

The organisation ACOM in essence differs from many of the organisations you are representing. In formal terms ACOM is a “Union”, and I hope you will not run out of this room now.....

An union of military personnel – in the Dutch social climate- goes in its objectives far beyond pay rises, pensions, days-off and so on.

In the guiding regulations of ACOM it says that the objective of ACOM is : the well being of its members and their families. In our opinion and taking into account the Dutch system of negotiations with the employer (The Minister of Defence), the playing ground is much bigger than only pay, pensions and days-off.

Work safety, - in barracks and in operational situations- , adequate training, time with the family between missions abroad are some of the subjects of negotiations between employer and employee. I even proudly say to you that for many issues it is legally required that both parties, employer-employee- come to an agreement.

Part of our view on “well being”, cannot be expressed in physically measurable quantities. That is why we are very active as an union to get the best possible psychological treatment (at the expense of the MOD) if our members or their family partners suffer from experiences which are known as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Secondly ; although recently one of the cabinet ministers here in The Netherlands stated that the Christian-Jewish background and tradition of The Netherlands should be broadened to include the Islam heritage as well, I think that ethical behaviour originating from a Christian background cannot be neglected in the Dutch Armed Forces. This belief too has been the basis in the past to agree to the question of the Military Ordinariat to become the Dutch member of AMI. Actually we of ACOM are more in line with the statutes of AMI, as ACOM

is a real ecumenical organisation.....

As we experience the annual AMI-conference as most valuable for the exchange of thoughts and ideas of you coming from so different societies and backgrounds it has not been too difficult to accept the invitation to take the burden of the responsibility for the 2008 conference. I have to admit that without the appreciated co-operation and valuable contribution of the MOD and the Military Ordinariat it would have been much more difficult to offer you the program as it stands now.

As 'host'-organisation and AMI full member I support the candidature of Nelleke Swinkels to be your next Secretary – General; this shows that two different organisations, ACOM and NKT, with partially similar goals quite well can supplement each other.

I am confident that the organising committee has arranged a valuable program that fits in the objective of AMI. I welcome you in The Netherlands for the 2008 AMI-conference under the banner of ACOM

Welcome and I hope you will enjoy your stay in the Netherlands, and that next Friday you will depart from a very successful week.