



REPORT 2001/2005 **OF THE INTERNATIONAL TEAM**

REPORT OF THE REGION OF EUROPE AND FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA **DISPLAYED BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MLC** **IN 4TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING (JULY 2005 - BORDEAUX, FRANCE)**

My regional report is based on these last four years, but I know that in many things I am going to talk about, the eight years in which I have had the responsibility to represent the region of Europe and French speaking Africa will be present. I am going to speak about issues not strictly regional, since the International Team decided I was going to coordinate or lead some other issues.

FRENCH SPEAKING AFRICA

In the regional report carried out in Philadelphia in 2001, I aimed, according to my opinion, the main steps to be taken during the following four years. In it, it was said:

- a. To give priority to communication and relation to Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo since it had been impossible to do it during the previous years;
- b. To date the African Regional Encounter and celebrate it; since we had tried to do so but we had to suspend it.
- c. To establish a reflection on the possibility of constituting in 2005 the African Region with a Regional Responsible in the International Team:
 - About getting in touch with the Democratic Republic of Congo and with the Congo, we finally got the name and e-mail address of the person who was going to be our contact. Something apparently as easier as that, it has meant for seven years not knowing if there were any MLC at all in these countries and if so in what situation, besides not knowing if they were receiving the information of the international field. The preparation of the international encounter and the contribution of the responsible of Togo and Ivory Coast on discovering who was the person to contact, have been finally what it has permitted that from a year ago there is a fluent communication within these countries.
 - About the second point, the regional encounter of Africa was finally celebrated in Abidján from the 9th to the 14th of August 2003 with the presence of four of the seven countries, both French and English speaking. The motto of the encounter was "To Be missionary of Mary", and each participating country took charge of preparing a block of the encounter.
 - This Inter-African encounter was the time to present openly the possibility of a new region in the international organization: the African. The international team exposed the reasons why we saw it necessary and the proposal was listened with interest by all the participants to the encounter. In fact, in this encounter, the national responsible of Africa will request to the International Assembly the creation of this new region with their representative in the international team.

EUROPE

The MLC of Europe are very diverse and the reality of each country has different characteristics in some questions. We have been able to observe this reality mainly in the regional encounters celebrated up to now.

One of the main difficulties that impede the development of the communities in some countries is the difficulty to transmit the project of the MLC to the youths. Nevertheless, the MLC of Europe, in general, count on organizing resources, of formation, of communication and of encounter among the privileged national communities.

On the other hand, the idiomatic factor influences powerfully in the real possibility to establish fluent relations among the European countries: there are four languages spoken apart from English (considered as one of the official languages) for the seven countries that belong to the European region. Besides, if some day there were MLC in Chekia, Poland and Albania, countries where the marianist presence already exists, each one of these countries would contribute with its own language.



On the missionary field, there are powerful calls in Europe. As it was concluded in the last European encounter: the youths, the immigrants, as well as the fight by the human rights are missionary action environments that nowadays call to our doors.

Nevertheless, it has been very difficult to me to value the importance of the international reality in the life of the European communities. I consider sincerely that there is a lot of things to do on transmission, listening and dialogue with the communities about the international issues and their value. In fact, in this period of regional representation, my visit has been requested only in two national encounters and in a meeting of leaders of MLC of another national organization. I consider that the fact of speaking only Spanish and needing a translator in the rest of the countries might have influenced on the scarce number of visits that the countries have requested from me.

About the visiting of the members of the International Team, an aspect we should improve is the organization and planning of these. It is very important to have the opportunity to establish a dialogue with the people and for this to happen, it is necessary to find the time, the space and the appropriate number of people. In some occasions, the visits, according to my opinion, have been reduced to be a listener of a national encounter and, in some occasions, I had fifteen minutes to speak without possibility for open dialogue. Therefore, I consider that it is not possible to develop a leadership work as it is asked to a member of the international team when he is visiting a country.

Because of this, for future visits, I believe that we should plan specific moments to treat the international issue and, perhaps, the best moment is not always a national encounter, where there are many issues of national interest to be treated. In any case, the national encounters with a privileged space so that the international representatives may know the reality of the national MLC.

As for the leadership, in the European regional encounter at Pallanza, I was urged to create a group of support. Nevertheless, and after a subsequent consultation on this issue to the national responsible, answered by a scarce number of them, I have to say I did not do it since I considered that it was going to be a lot greater the effort to find the people, to give them functions and to coordinate them than the volume of actions that the countries demanded and were open to carry out prompted by the conclusions of the European encounter, by the organization and the international team or their regional representative.

In any case, and not in a strictly regional form, there has been different people that have collaborated actively with some of the functions required to the regional representative, whether in tasks of translation, commission of twinning, preparation of regional encounters and organization of the international encounter. All of them have been volunteers, with the generosity and limitations that this means.

TWINNINGS

This international team decided, as the previous one did, to prompt the project of the twinning in answer to one of the challenges, which referred to knowledge and the interrelation among MLC of the world.

During this period a commission composed by three people was created to be responsible for:

- To inform all the countries on this project.
- To lead its beginning.
- To collect the requests of communities interested in participating.
- To contact one community with the other to start a twinning
- And to collect the information yearly of the march of the twinning carried out.

The commission named has been composed of three people, one of each official tongue:

- Isabella Moyer, from Canada.
- Jean-Marc Meriaux, from France.
- Ada Claux, from Peru.

It has been verified that this project stirs up the interest in many places. At the moment there are eight twinning carried out, although there are some more communities that have requested to be twinned. About this issue of twinning, we will have time to listen to Isabella Moyer in the name of the members



of the commission responsible for this project.

ORGANIZATION OF THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING

Since a year ago, my main dedication has been the organization of this international meeting in constant collaboration with both the rest of the international team and the organizing team from France, through its coordinator.

It has been a very intense work for all and at times really complicated. Nevertheless, this type of situations shows the force, the courage and the generosity of many people of our MLC.

The MLC of Africa and, especially of Ivory Coast, that have been willing to exceed the painful moment of changing the headquarters of this meeting and respond to Bordeaux.

The MLC of France that accepted with availability to be the new headquarters, in spite of the urgency with which we had to work in some issues. I would like to emphasize the great effort carried out for surpassing all the procedures and difficulties that the embassies and consulates have placed so that members of some countries can be here today.

The MLC of Peru that accepted hopefully to be the responsible for initiating the process of elaboration of the document of Mary and their prior work before this meeting.

The MLC of various countries that have contributed with economic extras to permit all who should be in this meeting would not be stopped to do so for economic problems.

It is in these hard moments of the international marianist lay life, when we can observe clearly the force and generosity of our MLC, and at the same time, their large limitations:

- We are, in most cases, voluntary and not experts. We have to develop actions for which we have not been formed previously or we have not enough experience.
- We develop these activities reducing time to other very important situations for our life: family, work, friendships, time of leisure, etc.
- And nevertheless, the spirit blows and things move forward, although, to tell the truth, any multinational business would be willing to include unskilled workers who work when the rest of their priority activities may permit it.

From my point of view, I think that before betting on what we want, we have to know what we are willing to offer. We have followed a path during these twelve years of international organization. It has been good and fruitful. But if we want more quality or quantity, I think that before saying so we should reflect on our resources and possibilities. We can no longer let us go only by good desires of an international assembly or by the best of intentions of those who accept a responsibility and that in certain sense can surpass their real possibilities.

ECONOMY

And the following is also directly connected with the financial participation of the MLC in the world.

- We say that international meetings are good, as well as regional meetings, the visits to the countries of the members of the international team, the participation in the World Council of the Marianist Family and in its activities, etc.
- We want the documents to be made in time and translated with quality into the three languages.
- We don't want any member of our MLC to lose the time they need to share with their family, or the money they fail to make when they are called by the responsibility with our communities.
- We want the MLC to have more public, ecclesial and social presence, since we are persuaded that our Marian church model has a lot to contribute to this world.
- And we know, even if we sometimes don't want to see it, that any activity, meeting, project or trip entails a certain expense.
- So I wonder now: Are we to keep on asking for money to the Society of Mary to cover certain expenses, or are we to give up on certain activities when there are no financial possibilities to carry them out?



- I also wonder: Is the financial participation of the countries, according to the criterion agreed upon, a necessary condition to belong to the international organization, or is it a voluntary decision of each country?

PROPOSAL OF A “RESPONSIBLE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS” IN THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Finally, I would like to make a proposal that mostly affects the countries with a higher number of members.

The awareness of the international reality has considerably grown in all countries. And at the same time, there are still some essential doubts in many members as to the need of this organization and as to some of its activities.

In any case, we have the feeling that the international issue is sometimes distant from the life of the communities, either because of lack of information, of interest in knowing about it, or because of the urge of other issues at the local or national level.

At the national level, the national responsible is the contact person with the international team and is in charge of keeping the local communities informed. However, I have seen that this person is also overwhelmed with national responsibilities.

As a consequence, many times the international aspect is left aside for a final discussion, and so, it never becomes sufficiently important so that the rest of the members may become aware of this importance.

Therefore, I believe that it may be a good idea that at the national level, somebody may be appointed to cooperate with the national responsible with issues concerning international affairs. This person would be in charge of working on and reminding others of the international commitments and challenges that affect their countries, as well as of encouraging the members of their countries to become aware of this reality and to participate in it within their possibilities.

This person would then be in contact both with the regional responsible and with the national responsible, which does not deny the important relationship that there should be between the two.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude:

- Thank you very much for the people I met these years and for the many realities of our MLC and of our Marianist Family that I could witness to.
- Thank you very much to the people that I had the privilege to work with and keep in touch with: national responsables, national council secretaries, translators, organizers and assistants in the different regional and international meetings, twinning commission, presidents of national councils of the Marianist family and members of the World Council of the Marianist Family, as well as other people and groups that I may not be mentioning at the moment.
- Thank you very much to the members of the international team. This team has been for me a great working team as well as an intimate Marianist lay community in many moments.



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REGIONAL RESPONSIBLE OF EUROPE AND FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA
INTERNATIONAL TEAM
MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITIES