

AICA International Board Meeting 25 March 2017

Secretary-General's Report

UNESCO

On return from Congress and after attending to AICA administrative business, the Secretariat held initial discussions on **Congress**: on the programme and on setting up the Scientific Committee. In this context, I attended the biennial **UNESCO International Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations** held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in December. We felt it was vitally important to renew our engagement with UNESCO. The pressure of the administrative problems over the last two years has left little time to liaise with other organisations, important for AICA's development and influence. The three day event, 12-14 December, was attended by many of the 350 NGOs which are in either consultative or associate status with UNESCO. I found the conference both enjoyable and illuminating. I could not stay for the last sessions which focused on the budget 2018-21 and had presentations on science, the digital revolution, ethics and e-learning. There was a strong focus in the presentations on digital technology and its impact on the diversity of cultural expression and the importance of sustaining the diversity of languages. The conference was very ably chaired by Martine Levy, the outgoing President of the NGO Liaison Committee, with whom I talked briefly about AICA. The new President Elect is the Committee Secretary Philippe Beaussant.. UNESCO's Executive was represented by Sabina Colombo, Chief for NGOs and her team whom I met at the Monday evening reception. The Director-General, Irina Bokova, had to give apologies as she had a family bereavement.

The Conference was very business like, interventions from the floor were courteous and relatively succinct. There must have been over 200 NGOs represented. They range from big issue organisations dealing with child poverty, child soldiers, environment, education etc to arts bodies, such as the powerful *International Music Council*, to *Clowns without Borders* and *Make Mothers Matter*. AICA has, then, to work hard to gain support in the context of associate NGOs who have a sustained working partnership with UNESCO.

AICA

The Office has been necessarily focused on AICA accounts and processes which our Assistant is managing with great care and attention to the demands of national Sections. The work of finalising the minutes of our last meeting and, importantly, the final versions of the revised **Statutes and Regulations** has been very time consuming. I must extend thanks to Christian Chambert who has diligently seen this work through to completion; the new documents are now posted on the AICA International website. They are long and exhaustive, but provide detailed guidance and clarity which we hope will be helpful to members, especially those running our national Sections. AICA's strength rests on the health of our Sections and while many are thriving and active, we are concerned that there are notable exceptions. In response to concerns raised by members in Italy, I have written to the President of the

Italian Section which, regrettably, has few members and is inactive and I will report on the progress of this extended exchange later in the Agenda.

It is clear from the recent survey on fees and from the proposal from Noel Kelly, President AICA Ireland for a members' survey on income, that many AICA members and national Sections are suffering not only political threats, but exceptional financial hardship. While writers cannot plead special cases in a world burdened by the negative social impacts of globalization, there is an unacceptable imbalance of income between professionals working in the arts, between those employed in the institutions and commercial sectors and those who try to work independently and contribute independent critical voices. As a body representing a community of art critics worldwide, AICA must address this by several means, one of which is to publish guidelines for writers and commissioners. AICAUK has posted its version. Conditions are, of course, not consistent from country to country, but national Sections might draft such guidelines appropriate to their region. These may afford better recognition of criticism and that it must be rewarded proportionately.

Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton
February 2017