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Federation Internationale des Associations Medicales Catholiques (FIAMC) Secretary-General's Report (February, 1978-September, 1982)

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Federation Internationale des Associations Medicales Catholiques (FIAMC)

Secretary-General's Report

(February, 1978 — September, 1982)

Introduction

It is indeed a pleasure for me to report to the general assembly meeting in the Eternal City — Rome, on Oct. 3, 1982. The last occasion when we met was Jan. 31, 1978, in the city of Bombay, India. We now meet again some four years and eight months later to review the happenings in FIAMC over the period of February, 1978—September, 1982.

The first year under review was indeed a memorable one because we lived through the experience of having had three supreme pontiffs. The executive committee of FIAMC had at that time recorded its sorrow at the passing away of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI and His Holiness, Pope John Paul I, followed a little later by His Eminence, Jean Cardinal Villot. It was in the same year that we hailed the election of Pope John Paul II and expressed our filial devotion to him. Those of us attending this meeting are privileged as His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, will not only be addressing our delegates but will also be attending one of our sessions. On behalf of the executive committee of FIAMC, I take this opportunity of thanking His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, for the very considerable support that has been initiated by His Holiness and provided to us through the good offices of His Eminence, Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, Secretary of State; His Excellency, Archbishop E. Martinez; the Pius XII Foundation; the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"; and the Pontifical Council of the Laity.

We feel certain that without this assistance, we in FIAMC would only be floundering.

At this stage I would like to refer to the sad and tragic death of Prof. Mariano Alimurung in November, 1980, while he was visiting the U.S.A. It was a very sad end for Prof. Alimurung who, over many

decades, worked hard for the organization and development of Catholic physicians in different parts of the world, particularly in Asia. As is well known, Prof. Alimurung was an honorary president of FIAMC as well as of our Asian regional federation. We shall certainly miss Prof. Alimurung. Our sympathies have been extended to his wife, Mrs. (Dr.) Alimurung and her family and we pray that God will grant him eternal rest which he so rightly deserves.

The question has often been asked as to what are the activities of FIAMC. Unfortunately, it is little appreciated that the major activities of FIAMC are really evident in the various countries where member federations hold meetings, conduct seminars, perform charitable medical work, counsel patients, participate in preventive health care and publish bulletins and papers. Moreover, FIAMC is also active in different continental regions where members meet at four yearly intervals to discuss vital topics of particular relevance to them. This is true of Europe and Asia, but it is hoped that in future such meetings will also be held in North America, Oceania, Africa and Latin America. With these few comments I should now like to turn to the activities of the executive committee of FIAMC itself for the period under review.

Executive Committee

Following the election of the office bearers by the general assembly in 1978, and on receipt of the various nominations from the Holy See and the regional federations, the following was the composition of the executive committee of FIAMC.

President	Dr. Gino G. Papola
Secretary-General . .	Dr. Chicot J. Vas
Treasurer	Dr. T. P. Linehan
Ecclesiastical Advisor	Msgr. Dino Lorenzetti
Asst. Sec.-General . .	Dr. J. Massons
Assistant Treasurer .	Dr. J. Kluyskens
North America	Dr. C. Bauda (U.S.A.), vice-president Dr. Karl Reese (Canada), member
Europe	Prof. J. Lereboullet (France), vice-president Dr. Ch. de Ghelders (Belgium), member
Asia	Dr. Remedios G. Arellana (Philippines), v.-pres. Dr. Jea Ho Kim (Korea), member
Oceania	Dr. C. T. Collins (New Zealand), vice-president Dr. Bryan Curtin (Australia), member
Africa	Dr. Joan Lamplugh (Zimbabwe), vice-president Dr. Susan De Graft Johnson (Ghana), unofficial member

As required by the FIAMC statutes, the executive committee met yearly as follows:

- 1978 Bombay
- 1979 Denmark
- 1980 Chicago, U.S.A.
- 1981 and 1982 . . Rome, Italy

Representation

The executive committee was represented at various meetings held in different parts of the world by members of the executive committee as shown below:

- 1979 Dr. T. P. Linehan, treasurer, represented FIAMC at the 25th anniversary celebrations of the New Zealand Guild of Catholic Doctors.
- 1980 The president, Dr. Gino G. Papola, attended the European regional congress in Brussels as a representative of FIAMC.
- 1980 The secretary-general, Dr. C. J. Vas, represented FIAMC at the Asian regional congress in Seoul, Korea.
- 1981 Dr. J. Kluyskens, assistant treasurer, attended the World Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Pharmacists (FIPC) on behalf of FIAMC.
- 1982 Dr. Bryan Curtin attended the World Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Nurses (CICIAMS) on behalf of FIAMC.

XV FIAMC World Congress

The executive committee, together with the executive committee of the Associazione Medici Cattolici Italiani (A.M.C.I.) which kindly agreed to host this XV FIAMC Congress, has worked hard over the past years to make this meeting a valuable and memorable occasion. As is well known, the theme of this Congress is "The Physician in the Service of Life."

At this stage, little need be reported about this meeting which is yet in progress.

Bulletin

The FIAMC Bulletin continued to appear twice a year over the last four-year period which is being reviewed. It has been the endeavor of the secretary-general to make it attractive and informative but, as happens on occasion, there is a dearth of information. Fellow delegates

are requested to ensure that news of their member federations is submitted at regular intervals to the secretary-general, so that the Bulletin can be made even more informative and enjoyable.

Logo

It is of interest that despite the fact that 14 Congresses of FIAMC have been held, we did not have a symbol or logo that would represent FIAMC. The executive committee and secretary-general have considered this for some time and I am glad to report that FIAMC at last has a logo which is shown on the front page of this report.

Scientists' Exchange

The statutes of FIAMC contain the hope that Catholic scientists from different parts of the world will communicate and assist one another in the exercise of their profession. The secretary-general was happy to initiate this activity some two years ago when a British physician spent two months working in urban and rural India, educating family doctors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists in the rehabilitation of hemiplegic patients. Our Japanese members in 1980 offered to assist by arranging for the training of pediatricians interested in the care of neonates and low birth weight infants. Member federations are again requested to consider how this activity could be enhanced so that Catholic physicians in different parts of the world can travel and acquire experience in different countries. Under this scheme it is expected that the funds for travel will be procured by the candidates themselves, but their stay and training in the host countries will be provided for them.

Journal Exchange

The secretary-general has been in frequent touch with many fledgling organizations of Catholic doctors and also older established groups in FIAMC. The view has often been expressed that it would be immensely profitable for member federations to exchange copies of their publications such as newspapers, bulletins or journals. This activity has been started in the past year in a small way and it is hoped that it will continue to progress.

Pope John XXI Prize

It is heartening to note that the Portuguese Federation has once again revived the Pope John XXI Prize for the best paper in deontology and hopefully it will be awarded at this XV FIAMC Congress.

Statute Amendments

The members of the executive committee had been aware for some time that the statutes of FIAMC were in need of amendment by way of clarification and codification. This task was allotted to Dr. C. Bauda, who presented the amendments to the executive committee. After some discussion by the members of the executive committee and representatives of some other federations, the statutes have now been submitted for discussion and approval, if found fit by the general assembly meeting today.

International Relations

The secretary-general has maintained useful contacts and relationships with the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum," the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Pontifical Council for Mission Aid and Caritas Internationalis. It must be placed on record that the executive committee of FIAMC is exceedingly grateful for the very considerable aid provided by these Pontifical Councils in the conduct of our activities over the past four years. The secretary-general had also been invited to participate in a workshop meeting of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" in June, 1981, which studied in great depth the subject of "Christ, the Church and Healing."

Contact has also been maintained with the Organization of International Catholic Associations, the International Federation of Catholic Pharmacists (FIPC), the International Catholic Nurses Association (CICIAMs) and the International Catholic Child Bureau. The latter organization intends to conduct in the near future an international program for the "Care of Destitute Children." It is hoped that members of FIAMC will participate in this program when the activities are planned for implementation in their various countries.

Our contact has also been maintained, albeit meager, with Pax Romana.

FIAMC Extension and New Members

The secretary-general was advised by the executive committee to continue working for the extension of FIAMC activities in all parts of the world. Contacts have been established with Catholic doctors and associations working in different areas of Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and eastern Europe.

I am happy to report at this meeting that Argentina, Hong Kong and Ghana have sought membership of FIAMC. Sri Lanka and Ireland have requested revival of their former membership of FIAMC. It is probable that by the time of this meeting, Zambia and Burma may also seek membership. Extension of FIAMC and establishment of

closer contacts in the different continents will, of course, continue, but certain difficulties which we must consider are faced by Catholic doctors:

- 1) Catholic doctors living and working in various countries, especially Islamic states, find it difficult to associate themselves in legally constituted bodies because of local conditions. The secretary-general discussed these matters some two years ago while visiting one of the countries in the Middle East where it was suggested that a large organization should be founded in a suitable country where Catholic doctors in different Islamic countries may meet from time to time and also be officially represented in FIAMC. This matter is still under discussion. We are grateful to His Eminence, Wladislaw Cardinal Rubin, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches in the Holy See, for assistance in trying to solve this problem.
- 2) Another difficulty faced in some small countries of Africa and Asia refers to the fact that an association of doctors of any religious affiliation is considered suspicious and not in the mainstream of the national life of a country. In such cases, Catholics find it difficult to form legally constituted bodies. As a result they cannot be admitted into FIAMC.
- 3) In certain countries the number of Catholic doctors is exceedingly small and they find it difficult to federate themselves and seek membership of FIAMC. Therefore, they are deprived of an official association with FIAMC, but what is more important is the fact that FIAMC does not have national affiliates in such countries. This causes some difficulty, as the membership of FIAMC, therefore, remains restricted and prevents recognition of FIAMC by other international bodies because it does not represent Catholic physicians all over the world. This restriction of membership will probably present an obstacle to FIAMC when it officially seeks membership of international organizations, such as WHO and others where FIAMC must have a visible presence.

Members are requested to consider these matters and permit the executive committee of the future to deal with such issues liberally and not rigidly, because of a necessity to comply with FIAMC statutes. Such a step will enable Catholic doctors in different parts of the world to be associated officially with FIAMC.

FIAMC Bio-Medical Ethics Centre

The secretary-general proposed in 1979 that a Bio-Medical Ethics Centre be founded by FIAMC in pursuance of its aims and objectives as there was a great need for such a center.

The executive committee in 1979, having considered this proposal,

empowered the secretary-general to investigate the possibility of establishing such a center for a start in an English-speaking country. In 1980 it was reported that a center of the type envisaged could not be founded by FIAMC in the English-speaking countries of Europe and North America. At that time the treasurer, Dr. T. P. Linehan, suggested to the undersigned at an informal meeting in London that the center be established, if possible, in India.

A proposal was, therefore, submitted to the executive committee for the establishment of a FIAMC Bio-Medical Ethics Centre in Bombay, India, through the courtesy and assistance of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and Dr. Simon I. Pimenta, the archbishop of Bombay. This proposal was adopted by the executive committee in September, 1980. Thereafter, rapid progress was made and the FIAMC Bio-Medical Ethics Centre (FBMEC) was established on Sept. 8, 1981, at the St. Pius X College in North Bombay, through the munificence of His Grace, Archbishop Simon I. Pimenta, who was exceedingly keen that this project be implemented as a service to the international community of Catholic doctors.

Since the foundation of the FBMEC on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, the Centre has been physically established through donations collected in India and has commenced work. We have been fortunate in obtaining the full-time services of a medically qualified priest, Dr. Joseph A. Menezes, S.J., of the Bombay province, who is a resident at St. Pius X College. It is hoped that Fr. Menezes will be attending the XV FIAMC Congress so that our member federations and delegates will be able to establish contact with him, inform him of their requirements and provide advice as well. The Holy See, through the Pius XII Foundation, has seen fit to support the Centre by means of encouragement and grants.

The following program of action has been undertaken by the FBMEC:

It may be recalled that the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" had requested the executive committee of FIAMC meeting in Rome in September, 1981, to draft a brief Code of Ethics for the Catholic Doctor, as none existed, despite a voluminous amount of literature on this subject being available. At that time the executive committee resolved that it would assist in this matter and the project was taken up by the FBMEC. We are pleased to report that the draft has been completed and circulated to all member federations for their comments in the hope that these would be received by the time of this meeting. The FBMEC has set itself the target of submitting a final draft "Code" to the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" by the end of December, 1982. This may, however, be extended by three months.

The FBMEC has also corresponded with all member federations of FIAMC and other countries as well, inquiring about prevailing

trends in regard to euthanasia. Twelve members have so far replied and a composite document on euthanasia prepared in yet another country has been obtained.

The FBMEC has also commenced a detailed study on euthanasia in the oriental context, and a project for eliciting the opinions of the public has been commenced in India with a view to countering the "avant-garde" tendencies that have been noted in the last two years.

The FBMEC has also commenced working on the production of a set of lectures or correspondence-type of material, that may be sent to medical students or doctors in any part of the world requiring information on medical ethics. It is hoped that these papers will present the Catholic viewpoint but approach it from a non-denominational angle.

The FBMEC has also started circulating to member federations material culled from the Holy See and papal documents which refer to matters of health and medical ethics.

The staff of the FBMEC is now contemplating whether it would be possible and worthwhile to collate all the various papal doctrinal statements concerning health and medical ethics issued by the last three pontiffs. A final decision in this matter has not yet been taken, as consultations with the Holy See will be necessary.

Acknowledgements

In conclusion, I wish to place on record my gratitude and indebtedness to the president, Dr. Gino G. Papola; the treasurer, Dr. T. P. Linehan; the ecclesiastical advisor, Msgr. Dino Lorenzetti; and all the members of the executive committee who have assisted me considerably during the last four years. Whatever good may have been done was largely due to the assistance of my colleagues, but the deficiencies and shortcomings are entirely mine. I crave the indulgence of fellow delegates in this matter.

I should like to make a special mention of our president, Dr. Gino G. Papola, who has advised and assisted me in great measure over the last eight years of his presidency during which time I was treasurer for four years (1974-1978) and secretary-general from 1978 to the present time. I am quite certain in my own mind that were it not for Dr. Papola, my own activities would not have been so fruitful. Fellow delegates will realize, now and in time, how much Dr. Papola has contributed to FIAMC. I hope and trust that he will be significantly rewarded for this and that he will, like his predecessors, continue to be with us as a worthy honorary president.

— C. J. Vas
Secretary-General