



ICMA MEDITERRANEAN & MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE

Alexandria, May 6th – 9th, 2006

The impact of Muslim Culture in the Maritime World

SUMMARY

The ICMA MEDITERRANEAN & MIDDLE EAST REGION celebrated its conference in Alexandria (Egypt) from May 6th until 9th 2006.

18 representatives from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, United Arab Emirates and Ukraine, members of different Christian churches (Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Ukrainian Orthodox) joined to discuss the following topics:

1. The role of Christian minorities in the Middle East
2. Intercultural Dialog in the Mediterranean Area
3. Dialogue with Muslim Culture and Religion
4. The work and live on a ship, confined on board out on the wide sea.
5. How to work in a port for seafarers welfare in 2006; problems to face
6. ITF programs
7. Access to ships under ISPS code conditions.

All the participants presented their reports and it was discussed about the different activities and problems.

Topics developed by the speakers:

1. **The role of Christian minorities in the Middle East**, by the Rev.Dr. M.G. Rizk, Presbyterian Egyptian Pastor. He went through the History, since the times of Jesus Christ until our time, showing us how this country that was Christian from the first times a.C. became a major Islamic Country. As reasons he mentioned the rivalry between the Church in Constantinople (St. Andrew) and the Roman Church (St. Peter and St. Paul), the inflexibility of Copts and also the discussions among Christians about the humankind and divinity of Christ and the Holy Trinity. Muslims with their strong capacity of conviction told them that there is only one God (Ala).

Nowadays in Egypt 90% there are Muslim, 8 % Copt, 1% Roman Catholic and 1% different Christian denominations. Because of the international politic situation, the tension in Egypt between Muslim and Christians has increased. The way a Christian minority can survive is to show that their works are good by developing social activities for the most poor and sick people, without any statement of their own faith, while people know that they are Christian, respecting the Islam and asking for respect.

2. **Intercultural Dialog inn the Mediterranean Area**, by Dr. H. Rieth from the Anna Lindh Foundation. We had a presentation of this foundation under the principle: unity in diversity. They encouraged the participants of the conference to visit their webside and perhaps to become members of the foundation.
3. **Dialogue with Muslim Culture and Religion**, by the Rev.M.G. Lauche. He divided his explanations in three parts: Religion, Politic and Culture.

Religion:

For Islam there are three great prophets: Moses, Christ and Mohammed because they let us books (Old and New Testament and Coram).

The pillars of faith are: One God, his angels, the holy books, the prophets and messengers, resurrection after death, the Day of Judgment and predestination.

The rights of Islam are: the daily prayers, the fasten and the Ramadan.

Politic: The political dimension goes together with the religious. Mohammed was not only a religious, but also a politic leader. Mohammed adopted first a positive attitude versus Christians and Jews, but they became his enemies, after refusing him. Muslims consider a country as Muslim when the civil law follows the Islam law and when the legislator is as Muslim.

Culture: Mr. Lauche explained according Muslims culture aspects like: Time, generosity and hospitality, communication, family, marriage, dressing, honor and shame.

4. **How to work in a port for seafarer's welfare in 2006; problems to face**, by Bernard Vincent (Marseille) and Emma Kouznetzova and Tatiana Sitalo (Yalta).

Bernard Vincent exposed problems like the decreasing number of seafarers visiting clubs because of the short time around, the few people on board and the hard work that causes stress and tiredness. Seafarers missions should be near the ships and offering friendship, beside the typical services (transport, telephone, internet. , etc) Seafarers are alone and they appreciate friendship, somebody who listen to them. We have to be witness of Christ and Mary.

Emma and Tatiana exposed the problems in Yalta, where the club was build under the communist regime. Nowadays the Harbor Master is doing everything to take the club out of the building because the land can be sold to a very good price. They are continuous fighting even in the court to avoid this. They have asked the protection at different political levels. They act as International Seafarers Welfare Centre because a Christian organization would not be accepted.

In Yalta many crews on board the ships are often not allowed to go ashore or they have to wait a couple of hours going through several controls. Some of this crews are Ukrainian and they loose an important time to go home.

5. **Access to ships under ISPS code conditions**, by Ricardo Rodríguez-Martos (Barcelona). He made a short explanation about what ISPS code means, the most important concepts and also what it says regarding the right of seafarers for shore leave and getting visits on board the ship. He underlined how ISPS code could be also a way for a better integration in the port. He mentioned the ILO 185 Convention regarding ID cards for seafarers as a tool for facilitating shore leave in ports where extra visa is demanded and also as a tool for supporting the security aim of ISPS. He remarked that all ICMA member were invited in New Orleans to write to their Governs asking for ratifying this Convention. Regarding the cases of crews that are not allowed to go ashore, against what resolution 11 of this code says, Jürgen Kanz remarked that all ICMA members have been asked for informing about these cases so that ICMA can exposes it to IMO, but nobody has informed about such cases until now.

Jürgen Kanz informed about the ILO Consolidated Convention for Seafarers, approved in February 2006, which puts together all the existing ILO Conventions about seafarers and can be considered a "Bill of Rights"

6. **The work and live on a ship, confined on board out on the wide sea**, by Hero Feenders (Bremen). He described the personal and social consequences for live on board a ship, specially when the crew is

multinational. He emphasized the role of missions to help seafarers to come out of their social isolation.

7. **ITF programs**, by Tatiana Tarasyk (Odessa). She exposed the ITF subventioned program “twining centres” informing the conference about the already made experiences between different ports, all the derivate benefits for the participant ports and encouraged more Icma centres to participate, informing about the procedure to apply for it.

8. ICMA Mediterranean business: Jürgen Kanz, General Secretary, reported on ICMA. What is ICMA? : It is a network of Organizations. It depends on the input of its members.

It develops different programs started by some of its members.

This means that there is not centralism in the activity of ICMA.

ICMA is financed with the help of ITF Seafarer’s Trust.

There is a General Secretary and a central office that controls and coordinates the different activities

There are ICMA Regional Conferences every 2 or 3 years.

Regions:

NAMMA, Baltic, Western Europe, Mediterranean & Middle East, East Asia Chaplain Conference, Western Africa Conference, Southern Africa Conference, Southern Asia Conference and Latin America Conference

ICMA has delegations in front of IMO and ILO

ICMA participates of ICSW. Some programs are ISS, Ship (Seafarers help information program), Ship’s visitors (ISPS) course

ICMA Directory: There is a new edition. It is necessary to print it or it is enough to have it in electronic form?

Structure of this region: It was expressed the desire that the Black Sea Ports should remain in the ICMA Mediterranean and Middle East Region.

a.) Election of Regional Coordinator: The conference elected Rev. Stephen Miller, MtS port chaplain in Dubai.

b.) Place and date for the next ICMA Mediterranean Middle East Conference:

The Conference accepted the invitation of Yalta and agreed to have the next conference there in September 2008.

Agreements of the Conference:

The Conference took the following agreements:

1.) Given the importance of knowing the most important religious, political and cultural aspects of the different seamen we can meet, the conference agrees to ask the Executive Committee to start a project of a Handbook for port chaplains and captains about peculiarities of seafarers of them most common countries and religions.

2.) Given then importance of ILO 185 Convention, the Conference agrees to encourage their participants to write to their Governs asking for the ratification of it.

3.) Given the importance of denouncing the cases of the denying of shore leave, the conference agrees to encourage the centres in the region to inform Douglas Stevenson about it.

4.) Given the importance of seafarers missions in order to help seafarers to come out of their social isolation, the conference agrees to encourages the centers not only to deliver welfare services for seafarers, but also to try to offer social events that help them to feel they is not isolated.

5.) Given the problems some centers in Ukraine have to face in front of local authorities, the conference agrees to underline the support to them and their activities.

6.) Given the importance of the ICMA directory and the difficulties for many seafarers, the Conference agrees to propose that it should be printed.

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Alexandria, May 9th. 2006