



**80 anni**  
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**Conference of International Catholic Organisations**  
**Conférence des Organisations Internationales Catholiques**  
**Conferencia de las Organizaciones Internacionales Católicas**  
**Konferenz der Internationalen katholischen Organisationen**

PastPresident: Ernest KÖNIG, Genret. Albrechtsgasse 98, A-2500 BADEN  
Tel/Fax: +43 2252 49276, eMail: [oic@mildioz.at](mailto:oic@mildioz.at) / [ernest.koenig@mildioz.at](mailto:ernest.koenig@mildioz.at)

[www.oic-ico.org](http://www.oic-ico.org)

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Dear Mister President, Secretary General, Participants at the AMI Conference and General Assembly 2007; dear Friends,  
30. August 2007

Thank you for the invitation to this AMI reunion; with my heart I will be with you.

The topic “strengthening Christian Values within Armed Forces Worldwide” describes perfectly our/your permanent mission.

I see the subtopic “Ecumenical experiences in mission abroad” as specifically well chosen, because exceptional situations in our profession foster an Ecumenical together more than in other environments; with this AMI might be spearhead for similar ongoing endeavours like the Sarajevo project.

International humanitarian law and Christian values might be allocated to different levels, nevertheless it is a “must” that International Catholic Organisations, Associations or whatsoever work together in order to be better prepared to stand up for these Christian Values in the process of emerging new for instance humanitarian laws in the frame of International Organisations; child soldiers for instance are an itching issue<sup>1</sup>.

We in the CICO, were striving for that in the past and promising intentions, maybe in the frame of the upcoming Forum, might increase our efficiency in this respect in the future.

You also intend to evaluate disadvantages and advantages of being an accredited NGO, which is important. The burden is obvious, if you want to influence something: It demands an increased engagement! But it is a prerequisite to be taken seriously by brother/sister organisations, by the HI See, the church and by the International Community.

You also want to talk about the future. Permit me some brief reflections related to the CICO, which is also evaluating its future, intending deep changes and a “regroupement”.

You well know that AMI was a couple of times member of the Coordination Committee and held the Presidency from December 2001 till June 2007, the longest period in its history; and not the easiest one. 10 years ago the Conference decided to be more open and more cooperative in all directions, but the implementation was cumbersome, because it had to change i. a. the “closed shop” philosophy, chosen 49 years ago. In December 2003 the General Assembly decided on a dynamic planning- and management procedure; in the light of dramatic challenges on the horizon, a “together” was seen as mandatory; therefore also the institutions of the HI See were invited, participated and showed interest, but without official reaction afterwards. Then, in the institutions of the HI See, the idea of a Forum was triggered, just 2 month afterwards! After misunderstandings, and clarifications, based on the work of the team “Future CICO” working since January 2006, the situation is: Half of the preparatory team for the Forum are members of the CICOs leading team, the new president included; changing its original intention, the Secretariat of State and the PCL sent their representatives to the 80 year General Assembly of the CICO in June 2007; during this GA the overwhelming majority decided to go on working together - 80 % wanted to keep its lay

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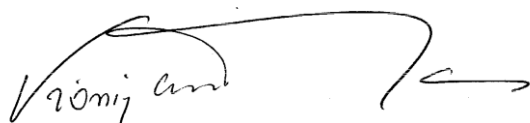
<sup>1</sup> See second attachment

identity as well as to meet upcoming challenges, knowing that deep changes are necessary; naturally "leave it as it is" or "pre-emptive obedience" (finances etc) were seducing aspects. Ralph was witness and may tell you more details. A few weeks ago Secretary of State asked for a concrete project of the CICO to be presented during the Forum in December 07. While you are meeting here in Switzerland, the responsible persons of the Conference are meeting also in this beautiful country preparing these deep changes in order to meet necessary requirements, which are the improved communication, the opening, the cooperation in all directions, the mission, the aim, traditional and new members with the common goal to engage themselves, concrete actions as the project for the Forum, the management, the structure and the strategic plan for the coming two years; a heavy program; its implementation will demand for the engagement of the presidents of its members as it was in the past, part of it will be a revival of General Assemblies of the Presidents.

To sum up: « l'identité catholique and laic, la visibilité, l'efficacité », Catholic as well as lay identity, visibility and effectiveness are the guidelines. What we have learned in the last years is: If we, the lay oriented associations work together with a common identity from a position of strength and decisiveness, we are appreciated as partners and esteemed; being disinterested or divided and weak, parts will be used if necessary - or put aside.

I do hope that both meetings will pave the way to common successes in the future.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wim Van der Meer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Vatikan News August 2007**

**Kindersoldaten in Uganda – In den Krieg entführt, zum Morden gezwungen**

Kriege und bewaffnete Konflikte treffen heute mehr denn je Unschuldige. Rund 300.000 Kinder werden weltweit als Kindersoldaten zum Kämpfen und Töten gezwungen. Der Krieg im Norden Ugandas ist heute der längste ununterbrochene Bürgerkrieg Afrikas und einer der brutalsten. Immer noch werden dort Kinder zum Kämpfen und Töten gezwungen, sagt Jörg Novak vom katholischen Hilfswerk Missio. Er hat sich bei einer Reise durch Uganda einen Einblick in die Lage verschafft. *„Der ganze Norden Ugandas wird von einer terroristischen Rebellengruppe beherrscht. Die Lords Resistance Army entführt ganz gezielt Minderjährige und setzt sie für ihre Zwecke ein. Es sind Tausende, man spricht über den langen Zeitraum von einer Größendimension von ungefähr 20.000 Kindersoldaten.“*

Ohne Hilfe von Außen gibt es keine Zukunft für die ehemaligen Kindersoldaten. Wenn es ihnen gelingt zu entkommen, leben sie in ständiger Angst vor erneuten Entführungen oder Vergeltung. Sie müssen auch damit fertig werden, von ihren Dörfern und Familien ausgeschlossen zu werden, die durch sie gelitten haben.

*„Es gibt noch Ängste, es gibt Hass, es gibt Rachegefühle und da ist, glaube ich, die Botschaft einer Versöhnung eine ganz zentrale, die von der katholischen Kirche vermittelt wird, um Versöhnung und Frieden zu schaffen. Es gibt wirklich Fälle, wo ehemalige Kindersoldaten, die zu den Großeltern zurückkamen – die Eltern waren inzwischen gestorben – und die dann gesagt haben ‚Wir wollen diese Mörder nicht‘ und haben sie als Enkelkinder verstoßen. Wenn man sich vorstellt, nach dem Motto ‚Schwerter zu Flugscharen‘, diese Kinder wurden zum Töten gezwungen und jetzt, durch die Hilfe der katholischen Kirche und durch Missio sollen sie wieder in ein normales Leben zurückkehren. Das ist eine ganz wichtige Aufgabe. Da spielt die katholische Kirche, gerade in Norduganda, eine wichtige Rolle“ (rv)*