Assembly Meeting

Friday 4th September 2020

14.00pm-15.30pm (timezone: CAT/CET)

Zoom meeting.

**FINAL**

**Member Institutions Present**

* Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Monash University, Australia
* Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights (CCJHR), University College Cork, Ireland
* Centre for Human Rights Research, University of Manitoba, Canada
* Centre for Human Rights Studies, University of Zurich (UZHR), Switzerland
* Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa
* Centre for the Study of Human Rights Law, University of Strathclyde, UK
* Chair of Human Rights and Public Authorities of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Spain
* Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights, Sowchos University, Taiwan
* Czech Center for Human Rights and Democracy (CCHRD), Czech Republic
* Department for Human Rights and Politics, Institute for Political and International Studies, ELTE University Budapest, Hungary
* Department of Human Rights, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland
* Erik Castrén Institute, University of Helsinki, Finland
* European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Austria
* Global Campus of Human Rights, Italy
* Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh, UK
* Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, Sheffield Hallam University, UK
* Human Rights Centre, Queen's University Belfast, UK
* Human Rights Centre of the University of Potsdam, Germany
* Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol, UK
* Human Rights Institute, Binghamton University, U.S.A.
* Human Rights Law Centre, University of Nottingham, UK
* Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa, Canada
* Institut de Droit Européen des Droits de l'Homme (Montpellier - IDEDH), France
* Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University, Finland
* Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Idehpucp), Peru
* Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland Galway, Ireland
* Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Austria
* Maastricht Centre for Human Rights , the Netherlands
* Minerva Center for Human Rights, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
* Newcastle Forum for Human Rights & Social Justice, UK
* Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, Norway
* Pedro Arrupe Institute of Human Rights of the University of Deusto, Spain
* Poznan Human Rights Centre, Poland
* Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Sweden
* School of Global Studies University of Gothenburg, Sweden
* SIM - Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, the Netherlands
* Sussex Centre for Human Rights Research, UK
* Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights, Switzerland
* Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster, UK
* UCD Centre for Human Rights, University College Dublin, Ireland
* UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Public Authorities, Luxembourg

**Member Institutions Represented by other AHRI Institutions (by proxy)**

* Department for Human Rights and Politics, Institute for Political and International Studies, ELTE University Budapest, Hungary (by proxy- AHRI chair)
* EURAC Research Institute for Human Rights, Italy (by proxy- AHRI chair)
* Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol, UK (by proxy- AHRI chair)
* Institut de Droit Européen des Droits de l'Homme (Montpellier - IDEDH), France (by proxy- AHRI chair)
* Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland Galway (by proxy- AHRI chair)
* Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, Belgium (by proxy- AHRI chair)
* Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights, Switzerland (by proxy- AHRI chair)

**Apologies Received by Member Institutes:**

* Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Serbia
* Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York, UK
* Centre for Human Rights Erlangen-Nürnberg – CHREN, Germany
* Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University, Finland
* Law and Development Research Group, University of Antwerp, Belgium

**New Membership Applicant Institutes present**

* Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford, UK
* Centre for Fundamental Rights, Hertie School, Germany
* Centre for Research and Development of Constitution and Human Rights, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia
* Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
* Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, University of Geneva, Switzerland

# New Applicant Institutes apologies

* Center for Human Rights Science, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA
* Centre for Human Rights and Peace, University of Nairobi, Kenya

1. **Welcome**

The Chair warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that the meeting was quorate.

1. **Adoption of agenda**

**Decision:** Agenda adopted.

1. **Approval of minutes from Assembly Meeting on Saturday 7th September 2019 (Annex 1)**

Two corrections were noted regarding the presence of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights and Newcastle Forum for Human Rights & Social Justice.

**Action:** Executive Secretary to update the minutes.

1. **Report of the Chair**

The AHRI chair gave a general update. It was noted that the Executive Committee has met twice in the past year, rather than the usual one meeting, to address issues that arose, notably to discuss the conference in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chair gave a summary of the issues that had been discussed in the Executive Committee. Part of the agenda has still been to create more opportunities for AHRI members to gather outside of the conference. For example, a working group was established to look at collaboration with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. Unfortunately an event that had been planned had to be cancelled with the onset of travel restrictions earlier this year. Other initiatives that have stemmed for AHRI include the Northern UK Human Rights Network. There have been a number of efforts to help stimulate relationships across the members. The Chair reiterated the role of AHRI in aiming to help develop stronger links across institutes. Members will be kept updated on issues or opportunities that arise via the monthly newsletter and all members are welcome to get in touch at any time with initiatives.

1. **Financial Statement (Annex 2a and 2b)**

Representatives received the financial statements related to the annual conference in Potsdam, and also for the current year. The purpose of the annual statements is primarily to show how membership fees have been spent, but also to provide past conference figures for institutes who may be interested in hosting in future.

When the financial statement for the current year was prepared thirty-six members had not yet paid. The Secretariat will follow up on this. The Chair recognised that this has been a very unusual year with organisational difficulties on all sides. No one should worry if this year fees have not been paid, but any institutes who have not paid will receive a reminder via email to their named contact in the next week.

1. **Admission of New Members (7 applications) (Annex 3)**

The Chair noted that full applications had been made available to all representatives in advance, and invited each institute representative to introduce themselves and their institute and the motivations for joining AHRI, and to respond to any questions arising.

Members were invited to show support via Zoom reactions and principally to raise digital hands with any question or objections.

Professor Başak Çalı and Professor Cathryn Costello introduced the Centre for Fundamental Rights, Hertie School, Germany. No objections raised. The Centre was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

No representatives were present on behalf on the Centre for Human Rights and Peace, University of Nairobi, Kenya. Professor Magnus Killander, who had endorsed the Centre’s application, spoke on their behalf. No objections raised. The Centre was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

Apologies were received by the representative of the Center for Human Rights Science, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA. Professor Magnus Killander, who had endorsed the Centre’s application, spoke on their behalf. No objections raised. The Center was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

Dr Erna Dyah Kusumawati introduced the Centre for Research and Development of Constitution and Human Rights, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia. No objections raised. The Center was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

Dr Usang Maria Assim introduced the Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. No objections raised. The Center was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

Ms Nathalie Mivelaz Tirabosco introduced the Geneva Institute of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. No objections raised. The Center was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

Professor Kate O’Regan spoke on behalf of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford, UK. No objections raised. The Center was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

The Chair thanked everyone and expressed a final welcome to the seven new members, which takes the number of AHRI member institutes to more than eighty.

1. **Establishment of AHRI as an International Association**

The Chair gave an update on the establishment of AHRI as an international association under Belgian law. After more than 3 years of hard work by Professor Jan Wouters (Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies), the Chair was delighted to announce that the Royal Decree granting legal personality as an international association was signed on 20 July 2020. This status will become official once published in the official Belgian State Gazette, which will happen in the next few weeks. The Chair outlined the opportunities that this will afford. It will allow AHRI to open a bank account, enabling membership fee payments to be further streamlined, and it will enable AHRI to apply for grants, among other potential opportunities for future development.

The Chair noted a tremendous debt of gratitude to Professor Wouters to have kept pursuing this, as it was not always straightforward to gather the necessary documentation.

The Chair informed the Assembly that the Executive Committee would be holding an extraordinary meeting once the status is official.

1. **Election of Executive Committee members (Annex 4)**

The Chair gave an overview of the process for election to the Executive Committee and confirmed that representatives had received an invitation to put their institutes forward in advance, but spontaneous standing is also possible. It was noted that there was currently no maximum number of members.

All seven current members with expiring terms had confirmed their wish to be re-elected.

Advance intention to stand for election had been notified by Professor Kevin Bell, on behalf of the Castan Centre for Human Rights. The Chair invited Professor Bell to address the Assembly.

Two further institutes were put forward by Professor Michael Lysander on behalf of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, and Dr Alejandro Fuentes on behalf of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law.

A note of support for the three new Executive Committee members was expressed from the floor.

The Chair invited any questions from the Assembly. No questions raised.

All seven member institutes were re-elected and the Castan Centre for Human Rights. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights and Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law were elected for a three year term.

The Chair informed the Assembly that Executive Committee had yesterday discussed developing a policy on Executive Committee membership, including maximum terms, and this will be discussed at a further meeting. Professor Başak Çalı (Centre for Fundamental Rights, Hertie School) offered as a follow-up to discuss her experience within the European Society of International Law if it would be useful to consider any examples of policies that AHRI could draw inspiration from for such things as Executive Committee membership.

1. **Membership fee policy (Annex 5)**

The Chair noted that the issue of membership fees had been raised at last year’s Assembly. The Chair explained that a change was prompted partly by changes in the administration needed due to AHRI’s growth. The change in the fee structure was to enable differentiation between institutes with different economic circumstances. The fee policy had been made available in advance. The Chair invited contributions from the floor.

Two points of discussion were raised: Firstly, regarding the impact of funding cuts within some institutions, especially in light of COVID. The Chair responded that the proposed policy was flexible in that it will be at the discretion of representatives to align the fee payment with the economic position of their institute. Secondly, regarding the operation of waivers as envisaged in the policy and how this would be managed. The Chair responded that only one institute had requested a waiver this year, suggesting that it may not be a significant issue, but agreed that there are likely to be administrative issues that will arise, which will have to be worked through. There is indeed flexibility to revisit this policy if any issues arise, including in respect of fee waivers.

The Chair requested a vote via Zoom reactions. Majority indicated acceptance of the policy.

The Chair thanked Dr Ingrid Westendorp (Maastricht Centre for Human Rights and AHRI Vice-Chair) for her contribution to developing the proposal.

**Decision:** The fee policy proposal is adopted and will come into effect in 2021 (see Annex for new fee policy).

1. **AHRI Conference 2021 and 2022**

Dr Ingrid Westendorp introduced the theme for the conference to be hosted by the Maastricht Centre for Human Rights next year, which is ‘Human Rights Strategies’. The hope is that this will be an in-person conference and planning is underway on that basis. It was highlighted that the conference will take place at the end of August rather than September due to teaching term times.

Professor Magnus Killander expressed the hope that it will next be possible to attend in person the rescheduled conference at the University of Pretoria (hosted by the Centre for Human Rights) when the time comes, in 2022. It is planned that the AHRI 2022 conference will be held in the new African Futures complex and the theme is anticipated to be related to digital technologies and human rights.

For the benefit of new members, the Chair explained the policy of organising conferences two years in advance.

1. **Next meeting**

The next Assembly will take place during the Maastricht conference (27th-28th August 2022).

1. **AOB.**

There was a comment from the floor to welcome the growth of AHRI membership across regions. A question raised for discussion about how to strengthen AHRI in light of this, and whether returning to a working group model would be valuable. The Chair welcomed this point and noted that the Secretariat had been contacted by one other institute keen to discuss this. This in on the agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting. The Chair invited members to keep in touch with ideas so that this could be taken forward.

There was a comment from the floor to express thanks to the organisers for transferring the conference to the online format, which showed that AHRI as an organisation had resilience to respond to current challenges.

There was a further comment from the floor to express thanks to the organisers for their work on behalf of AHRI and for the direction that it had taken in recent years with the growth across regions. The issue of colleagues in Belarus was raised and a question asked as to whether any consideration had been given to express some support. The Chair clarified that there has not been any internal discussion of a particular statement this year and suggested that this would be a good focus for a working group.

A final comment from the floor expressed support for study groups, able to develop topics together, alongside other potential ideas that would increase interaction between different institutions within AHRI. It was noted that the Human Rights Committee had recently released General Comment 37 on the Right to Peaceful Assembly, which could be linked to the particular Belarus context. Thanks were expressed to the organisers for the move online, which seemed to be a success.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Minutes taken by Elaine Webster

Executive Secretary