

## Meeting of IASSID Council

Maastricht, the Netherlands - 3 August 2006

### Report to Council

#### Background

WHO has agreed formally to continue its relationship with IASSID. IASSID organizes a world congress every four years (Montpellier 2004, Capetown 2008); European region conferences (Dublin 2002, Maastricht 2006); and a regional conference in Southeast Asia (Taipei 2005, Singapore 2009). Building on a preliminary event in Buenos Aires (July 2003), IASSID now wishes to develop its presence in South America and welcomes active collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to test the feasibility of a regional conference in South America in 2007.

#### Activity 2006

On 15 March, Matt Janicki and I met three PAHO officials at their headquarters in Washington DC: -

Jose Luis Di Fabio, Area Manager, Technology and Health Services Delivery  
Javier Vasquez, Human Rights Specialist, Area of Technology and Health  
Services –Legal Affairs  
Enrique Vega Garcia, Regional Advisor on Aging and Health

They were very positive about active collaboration between PAHO and IASSID, notably in raising awareness and understanding of the needs of people with intellectual disabilities in the South American region.

It was agreed that we share interest in, first, *human rights* among people with intellectual disabilities. It was noted that in many countries, people with intellectual disabilities are deprived of liberty and civic participation through permanent guardianship laws, and are often incarcerated in large psychiatric institutions. Sterilization is a further threat. A second domain is how best to promote healthy lives and *healthy aging* among people with intellectual disabilities. In each of these complex areas, it seems that IASSID might offer expertise and share knowledge with those charged with making policy on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities throughout countries in the region.

#### Proposed conference

A conference organized by IASSID and PAHO in Santiago, Chile in early September 2007 was discussed: -

- (a) The timing is suitable for PAHO in advancing recommendations through its structures of governance and internal timetable;

- (b) September is springtime, and the start of the academic year;
- (c) Chile is now reforming its guardianship laws;
- (d) There is a new President in Chile and a climate of change;

At PAHO's suggestion, we made contact with Soledad Cisternas Reyes, a human rights lawyer who has been involved in advancing the UN Convention. Soledad obliged us by traveling to Montréal to attend the Summit on Social Inclusion from 2-5 May 2006. The Executive of IASSID met with her there to discuss initial plans for an event in Santiago in September 2007. A target audience of about 250 persons was agreed. These talks were especially fruitful thanks to the translation support that Miguel-Angel Verdugo provided.

### **Current plans**

IASSID will team up with colleagues on Santiago, Chile, to hold an IASSID-Sud America conference in Santiago after mid-September 2007.

A survey of many colleagues has yielded a list of about 30 individuals throughout South America who have become very interested in participating in this meeting.

Thematically, as recommended by PAHO, we plan to focus on human rights and disability, but the meeting will be designed to highlight service models and governmental policies toward disability.

Plans are proceeding to develop ministerial support within Chile and to involve a range of voluntary and charitable organizations involved with human services and social welfare. PAHO has agreed to be involved, and Patricia is working to connect with local PAHO officials in Santiago.

MJ is willing to represent IASSID at a September 2006 meeting at PAHO if this is appropriate and we shall both be meeting with our Chilean colleagues in January 2007 to discuss the logistics and program planning for the September conference.

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**Patricia Noonan Walsh**

Vice-President on International Organizational Affairs