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Report of the Secretary General AMI
Given at the General Assembly in MENNORODE/NETHERLANDS
on September 8th 2008

Excellencies, Generals, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends of AMI, Sisters and Brothers in Jesus Christ!

I am very happy to be here. Let me take the opportunity to warmly welcome you to the conference center in Mennorode. We are thankful that the Netherlands offered to be the host of our conference in 2008.

The whole period of our responsibility as AMI Executive Committee was full of efforts to enhance our worldwide network of the Lay Apostolate of Catholic Soldiers. As the AMI- Secretary General my prime responsibility has to deal with organisation. This function and the representation of my country Austria have always been a pleasure and an honour for me. The last three years have been a wonderful time with many interesting and challenging issues. Therefore, please allow me to thank my assistants, without whom I would not have been able to execute my duties. Especially. I want to express my gratitude to my assistants at the secretariat, Staff Sergeant Markus STROMBERGER and Warrant Officer Leopold GANSTER.

In particular, I would like to thank our hosts in the Netherlands. We originally intended to go to Nigeria for the General Assembly 2008. Because of different reasons our president mentioned before we had to change our plans and to commit ourselves to a new project- "AMI-General Assembly 2008 in the Netherlands". During the last months we enjoyed a very constructive, busy and fruitful cooperation between the organizing team of the Netherlands and the AMI Executive Committee. Our special gratitude has to go to Mrs. Nelleke Swinkels and to Mr. LtCol (R) Gerard DYKERS, both are the initiators and pioneers of the project "AMI-General Assembly 2008 in the Netherlands". At the same moment we also need to honour Jan VAN LIVERLOO for a splendid preparation of the Liturgy and all other members of the NL organizing team for their support.

Allow me to present a short summary of my working period as Secretary General of AMI. The last three years were quite busy, we experienced many successful moments but also some disappointments. Above all, I was always fulfilling my tasks with a happy heart.

I am proud to say that our team managed successfully to build a solid organisational and financial basis during the past 3 years. My successors will find good conditions to continue our way. In cooperation with the respective host nations we succeeded to organise 3 conferences that fulfilled all expectations and I am totally convinced that this will also be achieved here in the Netherlands.

The change of generations from experienced AMI-Veterans to the dynamic young ExCom-Team and also the change within the delegates to the AMI conferences took place without any problems and, above all, without any loss of compassion and quality.

I am absolutely convinced that we took the right decisions just in time, focussing on the future development of our catholic based lay community.

Allow me to mention a few landmarks:

- Implementation of a permanent working group
- Continued effort to gain the status as NGO
- A new financial rulebook
- Finalisation of the new statutes of AMI
- A modernised internet platform
- Funding of a project-team with the aim to recreate our AMI-folder and to take further care of our comprehensive internet performance

All these steps are to be mentioned as highlights out of a wide range of organisational actions within of our community.

We managed to consolidate AMI's financial affairs by saving money in many ways. For instance, I am working at my home office, using my own fax machine and IT – infrastructure. Apart from that we are generously supported by the german and austrian military bishop.

Allow me to draw your attention one more time to an important issue because the situation has not improved much since 2007. It is a particular interest of mine to re-engage formerly active AMI-members and associated countries. Unfortunately, we had to face a few disappointments in that regard. Many of my attempts to get in contact with formerly active members and associated countries were unsuccessful and remained without reply.

Therefore, it is a special pleasure and appreciation that we were able to establish a fresh link with the Philippines, with Italy, with Czech Republic, with Brazil and for the first time with Egypt and Malawi. More than that, we have the great opportunity to welcome the delegation of Malawi. The presence of our friend from Malawi is an important further step encouraging the lay apostolate within the Armed Forces

worldwide. Welcome to our organisation! I am looking forward to having you as an active partner for a common prosperous future of our efforts and ideals.

Once again I would like to repeat the plea of our president to the delegates for helping to establish old but also new contacts. To support these goals I'd like to ask all of you and the attending priests in particular since your international relations can contribute tremendously. I will provide a list of those countries without any liaison. All addresses and references you may consider useful will update or complement our contact register then.

This leads me again to the topic of finances since most of the member-states without contact have also not forwarded their membership dues. According to the statutes of AMI this would be a reason to suspend them as members. However, we want to avoid this for the time being and seek an acceptable solution for both sides if we can communicate with these members.

As you know there was a positive referendum about AMI's possible status as NGO last year in Switzerland. During the last 3 years the Headquarters of AMI have been in Austria. To get the NGO-status AMI has to undergo the valid Austrian Law.

According to the Austrian Federal Law a NGO, which fulfils the Austrian Legal Basic requirements, can concede the Legal Status of an organisation by notification of the Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In my function as Secretary General I have applied for this NGO- Legal Status at the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Unfortunately, our application has been rejected because we had no proof for a cooperation with other international organisations like UN or OSCE in Vienna. I did not have enough time to start a second effort or to intervene. The ExCom has decided that we will start a new application with the new AMI General Secretary in 2009. This leads me to the next important point.

Because of the end of the election period of the AMI Presidency and of my working period as AMI Secretary General in December 2008 we have been kindly asking all member countries, who are interested in the function of the AMI Secretary General or the AMI Presidency, to nominate a team for the elections in 2008 until 10. January 2007. Two countries have sent us their election proposals. Germany has offered to candidate for the AMI Presidency again and the Netherlands are nominated as candidate for the Secretary General.

According to a suggestion from Kenya it was commonly agreed that in some cases (this includes for example the African countries) invitations for the next conference should be sent first to the official addresses of the armed forces of each member country and of the associated countries. Therefore, the team of the AMI Secretary General needs all these addresses as soon as possible. Unfortunately, we got not even a single answer so far. I do not understand why the member countries have not send the

respective addresses. Because of this reason we could not send the invitations to the official addresses.

I also have to mention that we have to ask all the delegates to take more care about the indicated deadlines. A lot of registration forms have reached me much too late which caused a lot of additional work. Without the correct flight details it is extremely difficult to organise accommodation and transfer of such a big number of guests.

Because we want to link the AMI-homepage with the homepage of your national organisation, we also need the address of your homepage. If you remember I have been asking in my invitation letter to send us this address and all your ideas in order to improve our homepage. Today I have to repeat my request because it is our aim to provide you with the best information possible. During our conference, Colonel Kloss will inform you about the latest development of our AMI website.

During our last conference in Switzerland it was unanimously agreed to establish a "Project-Team" which starts to work with the ideas to create a new AMI-folder, a flyer and a comprehensive internet performance. This "Project-Team" including Captain Annie WALSCHARTS (Belgium), LtCol Andreas PREUSS (Germany) and Major Ambrose SIGUNA (Kenya) is chaired by Nelleke SWINKELS from the Netherlands and will report about the results. Thank you very much for your work. I am looking forward to discover the results of your project.

It was unanimously agreed to continue the work of the "Permanent Working Group" throughout the year with all necessary issues until the upcoming Annual General Assembly where it should report about it. This Working Group is chaired by LtCol (R) Gerard DYKERS from the Netherlands. Dear Gerard, I thank you very much for your work and for all your efforts. I am looking forward to your presentation and to the discussion which will show us the way how to establish the project of an „AMI Permanent Working Group”.

Let me mention some words about the cooperation with the Conference of International Catholic Organisations (CICO). During the last 40 years the cooperation with other International Catholic Organisations (ICOs) under the umbrella of CICO have been of predominant importance for AMI. But the situation has changed completely.

I am quoting from an official CICO release: "The extraordinary General Assembly of the Conference of the International Catholic Organisations , held on 19th June 2008 in Paris, decided on the institution's DISSOLUTION. The decision was voted by a special majority of more than two thirds of its members following a general policy debate, concluding a one-year process of multilateral dialogue. The decision's main object is to allow for the new Forum which included an additional 100 Catholic-inspired NGOs, and held its first meeting in Rome in November 2007. This was initiated by the Vatican Secretariat of State. This platform favours network exchanges that renders

effective the presence and response to global challenges, in the framework of the United Nations and other intergovernmental authorities.

In a world in constant evolution, the implementation of a response more adapted to our time, henceforth allows to bring together the community of both public and private international Catholic associations of the lay faithful as well as religious congregations, with international statute in regard to intergovernmental authorities, around objectives and common witness to evangelical values and those conveyed by the social teaching of the Church.

This is the fruit of co-operation between the permanent observers of the Holy See, the members from different dicasteries, international Catholic centres, around themes considered to be a priority at the service of humanity.”

I personally support the installation of the new forum of Catholic-inspired NGOs but I regret the way of the dissolution of CICO. I want to point out, that CICO has been working successfully for the international lay apostolate since 1927. Even if organisational structures have not been up to date any more, the General Assembly should have found an interim solution without risking the loss of enormous know how and an intact network. Because of the dissolution of CICO it is impossible to work together with other catholic lay organisations on a professional basis. The next project meeting of the newly defined forum will only take place in autumn 2009.

Finally, let me look back to our last year’s conference and let me point out an important issue once again: For the first time in the history of AMI an Annual General Assembly was conducted in Switzerland. We deeply thank our hosts from Switzerland because of their well organised performance, their hospitality and excellent realization of the Annual General Assembly 2007. It was a great pleasure to work together with our swiss friends.

I want to stress that during our conference all your wishes and requests can be forwarded at any time. We will try our best to meet all your expectations in a professional manner. You can address all administrative and organisational questions to me or to all the other members of the organizing committee, so that we can offer you a suitable solution. You will be informed about agenda of this conference daily in order avoid any communication problems.

The AMI Conference and General Assembly will discuss under the overall topic

“Strengthening Christian Values within Armed Forces Worldwide”

the following subtopics:

- War against terror versus Christian values
- Ethics and military operations

At the end of the conference we will vote on a joint AMI position regarding the conference topics, if possible, and publish it subsequently.

Let me end by saying that I am wishing you an interesting and successful conference and that I am looking forward to many interesting reports and discussions and also to celebrating the Holy Mass together.

Thank you for your attention.

God bless you all.

Michael JEDLIČKA

Lieutenant Colonel

AMI Secretary General

ANNEX:

Members of the AMI without any liaison

Celam
Colombia
Croatia
Ghana

Associated Members of the AMI without any liaison

Argentina
Canada
Chile
Congo Brazzaville
Denmark
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Estonia
Indonesia
Latvia
Norway
Peru
Poland
Romania
South Africa
South Korea
Sweden
Ukraine