

Report from Dato Azman Ujang

* The English-Speaking Union International Council meeting 2010 was held in Tirana, Albania, on 21st October, 2010.

The meeting, attended by 30 delegates from 18 member countries, was chaired by Lord Hunt, Chairman of ESU International Council. Also present was Lord Watson, Chairman Emeritus of ESU International Council.

Malaysia was represented by ESU Malaysia Committee Member Dato Azman Ujang.

Lord Hunt began the meeting by welcoming the return of ESU Australia to the ESU International Council. ESU Australia's membership was previously suspended following an infringement of the Constitution.

The meeting warmly applauded the role played by ESU New Zealand in resolving the Australian suspension issue. ESU Australia National President Chris Perriam and Executive Committee Member Gill Perriam attended the meeting.

The ICM then formally admitted ESU Iceland as a new member.

Eliza Reid, Chairman of the Steering Committee of ESU Iceland told the meeting of the "very high" level of English language comprehension in Iceland, with the language being made compulsory in schools and universities, among other things.

The meeting also paid tribute to outgoing ESU International Council President Erne Zettersten and formally announced the election of Garo Keheyian as the new President for 2010-2011 term.

Garo Keheyian, who is Chairman of ESU Cyprus, was elected by ESU International Council delegates via electronic polling earlier.

In his acceptance speech, Keheyian said he intends to move the ICM to a new phase of placing high emphasis in terms of investments in member countries on English, as this would certainly pay "huge dividends".

He urged ESU USA to play a much larger role in ESUs given its tremendous strength and vibrancy internationally. Also, he suggested the International Council distribute its "participatory powers" in the coming years with larger roles and building upon the Anglo-American foundation.

Keheyian said he intends to organise conferences on a regional basis among ESUs instead of just meeting once a year under the present ICM format.

Along this line, the meeting endorsed a suggestion to encourage ESUs to forge bilateral linkages and even on twinning basis among any two ESUs.

The ICM stressed that ESUs are relevant not only to discuss issues in its mission statement and vision but to address other human efforts and issues such as climate change, sustainable development and the digital community given the fact that English is spoken by some 1.5 billion people, and rapidly growing by the day.

Earlier, the outgoing president, Arne Zettersten, proposed the setting up of a small group of previous IC presidents as an Advisory Group to build upon the ESU network, and whose task would also be to promote global understanding through new initiatives in English language policies and to get more countries to form ESUs.

The proposal was unanimously approved. Lord Watson described the proposal as a wise one and he had great pleasure working with the outgoing president and he joined every delegate in looking forward to the stewardship of new president Keheyian.

ESU Malaysia delegate Azman Ujang told the meeting in expanding ESUs

internationally, efforts should be made to get China into the ESU fraternity as the world's most populous country could potentially be the largest English-speaking nation, too.

Not having China in the ICM is like a vacuum or a void that ought to be filled.

Lord Watson explained that this is not quite possible yet and apparently China does not recognise NGOs.

But he told the meeting informal efforts have been made and internally and English is a fast growing language in China.

Azman also spoke of the need to revisit the term "Commonwealth" in the ESU Charter, arguing that as far as English is concerned, it goes beyond the shores of the Commonwealth countries and to reflect its position as a world language.

Lord Hunt explained that the term Commonwealth is in the Charter in view of the position of the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth.

A day before the ICM, the delegates met to hear briefings by hosts ESU Albania on the huge popularity of the English language among Albanians. ESU Albania was able to host the ICM despite being one of the newest ESU members or hardly a year.

In conjunction with the ICM in Albania, both the country's prime minister and minister of education and science announced new initiatives to boost the teaching and learning of English in the Eastern European nation after years of neglect due to its Socialist past.

The ICM delegates noted with great delight these initiatives which they felt should set examples for other countries to follow.

The ICM decided to take up the offer by ESU USA to host the next ICM at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from Oct 5 to 9, 2011.

It also decided to accept the offer by ESU Turkey to host the World Members' Conference in Istanbul in September 2012.

(Attached see report by Executive Secretary, ESU International Council, Annette Fisher).

Ends..

Dear International Chairmen/Presidents,

We had a very successful International Council Meeting in Albania, thank you to all Chairmen who were able to make it to the ICM, discussions were very productive and we covered a lot of ground. For those who were unable to attend, you will of course be receiving the comprehensive minutes and tabled papers for the meeting but in the meantime please find attached the following:

- Constitution Consultation – Key points to come out of the consultation workshop on the constitution
- Suggested improvements and reforms to the constitution – document which the consultation workshop was based on, with key amendments from the workshops added (please note the key to colours)
- New Programme notes – new initiatives and programmes discussed at the ICM
- Iceland ratification – document submitted by ESU Iceland
- International Strategy paper – document submitted as part of the Secretary General's report
- ICM 2011 – information on next year's ICM in America
- Sample MOU – memorandum of understanding used at the launch of ESU Turkey

We are also delighted to officially announce the following:

- The 2011 ICM will be held on 04-05 October in Philadelphia, to be followed by the ESU USA AGM
- ESU Iceland has been unanimously ratified for launch 09-12 June 2011
- The 2012 WMC will be hosted by ESU Turkey, dates to be announced
- Garo Keheyian, Chairman, ESU Cyprus has been elected President of the International Council 2010-2011

You will shortly be receiving by post, the country reports from many ESUs and a booklet on the destination for the 2011 ICM. Also please look out for a message from Garo Keheyian, the new President in the coming days.

If you have any questions and comments about any of the above or the attached, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Annette

Annette JE Fisher
Head of International, ESU