewing the current status of the *Definition* was submitted to the General Meeting by Nicolai Paulsen as co-chair of the IFSW Social Work Definition Project illustrates the changes needed, showing the different drafts and providing the latest commentaries on the definition. Nicolai apologised that the paper was not in the book (of presentations to the General Meeting) and not translated. He noted that this is a process that has gone on for last four years and following further dialogue on the review it is clear that the present definition needs to change to identify a new definition including new perspectives. Nicolai recognised the work of the Secretary-General and Policy and Communications Officer towards this and indicated that we need more time for the ongoing review. The review was discussed fully at the Latin American Conference last year and has come quite a long way since then. The Committee will continue the review process. Nicolai asked if the General Meeting could give a mandate for this work to continue.

Motion that the General Meeting agrees that there needed to be a new Global Definition of Social Work and supports further ongoing work to develop such a Definition.

Moved: Denmark

Seconded: Finland

All in favour

In discussion following this acceptance of the motion, Austria suggested that there should be time for feedback on the discussion paper and this was supported by Argentina, while Malta suggested a global definition with regional notes. Norway however did not approve this idea as they felt that we should all be able to relate to a single definition. All however supported the work towards a new Definition of Social Work.

12.4. Report on Publications

This report was submitted by Nigel Hall, IFSW Publications Editor. Nigel highlighted IFSW contributions to key publications launched recently, including *Social Work Around the World V: Building the Global Agenda in Social Work and Social Development* and the two *Handbooks on International Social Work* published by Sage and Oxford respectively; and he explained the current status of the *Journal of Social Work*. Future publications should highlight best practice in social work and social development from around the world.

13. Appointment of IFSW Representatives

Representatives to the following organisations were accepted by affirmation:

- Human Rights Commission, Secretary, Ruth Stark
- Permanent Committee on Ethical Issues, Secretary, Richard Hugman
- United Nations, Geneva, Klaus Kühne
- United Nations, New York, Michael Cronin
- United Nations, Vienna, Georg Dimitz
- United Nations, Nairobi, Charles Mbugua
- Amnesty International, Terry Bamford
- IFSW Ambassador, Suzanne Dworack-Peck
- Publications Officer, Nigel Hall

14. Forthcoming Conferences

14.1. South Africa 2013

Charles Mbugua announced a forthcoming conference in South Africa in September 2013 following the Nairobi Summit, where the idea of a follow up to MDGs in terms of Sustainable Development Goals will be considered. More information about this will be forthcoming.

14.2. Melbourne, Australia 2014

The next global conference of IFSW, IASSW, and ICSW will be held in Melbourne in July 2014.

14.3. Calls for hosting bids for 2016

The Secretary-General noted that bids are now open for Conference venues for 2016.

15. Any Other Business

- Denmark (supported by France) thanked the IFSW office for the book listing General Meeting business.
- Japan wished to thank IFSW for the support they have received after the tsunami and earthquake
- The President thanked our colleagues from Japan for their contribution to relief and reconstruction efforts and mentioned other disasters in Russia, New Zealand and the USA in the previous two years which have affected our colleagues.
- Portugal noted their wish to support a resolution for Portuguese to be an official language of IFSW as 220 million people in 8 countries speak Portuguese. It was noted that this will have fiscal implications but will be reviewed along with the issue of other possible languages.
- Romania queried whether we have a budget for 2012-2013 and were informed that it will be sent out later.

16. Election of Elections Officer and Alternates

The appointment of election officers/alternates was deferred

17. Date and place of the next General Meeting

Venue – Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Australia, date of General Meeting to be confirmed later.

18. Closing of General Meeting

The General Meeting was closed by the President who thanked everyone for their attendance and the work they had done.