

Report from the ARC•PEACE meeting in Barcelona 17 April 2008

The meeting was held at the University of Catalunya, and hosted by ASF-Spain. The meeting was attended by 14 members from 11 countries plus some observers from ASF-International.

Jordi Balari – International officer of ASF-Espana and chairman of ASF-International – welcomed everybody to Barcelona and to the ARC•PEACE meeting. *Dick Urban Vestbro* – Co-Chair of ARC•PEACE – welcomed all present and expressed gratitude to Jordi Balari and ASF-Espana for generously hosting the meeting. He then formally opened the meeting, which is the 15th since ARC•PEACE was founded.

Dick Urban Vestbro made a short presentation about ARC•PEACE, including details about the founding meeting in 1987; the importance of the nuclear arms threat; the main ideas behind the ARC•PEACE Charter; a list of the previous 14 ARC•PEACE conferences; a short presentation of former and new members; how ARC•PEACE became an NGO of consultative status to the UN, and examples of activities of members.

General discussion on the role of ARC•PEACE

Each participant introduced her/himself and his organisation. Dick Urban Vestbro referred to printed reports from Cuba Solar, ARC•PEACE Sudan, SGR of UK and the Centre for Architecture & Human Rights (CAHR, Bangkok). A report from the Stockholm Co-Chair for the period 2004-2008 had been sent out in advance to all members, and was also distributed to the participants. Dick Urban Vestbro presented the report orally.

The participants engaged in a discussion about the four main aims of our organisation in the light of assessments made of global economic and political changes. Among other things it was pointed out that the threat of nuclear war is as much present as it was in 1987, when ARC•PEACE was founded; that professional commitment to housing the poor is more urgent than ever, and that architects and planners often do not take sustainable development seriously. It was pointed out that the issue of disaster management deserves a more prominent place among ARC•PEACE activities, and also that we should engage in the removal of remaining mines in war zones, perhaps in collaboration with International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms.

Administrative affairs

The most recent list of members was distributed. It shows that ARC•PEACE has ten organisation members and another 20 individual members. The meeting discussed how to arrange for a more even distribution of tasks for the coming period. Dick Urban Vestbro announced his intention to step down as Co-Chair, while remaining Secretary if the meeting so wishes. He proposed that a leadership group be composed consisting of Co-Chairs, perhaps a Vice-Chair and a Treasurer. It was decided to elect Bijayanand Misra as new Co-Chair, Osman El Kheir as either Co-chair or Vice-Chair (depending on the answer of Luz Maria Sanchez whether she will remain Co-Chair or not), Mewahib Yagoub Mohamed as new Treasurer, and Dick Urban Vestbro as Secretary. It was decided that the four mentioned functionaries be referred to as *the Executive Committee*.

The present Charter was revised in June 2000. It comprises both the political platform and the statutes of ARC•PEACE. The document is only 1,5 pages, i.e. considerably smaller than statutes of organisations similar to ours. It was decided to commission Bijay Misra, Osman El Kheir, Norio Okada and Dick Urban Vestbro to review the present Charter.

It was noted that ARC-PEACE does not have a work plan for the coming period. Bijay Misra proposed that such a plan be worked out by a group consisting of the Co/Vice-Chairs and the Secretary and sent out for email decision within the coming 6 months. It was decided according to the proposal. It was proposed that a special working groups be composed, for instance for support to the UN representative; for fund-raising; for upgrading of informal settlements etc. Time did not allow further discussion on this issue.

Website, newsletter

It was noted with thanks that ARC•PEACE Sudan had established the new ARC•PEACE website that they had paid for the web host. Special thanks were directed to *Elisa Ceria* for designing the new website, and to *Munzer Maali*, who has managed the website excellently since the start.

It was noted that rotating responsibility for the newsletter has been working fairly well during the last year. Bijay Misra offered to be the editor of the next issue. This was accepted. It was decided that attempts be made to continue with the rotating responsibility, and that the new ExCom is to make a scheme for such a rotating editorship. It was decided that special issues of the newsletter be issued in Arabic, Russian, Spanish etc (depending on willing editor/translator).

Our work in the United Nations

Our UN representative Branislava Saveljic-Balac distributed a report about her activities during the period she had been in charge (since 1 January 2007). She also reported orally. She has been present at all major events within the ECOSOC (economic and social affairs + environment & human rights). She also serves as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Human Settlements. For the coming period Dr Saveljic-Balac suggests that ARC•PEACE participates in an event on Water and Sanitation in May, and in the World Urban Forum in Nanjing in October 2008.

End of meeting

The Chairman Bijay Misra closed the meeting and thanked everybody for their contributions.

The meeting was followed by a full day's seminar with the title: "*Are architects and planners obstacles to enabling housing strategies in low-income countries?*". The seminar day also included presentations of design and planning projects in Japan, Croatia, Sudan, Uganda and Latin America.

Dick Urban Vestbro