

## **Minutes of ICOH National Secretaries Meeting**

held in Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, Lodz, Poland on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2004

### **Participants:**

Ruddy Facci – ICOH Vice-President  
Timo Leino – Finnish NS  
Theodore Bazas – Greek NS  
Dariusz Kluszczyński – Polish NS

### **Phone connected:**

Jorge Morales – Mexican NS

### **Invited guests:**

Konrad Rydzyński – Director General of NIOM  
Jerzy Kopias – Head of Health Care Organization Department, NIOM

### **Technical means:**

dissemination of video and voice as life-stream in ram format (RealPlayer);  
phone line available.

The meeting followed the attached Agenda (attach. 1) and began with the Welcome of Ruddy Facci. Next, Director General of NIOM, Prof. Konrad Rydzyński presented the general information on the host institution – NIOM (attach. 2). Director K. Rydzyński raised the absence of Polish ICOH members in ICOH bodies.

After the short discussion on the role of NIOM between R. Facci and K. Rydzyński, the participants' presentations began.

Presentation of Theodore Bazas (attach. 3) – general question: election or selection of ICOH NS. T. Bazas was opting for the selection. R. Facci and D. Kluszczyński were opting for election. T. Leino presented the “flexible option”, i.e. to allow the selection of NS in a case of small or new national groups.

Presentation of Dariusz Kluszczyński (attach. 4) – the term “radiation” means ionising radiation too. Radiation and Work SC should have the representation of the ionising radiation professionals. R. Facci will transfer this suggestion to Alain Cantineau.

Presentation of Timo Leino – the important role of SC. The important role of internet while the distribution of information is needed. Information on the meeting of Finnish ICOH group in Helsinki was presented.

Presentation of Ruddy Facci – the list of ICOH meetings was presented. The important role of Africa Region was pointed out. Next, the list of NS was presented. It was stressed that NS are requested to increase the number of ICOH members in good standing by 25% till the end of 2004. T. Bazas noticed that the name of Macedonia is wrong according to the international standards. It was the suggestion to promote national ICOH web pages too.

When the discussion finished, the presentation of J. Kopias was presented (attach. 5).

After the break, the Meeting participants visited selected Departments of NIOM (Radiation Protection, Chemical Hazard, Environmental Health Hazards and Toxicology and Carcinogenesis).

When the visit was finished, the discussion on the role of ICOH NS and ICOH itself was continued.

Timo Leino was asked if the next NS Meeting might be organised in January in Helsinki during International Conference on Occupational Health Services 2005. T. Leino agreed to the proposal.

T. Bazas bring up the question of the selection of chairmen and chairwomen during the ICOH congresses. He proposed that as many as possible NS should be chosen as chairs. Because the decision belongs to the events' organizers, ICOH will send this suggestion to the Milan-2006 organizers.

R. Facci suggests organising of the next European Region NS Meeting in the middle of Europe in the second-half of 2005. The proposition of the location of the Meeting is the consequence of the small number of meetings' participants.

There was the discussion on the form (printed or electronic) of the leaflets and other informative materials. Majority agreed with the spreading docs in the electronic way, as it is the low-cost channel.

All agreed that the names of NS would be included into the official ICOH presentation.

It was agreed that the application form should contain the member professional activity and his or her scientific interests.

R. Facci= the benefits of being the ICOH members (i.e.: professional organisation, available papers, reduction of selected participant's fees).

Again the discussion on the election/selection problem began. All agreed that NS should be ethic and represent good standards. The consensus seems to be: the ICOH Board should approve all NS candidates and next they should be elected (exemptions(?): new countries, small national group). R. Facci was obliged to transfer to the Board the following proposal:

Bazas's proposal = ICOH should ask all its members for the opinion if ICOH NS should be elected or selected. The results should be made available to all ICOH members.

At the end of the Meeting contacted us Jorge Morales, Mexican NS. He presented Monterey as next (2012) place of ICOH Congress.

And finally R. Facci said goodbye to all participants and he closed the Meeting.

**ATTACHMENT 1**

<b>Final agenda ICOH NS Meeting</b> September 25 , 2004 (Saturday)			
	beginning time	duration	additional info
registration	08:45	00:15	
Welcome (ICOH) – R. Facci	<b>09:00</b>	00:30	broadcast
Welcome (Poland) – Prof. K. Rydzynski – Director of NIOM	09:30	00:30	broadcast
Participants' presentation	10:00	00:30	broadcast
News from ICOH – R. Facci	10:30	00:30	broadcast
café	11:00	00:15	
OH in Poland - J. Kopias	11:15	00:30	broadcast
Discussion: ICOH NS "Rules" (election, period, role) – all	11:45	01:30	broadcast
lunch	13:15	01:00	
Visit / tour: Nofer Institute - D. Kluszczynski	14:15	01:00	
NS activities / goals - R. Facci	15:15	00:30	broadcast
NS Agenda 2004 – 2006 - R. Facci	15:45	00:30	broadcast
Others – all	16:15	00:40	broadcast
End of the meeting - R. Facci	16:55	00:05	broadcast
<b>FINISH</b>	<b>17:00</b>		

**ATTACHMENT 2**

## ATTACHMENT 3

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ( ICOH )  
NATIONAL SECRETARIES [NSs] PREFERRABLY SELECTED THAN ELECTED

DISCUSSION PAPER FOR THE SEPTEMBER 2004 MEETING OF THE  
EUROPEAN REGION ICOH NATIONAL SECRETARIES'

By Dr Theodore Bazas, DMed, MD, MScOccMed(London), DIH(Eng), MFOM(RCP,  
London)

National Secretary of the ICOH for Greece,

Member of the Committee of Occupational Medicine of the Central Council of Health  
of the Greek Ministry of Health and Welfare

### THE QUESTION

At present, there are 56 International Commission on Occupational Health ( ICOH) National Secretaries ( NSs) nominated every three years by one of the two ICOH Vice Presidents. According to ICOH Bye-Law 15 of 1990," ICOH Members may elect a NS who is then approved by the President. If no National Organization exists, and if special reasons so require, the President can nominate a Secretary after consultation with Members of the ICOH of the country in question. The NS shall stay in close liaison with the Secretary-General and keep him informed on events within the nation."

Preliminary discussions about whether and how ICOH NSs would be selected or elected took place at the latest NSs' Meeting on 27 February 2003, at Iguassu Falls, Brazil, during the 27th International Congress on Occupational Health. To answer these questions in adequate detail, the optimum role and tasks to be performed by future incumbents and the matching professional profiles need to be considered. My proposals on these topics are as follows.

## NSs' TASKS

ICOH, in its dual capacity as a scientific and a professional society, coordinates and stimulates the production and dissemination of knowledge in 93 countries. A NS has a relevant leading role to play in strengthening ICOH , by assisting it to promote occupational health (OH)-related activities in a country. In my experience, if he (or she) is to achieve these goals, he (or she) must be expected to do the following :

(1) to adequately present ICOH to individual OH professionals, academic, governmental and private organizations, so that individual and group ICOH membership increases;

(2) to organize local meetings among ICOH members, and to facilitate local scientific meetings and conferences on specific themes;

(3) to stimulate national educational, research, administrative and legislative activities pertaining to OH;

(4) to provide information and reports, and to offer suggestions to the ICOH President, Officers, and the Chairpersons of ICOH Scientific Committees on national state of affairs, developments and events in relation to OH;

(5) to periodically submit a Report on the State of Occupational Health in the country for which he/she is the ICOH National Secretary to the ICOH President, by the end of the first year of each triennium. All such reports should be published in one volume by ICOH by the end of the third year of each triennium and distributed to all ICOH members. The cost for this ICOH publication could be covered partly by ICOH funds and partly by outside sponsors. The first such publication could appear by February 2006 and it would be a useful contribution to the information of occupational health professionals worldwide;

(6) to liaise with other ICOH National Secretaries and provide to them on request information and guidance on national state of affairs in relation to OH;

(7) to contribute articles and news to the ICOH Newsletter as a National Correspondent;

(8) to publicize locally ICOH-generated documents and ICOH-organized or sponsored International Conferences; and

(9) to act as Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson in sessions at ICOH international Congresses.

## NSs' PROFILE

In order to perform the above tasks effectively by undertaking all necessary work voluntarily without any remuneration, a NS must, in my opinion, possess the following qualifications and experience.

He/she must be:

(1) enthusiastic and knowledgeable about ICOH and the various elements of his own duties as a NS;

(2) an active ICOH Member in good standing for several years ( ICOH membership of less than six years would seem insufficient), and an active participant in at least two ICOH International Congresses;

(3) conversant in English or French;

(4) a well established OH professional, as substantiated by having worked in senior substantive posts; it is noted, that if a NS is based in a developed country, at least fifteen years experience in OH, ten of which in his own country and five in other countries or with an International or multinational Organizations would be necessary;

(5) a holder of a doctorate degree; and

(6) an author (or co-author) of published scientific papers on OH subjects, which (as evidence of their high quality and impact) must have received at least sixty citations in papers by other authors, in the USA Science Citation Index (compiled by Thomson ISI, Philadelphia).

If an occupational health professional possessing all six aforementioned elements of qualifications and experience is not available in a country, an OH professional with as many as possible of these elements would be considered eligible for being selected as ICOH National Secretary.

## SELECTION VS ELECTION OF NSs>

The aforementioned criteria could be used to ensure that a NS enjoys sufficient prestige and recognition in his/her country, and that he/she is ( in this capacity) also competent in fulfilling his/her local duties. The ultimate goal of ICOH is to contribute to the promotion of the highest possible professional OH standards and to the best OH practice. A NS is an OH professional who primarily represents ICOH in a country as a quasi "honorary consul" and strives to contribute to that goal; his carrying the additional kudos of being the ICOH National Secretary facilitates the work he performs locally for ICOH, i.e. his contribution to the advancement of national OH legislation, education and training, research and practice. This latter particular function is indeed of growing importance, because a NS ought to be influencing policy- and decision-makers, so that they assign higher priority to OH matters. He does not represent his country at ICOH. Consequently, the ICOH President (or the

authorized ICOH Vice-President) should select and nominate him (or her) as the ICOH National Secretary, granting him (or her) tenure. ICOH is certainly not a Confederation of national OH Trade Unions or Professional Societies represented in it through NSs. An OH professional may be popular among his fellow countrymen. However, if he does not meet the above-mentioned profile, he would probably not make an effective NS. Popularity could sometimes be accounted for by temporary political party favouritism. On the contrary, professional and scientific distinction as defined by specific criteria, is most likely to guarantee continuous success for a NS; if the ICOH NS is a key person recognized as a distinguished professional and scientist in his country, he is most likely to remain influential on the national OH scene regardless of any political changes.

The stipulation that ICOH Officers are elected is an entirely different matter, because ICOH Officers are elected, but any potential political party or Trade Union affiliations are diffused among a multinational electorate. Furthermore, ICOH Bye-Law 1 of 1990 allows for ICOH Members who are nationals and residents of one country to sponsor the membership of an OH professional who is a national and resident of a different country. Thus, it would be feasible e.g. for ICOH Members in one country to establish a contingent of ICOH Members in a different country; the latter would then be in a position to elect a NS who is favoured indirectly by ICOH Members in a foreign country. The unfairness of such an eventuality is obvious.

When a NS retires or resigns, e.g. on account of old age or disability, he should be entitled to nominate another ICOH Member in his country as his successor. His proposed nominee could then be accepted and appointed by the President, if he meets the criteria outlined above. Only if he does not meet them (or if the NS has died), the President (or the authorized Vice-President), would then nominate and appoint an OH professional of the country in question as the new NS, in consultation with the national membership. I contend that a new NS should be selected and appointed as described above, and subsequently remain as NS for as long as he practices OH, i.e. he/she should be granted tenure, and not be selected or elected every three years by the national membership, i.e. the status quo as regards



selection should in principle be maintained. However, if at least two thirds of the national membership demand in writing that the NS be replaced by another ICOH Member of that country, the

ICOH President should select and appoint a new NS; this provision would allow for exceptional circumstances.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In countries with a large membership, another Member could be selected by the NS (and then appointed by the President) as a Deputy NS. He could assist the NS or replace him for short periods of time, if necessary; he would also be considered first as the next NS, when the current NS retires, resigns or dies.

After at least ten years of service, a NS should at his request be entitled to be granted by the Board, Honorary or Emeritus membership, in recognition of his contribution to ICOH.

Any change in the ICOH Bye-Laws pertaining to National Secretaries formalizing their appointment and duties could be justified by the large increase of ICOH membership since 1990.

Support to the work of NSs by the ICOH Officers and Board would need to be strengthened. This could possibly be achieved as follows:

(a) by furnishing them with an Official Letter of Honorary Appointment, which would include a summary of their mandate, thus taking into account that formal presentation and procedure are appreciated a lot in many countries;

(b) by providing logistical and financial support as necessary in relation to translations of certain ICOH documents and other material, and to regional meetings of National Secretaries when combined with local OH events;

(c) by making formal reference to NSs in ICOH information material, such as the News Letter, which would facilitate and encourage their activities; and

(d) by issuing and sending to NSs ICOH Press Releases; these could be on ICOH Recommendations or Statements about Occupational Health Policies, Core Occupational Health Curricula, Occupational Health Ethics, and other topical

occupational health issues, on Declarations made at the end of ICOH Congresses (which would also summarize their salient points and would be analogous to the Resolutions issued at the end of WHO Regional Committee Meetings and WHO General Assemblies), and on summaries of ICOH Scientific Committees projects. The Press Releases would increase ICOH's profile and render it more widely known among OH professionals and the general public, result in the promotion of occupational health awareness, and possibly also motivate a larger number of OH professionals and Organizations to become Members of ICOH.

## CONCLUSION

ICOH Bye-Laws might need to be modified, so that they include provisions pertaining to formal procedure and selection criteria for the appointment of National Secretaries, and the functions required of them. Clearly, a decision on this issue would necessitate prior consultation with all current NSs, so that any change is based at best on consensus, or at least on absolute majority among them.

[Final Note: The following information is considered to be relevant to the interpretation of the views expressed in this paper:

The author of the paper

(1) enjoys the full support of the Greek ICOH membership. This support was manifested in a written declaration of confidence signed by all Greek ICOH members, which was given to the ICOH President, Vice Presidents and Secretary-General at ICOH 2003 at Iguassu Falls in Brazil;

(2) has been advising four consecutive Ministers of Health in his country (also when different political parties were in Government);

(3) has been honoured by having received over ninety different citations in total of his published papers in other authors' published papers, in the USA Science and Social Sciences Citation Index.]

**ATTACHMENT 4**

**ATTACHMENT 5**