

**World Veterans Federation  
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**65TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION  
Mr. Serge Wourgaft, Président d'Honneur**

In November 1950, the leaders of associations in Belgium, Denmark, USA, France, Italy, United Kingdom and Yugoslavia met in Paris to create the WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION (WVF).

Severely marked by the tragedies of World War II, they had the will to prevent such tragedies from happening again and for this purpose, unite efforts so that those who have experienced the suffering and barbarity of this war, whether they fought together or against each other, can work together for a world in keeping with the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, first of all, contribute through exchange of experiences, to healing the wounds of war and improving the quality of life of victims.

When referring to the activities and achievements of the WVF during those 65 years, how can we not also mention very deep changes in the world in which they took place.

The geo political upheavals, with the independence of colonized states, splits creating new states, conflicts of minorities struggling against oppression.

The change in the nature of conflicts that are increasingly non-state, internal and international terrorism.

A world that has experienced scientific and technological developments, the size and speed of which are probably unique in history and affect time and space and where medicine, biology and social sciences have made rapid progress.

These changes, in particular geopolitical ones, were reflected in the composition of the WVF, which now has member associations in 93 countries on 5 continents, former allies and former enemies. It was also pleased to welcome the Blue Berets associations that represent one of the wishes of the WVF: to put armed forces at the service of peace.

The WVF thus represents a wide array including all categories of veterans, prisoners, POWs whatever their origin, their religion, their philosophy, their beliefs.

In this constantly changing world, the first concern of the WVF was to allow disabled veterans to be reintegrated into their communities as full-citizen with the same potential and the same responsibilities as all other citizens. In this, the WVF opened a new path, based on medical and technological advances to develop residual skills and minimize disability. It should be stressed that these advances have benefited all of the disabled.

WVF was also among the first in the late 50s to worry about psychological problems, the invisible injuries, an area in which the research and exchange of experience which the WVF has contributed to has led to Governments taking into account Post Traumatic Stress Disorders and the socio-psychological consequences of war.

In order for the various measures be materialized, it is necessary that they are integrated into legislation. The WVF has therefore held 7 international conferences on legislation concerning veterans and victims of war. Their originality lay in the uniting during these conferences of representatives of governments and members of associations. Discussions based on the confrontation of government constraints, particular budgetary ones, with the legitimate needs of Veterans enabled significant

progress to be made, once again through exchange of experience and joint consideration of proposals, to make significant progress. The repetition of these conferences indicates the desire to follow scientific and technological developments.

"None can speak more eloquently for peace than those who have fought in war," Thus begins the Credo of the WVF, written when it was founded by then Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations and Nobel Peace Prize winner Ralph Bunche.

WVF, deeply committed to the United Nations Charter, which opens the preamble to its constitution, has always believed that the principles and provisions of the charter to which the 193 UN members have committed and of the institutionalization of international relations in the framework of the UN and its various agencies, most of which the WVF has consultative status with , offered the world the possibilities of resolving conflicts through peaceful negotiations.

Regarding the WVF, its statutory meetings or conferences and thematic or regional meetings have had as their main objectives:

- To allow member associations to exchange views on existing disputes to find a common position, which can contribute avoiding aggravation of the dispute and to achieving a peaceful solution.

A particularly significant example in this respect was the organization in November 1971 in Rome of a conference, for the first time, during the Cold War, of veterans of eastern, western southern and northern Europe. "the Rome appeal", adopted unanimously by the Conference, was widely reflected in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed by the governments in Helsinki on 1 August 1975 .

- To examine and make joint proposals regarding the establishment of peace in the broad sense, i.e. not only by the silencing of arms, but also by encouraging measures for disarmament, including encouraging progress in the quality of life as well as appealing and fighting against underdevelopment and poverty, and for the respect of human rights everywhere and by all. Many of these proposals have been translated into reality.

One of the important points in the WVF's activities has been its ongoing collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross for the Development of International Humanitarian Law, of which veterans are in some ways the users, but which also protects civilian populations that are, by far, the main victims of conflicts. A joint study group thus drafted a provision concerning non-uniformed combatants that was included in Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions.

In concluding this succinct yet lengthy presentation of the WVF activities, it should be noted that through its composition and with its experience of these 65 years, it must continue to contribute to make this world where computer calculators can perform millions of billions of operations per second, where we are preparing to send men to Mars, but where irresponsibility, lack of conscience and barbarism remain in armed conflict and international terrorism, so that the world may know peace, solidarity and respect for law.

Serge Wourgaft