

WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION
24th General Assembly
Johannesburg (South Africa)
1-5 December 2003

REPORT OF THE PLENARY WORKING SESSIONS

1. OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In the formal opening session of the 24th General Assembly of the WVF the highly respected President of the Republic of South Africa Thabo Mbeki said inter alia:

A I am indeed very pleased that this General Assembly will discuss many of these questions with a view to ensuring that all our countries and the international community as a whole respond to the consequences of war and military conflict in an appropriate manner that reaffirms respect for human life and the dignity of all persons.”

The spirit of these encouraging words was a starting point for discussions of the plenary meeting.

The plenary working sessions were opened by the President of the WVF Hamid Ibrahim. He wished all the participants warmly welcome. He also thanked the South African hosts for their excellent hospitality.

2. ROLL CALL OF DELEGATIONS

The roll call of the delegations by raising the label in alphabetical order of the English names of the countries indicated that delegations from 44 countries were present. In addition to this delegations of six countries arrived later. So delegations from altogether 50 member countries participated in the 24th General Assembly.

3. ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSEMBLY

Lt. Gen. Daniel Porter (Niel) Knobel was elected Vice-Chairman of the Assembly.

4. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted unanimously (Document 24/GA - 2).

5. DESIGNATION OF RAPPORTEURS FOR THE PLENARY WORKING SESSIONS

Mr. Robert Créange, France, was designated Rapporteur in French and Mr. Juhani Saari, Finland, Rapporteur in English for the plenary working sessions.

6. DESIGNATION OF THE CHAIRPERSONS, VICE-CHAIRPERSONS AND RAPPORTEURS OF THE COMMITTEES

Mr. Jacques Goujat from France was designated Chairman for the Committee on Policy and Colonel E.D.F. Prah from Ghana Chairman for the Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Affairs.

Ms. Helen Crawford from Australia was designated Rapporteur for Policy Committee and Mr. Andres Medina from Spain Rapporteur for Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Affairs.

In this connection it was also decided that the tellers would be designated from the Cuban, Malaysian and Slovenian delegations.

7. RATIFICATION OF NEW MEMBERS (see the Annex, Document 24/GA-4)

Eight applications for membership of the WVF approved by the 59th Council Meeting to be submitted for ratification to the 24th General Assembly were dealt with. All these applications were decided unanimously to be ratified.

8. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL (Document 24/GA-5)

The Secretary General briefly presented his Report with two annexes which included the Visits to Veterans Associations and WVF Representations 2001-2003.

At the beginning of the discussion concerning the introduction of the Report the multi-lateralism was emphasized as the basis of the world order. Also the respect of the sovereign rights of the states which subscribe to international law was underlined as one of the main principles of the world order.

The WVF and the French member associations were thanked for what they had done for war veterans of some French speaking countries in order to delete the differences in pensions. The first positive steps in this respect would be taken in 2004 and everything should be paid before the 1st of July.

The President and the Secretary General emphasized that the "Task Force" mentioned in Report had been established not only to deal with the problems of the deteriorated economy and on cost-cutting and on fund-raising issues but also to consider future activities of the WVF.

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Mr. Serge Wourgaft, Président d'Honneur of the WVF, briefly presented his Synopsis "50 Years of Action for Piece and Freedom" (Annex) that was also included in the files of the participants of the General Assembly.

The approach of the Synopsis is programmatic but it also recalls the situation and conditions, especially geopolitical ones, prevailing when the WVF was created, the principles underlying it and the methods and means of its actions.

In the Synopsis there is a very clear and precise introduction to the principles, composition and main lines and characteristics of actions of the WVF during its history. The Synopsis also covers references to the regional activities, the protection of human rights and activities concerning the international humanitarian law. Peaceful solution of armed conflicts and repairing the damages caused to war veterans and war victims by war and its consequences and especially six international WVF conferences on legislation are also WVF activities described in the Synopsis. Guidelines to basic rights of war veterans and victims of war drawn up by these conferences and adapted by the governments are one of the finest results reached by the WVF.

Also other important international questions like disarmament and international security, development of the third world countries and environmental questions are dealt with in the Synopsis. Respect for the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and close contacts with the United Nations including the UN Peace-keeping forces are main principles in the work of the WVF. All this is clearly and strongly expressed in the Synopsis.

Mr. Hamid Ibrahim, the President of the WVF, on behalf of all the participants congratulated President d'Honneur for the excellent work he had done by drawing up the Synopsis. It was noted that the Synopsis is a very good and comprehensive summary of the main activities and principal results obtained by the WVF. The synopsis also serves the further research and historians whatever the wishes of the WVF in this respect might be. It was discussed if the further work should be narrating, strictly historical or/and open for the future perspectives, scientific or documentary by nature; should there be a drafting committee, academic people or/and war veterans engaged in the work etc.

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A Communiqué (Annex) was adopted unanimously to be sent to Geneva where a non-governmental meeting between Israeli and Palestinian personalities aimed at a proposal to put an end to the conflict. In the Communiqué the WVF on the occasion of its 24th General Assembly held in Johannesburg expressed the wish that this new initiative would contribute to putting an end to the war between Israel and Palestine and to bringing peace to the Middle East.

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Dr. Baruch Levy from Israel presented a summarized proposal concerning Veterans Health and Welfare and International Cooperation in these matters. His proposal was decided to be dealt with in the informal meeting of the Standing Committee on European Affairs. (In the informal SCEA meeting two days later a small subgroup was decided to be considered to set up to prepare forward the proposals of Dr. Levy. Also the problems of the war veterans in Central and Eastern Europe on the basis of the report of Prof. Dr. Michal Chilczuk, Poland, could be dealt with by this subgroup).

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After a wide and comprehensive discussion, that covered to some extent also the economic situation of the WVF, the Report of the Secretary General was adopted unanimously.

9. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

9.1 REPORT OF THE TREASURER GENERAL

9.2 REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

9.3 RATIFICATION OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOLLOWING THEIR ADOPTION BY THE COUNCIL

9.4 OTHER MATTERS

Concerning the financial and budgetary matters and the Reports of the Treasurer General (Document 24/GA-6) and the Financial Committee (Document 24/GA-7) there was a wide discussion how the expenditure of the WVF could be cut and how the income could be increased. The discussion reflected great concern of the future of the WVF, because the years 2001 and 2002 show highly insufficient income compared with the WVF operating costs. The drop in rates of shares, bonds and investments had greatly affected the results of these years. The first analysis of the 2003 showed small improvement on the whole but the situation did remain worrying.

The Treasurer General informed the delegates of several measures that had been taken or had been considered to be taken in these respects. A special working group "Task Force" mentioned already in point 8 had been established to study urgent measures to be taken to ensure the financing of the WVF activities

One alternative could be to establish a foundation for fund-raising, with small costs or without any costs, if possible. How this can be realized still demands additional examination.

It was noted that it is very important that all the member associations maybe with support of their governments would pay their annual membership dues or at least as great part of it as possible. It was recommended that the current system of membership dues would be reviewed by the Financial Committee and the Executive Board.

The Report of the Treasurer General (covering the audited accounts for the past three years, prospects for the current year 2003, including also budgetary and financial outlook) and the Report of the Financial Committee were adopted unanimously.

The audited accounts for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002, already adopted earlier by the Council, were decided to be ratified unanimously.

10. POLICY ISSUES

11. SOCIAL AFFAIRS ISSUES

These issues were dealt with by the Committee of the whole on Policy (chaired by Mr. Jacques Goujat, France) and by the Committee of the whole on Rehabilitation & Social Affairs (chaired by Col. E.D.F. Prah, Ghana). The Reports of these Committees were presented under the item 14.1 on the agenda. Also the adoption of the resolutions by the plenary session took place there.

12. SPECIAL SESSION: "Towards a Perfect World: Global, National and Local Challenges"

The Special Session was held according to the separate programme. The main points of the excellent presentation of Professor DFS Fourie, University of South Africa, were distributed to the participants of the Special Session. (Annex).

13. ELECTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

There were according to the Constitutional Rules of the WVF nominations made by the delegations two full days before the election of the members of the Executive Board and the Financial Committee. These nominations were after some withdrawals adopted to be delivered to the delegations for elections (Annex, see yellow papers)

13.1. ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE WVF

There was only one nomination for the post of President, namely Mr. Hamid IBRAHIM (Malaysia). So it was stated that he continues as President of the WVF.

13.2. ELECTION OF THE TREASURER GENERAL

There was only one nomination for the post of Treasurer General, namely Mr. David T. KNOWLES (United Kingdom). So it was stated that he continues as Treasurer General.

13.3. ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS

There was only one nomination for the post of Vice-President for Africa, namely Lt. Gen. Daniel P. (Niel) KNOBEL, South Africa. So it was stated that he is one of the Vice-Presidents, representing Africa.

A secret ballot was taken concerning the other Vice-President posts, namely Vice-Presidents from the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. The tellers were from Cuban, Malaysian and Slovenian delegations (See point 6 above).

The results of the secret ballots were:

The Americas

48 votes were given, of which 5 were considered invalid by the tellers.

Mr. Stanley Allen (United States) 31 votes

Ms. June A. Willenz (United States) 12 votes

As Mr. Stanley ALLEN had reached the majority of the votes of the delegations present and voting, he had been elected the Vice-President representing the Americas.

Asia and the Pacific

48 votes were given, of which one was invalid.

Lt. Gen. Sridhar Shamsher J.B. Rana (Nepal) 27 votes

Col. John Morrice (Singapore) 21 votes

As Lt. Gen. Sridhar Shamsher J.B.RANA had reached the majority of the votes of the delegations present and voting, he had been elected the Vice-President representing Asia and the Pacific.

Europe

48 votes were given, which all were valid.

Mr. Jacques Goujat (France) 31 votes

Col. Bjarne Hesselberg (Denmark) 11 votes

Gen. Vladimir Govorov (Russia) 3 votes

Dr. Baruch Levy (Israel) 3 votes

As Mr. Jacques GOUJAT had reached the majority of the votes of the delegations present and voting, he had been elected the Vice-President representing Europe.

13.4. ELECTION OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

By having the secret ballots (votes by 48 delegations given, of which one invalid) between the nominated candidates to the Financial Committee were elected:

Mr. Loizos DEMETRIOU (Cyprus) 30 votes

Mr. Georges BUQUET (France) 28 votes and

Mr. Rodolphe LUTTY (Luxembourg) 27 votes.

The other candidates Mr. Laurie Poorter (South Africa) polled 23 votes, Mr. Robert W.W. van der Vegt (Australia) 16 votes and Mr. Rock Guneseke (Sri Lanka) 3 votes.

13.5. TITLES OF HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS

Titles of Honorary Vice-Presidents were conferred with acclamations on Mr. Mohammed BENJELLOUN (Morocco), Mrs. June STONE (Australia) and Gen. Vladimir GOVOROV (Russia).

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WVF REHABILITATION PRIZE

The WVF Rehabilitation Prize 2003 was granted to the Vietnam Friendship Village Project in recognition of the international value of services rendered in the field of rehabilitation.

Lt. Gen. Dang Quan Thuy, the President of the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN) presented this successful project. He said that the Friendship Village Project was an encouraging achievement made by joint efforts between Vietnamese veterans and certain number of veterans of good-will world wide including especially those from the United States, France, Germany, Japan, Great Britain and Canada. He on behalf of the recipients warmly thanked the WVF for the Rehabilitation Prize.

14. REPORTS

14.1. REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES AND ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS

Ms. Helen Crawford (Australia), the Rapporteur of the Committee on Policy, presented the resolutions adopted by the Committee. All the presented 12 resolutions (Document 24/GA-8) were adopted by the plenary working session, partly unanimously, partly (one of them amended) by some objections and/or abstentions.

Mr. Andres Medina (SPAIN), the Rapporteur of the Committee on Rehabilitation & Social Affairs, presented the resolutions adopted by the Committee. All the presented 13 resolutions (Document 24/GA-9) were adopted by the plenary working session unanimously, one of them amended. Four of these resolutions were originally submitted by the Executive Board (Document 24/GA-17)

14.2. REPORT OF THE PLENARY WORKING SESSIONS

Mr. Juhani Saari (Finland), the General Rapporteur, presented his Report covering the items 1 to 9 on the agenda. There were no objections against the Report, so it can be regarded as adopted.

15. RATIFICATION OF THE DESIGNATION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Council Members and the Alternate Council Members were ratified with some amendments according to the list delivered to the participants. (Annex, yellow paper)

16. CLOSING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At the beginning of the closing session both Malaysia and Nigeria announced to be ready to host the next 25th General Assembly of the WVF in 2006. It was noted that according to the Constitution of the WVF the Executive Board shall make the final decision.

Representatives of many delegations expressed their gratitude and recognition to the South African hosts for their outstanding hospitality and for all the excellent arrangements during their stay in Johannesburg. Several speakers also thanked the President of the WVF, Mr. Hamid Ibrahim, for his great personal contribution.

Mr. Hamid Ibrahim, the President of the WVF, on behalf of all the participants also warmly thanked the hosts for their splendid work and for the excellent conditions in which this General Assembly could be held in Johannesburg. He extended as a gift the

symbol of the WVF to Lt. Gen. Niel Knobel, the President of the Council of Military Veterans' Organisations of the Republic of South Africa - CMVO.

Mr. Hamid Ibrahim also thanked all the participants for their good cooperation and valuable contributions. He extended his special thanks to the Président d'Honneur, Mr. Serge Wourgaft, the new Honorary Vice-Presidents, Secretary General Marek Hagemajer and his efficient staff, especially Executive Director Mrs. Martine Fort. Finally he thanked - with acclamations of the participants - the interpreters who had done extraordinary good work. He further thanked everyone for the support he had received. Then he closed the 24th General Assembly of the WVF.

Juhani Saari
General Rapporteur