

# BELIEF & STATE

A newsletter about fundamental beliefs and public policy

*Reporting on issues relating to the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.*

Produced by Project Tandem, Inc.

July, 1993

## A WORD TO THE READER

The University of Essex Human Rights Centre has received a two year grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia, PA, USA, to produce and publish a "World Report on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion or Belief." Project Tandem, Inc. (PTI) is part of the management team that will produce this report. With this grant comes the responsibility to keep all of you

informed. More than ever, we will need your skills and good will as we go about this important two year task with the University of Essex.

This is our first "short" newsletter on the progress of the World Report. These newsletters will be brief, the kind you can skim in a few minutes. **BELIEF & STATE** will publish larger newsletters, for the general public, once progress on the World Report warrants such an effort.

For now, our aim is simply to keep friends informed who have already expressed an interest in our work. We would like to hear from you. We welcome any news you may wish to send our way.

We would also appreciate hearing if our mailing address for you is correct. We are sending these out by first class mail and need to make every one count. You can respond to us by writing to the Project Tandem address on the back of this first issue.

## WORLD REPORT LAUNCH IN VIENNA

The University of Essex, Project Tandem and the New York and Geneva Committees on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion or Belief presented a workshop on the World Report at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria, on June 14, 1993.

Kevin Boyle, editor-in-chief and director of the World Report, gave an overview of the history of the project. Mike Roan, director, Project Tandem and Juliet Sheen, deputy editor for the World Report, moderated the panel discussions. Christopher Smith, Program Officer, Religion Division, Pew Charitable Trusts, attended the launch in Vienna.

Project Tandem wishes to thank Sister Mary Plante, Franciscans and Techeste Aherom, The Baha'i International Community from New York ; Gianfranco

Rossi, Inter'l Association for Religious Liberty and Andree Farhi, Inter'l Council of Jewish Women, Geneva, for their helpful insights.

Kevin Boyle explained that this first of its kind World Report will have material on at least 50 countries, balanced by regions, types of belief systems and issues. He stated, " by presenting country-specific reports, the World Report will fill a gap in our information and understanding of this important and complex human right. The reports will contain not only instances of intolerance but also programs and initiatives which support implementation of the 1981 UN Declaration."

Because of the range of issues and perspectives needed for the World Report, leaflets were handed out to many of the 2500 human rights activists attending the NGO Forum in Vienna, asking for involvement of NGOs, religious communities, scholars, lawyers, educators and grassroots activists.

The involvement of diverse people is crucial to the success of this project. All who are interested are invited to participate.

## CONSULTATION AT THE HAGUE PEACE PALACE

Fifty persons attended a round table consultation sponsored by Netherlands World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in the chambers of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on June 15, 1993. John Taylor, Barbara Forster, Juliet Sheen and Mike Roan, from Project Tandem and the World Report management team, were invited to speak on their recent experiences at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and on the World Report on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion or Belief.

A wide range of religious leaders, academics, embassy diplomats and journalists attended.

Project Tandem wishes to thank Hans van Willenswaard, Eckart Dissen and Paula de Wijs from WCRP/Netherlands for arranging the afternoon consultation. A special thank you also goes to Gloria Bahiyih Tahzib, of the Baha'i Community in The Netherlands, for helping Project Tandem with the World Report workshop in Vienna.

A dinner was held in the evening at the Narwal Conference Centre to discuss follow-up events for the World Report. Tentative plans have been made to host a "Publisher's Conference" in The Netherlands in May, 1995, to release the World Report and to discuss its findings.

## WORKSHOP NOTES

Participant concerns from the World Report workshop on the opening afternoon of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights:

**Mary Plante**, (Franciscans)

"How will the WR be publicized and how will ordinary people plug into it?"

**Gianfranco Rossi**, (IARL)

"Facts needed so we can point to them when we raise issues with the UN as violations"

**Adghir ni Ahmed**, (Morocco)

"Where is the Islamic representation among NGO committees"

**Robert Traer**, (IARF)

"Avoid all references to 'this religion believes this,' be careful not to put people into categories"

**Jeremy Gunn**, (Int. HR Law Group)

"Lots of problems with religious intolerance do not concern the actions of governments, religion often is not the real issue, e.g. political interests are..."

**John Taylor**, (consultant),

"Religious and cultural groupings cross borders, some regional commentary is advisable"

**Adghir ni Ahmed**, (Morocco)

"Don't forget to involve lay people in WR"

**Bob Zuber**, (WC Model Proj)

"We need to preserve dynamic quality of religious traditions. Fluid formulations are needed"

**Kevin Boyle**, (Univer. of Essex)

"Any selection of states is arbitrary, answer lies, perhaps, in general themes, choose countries where a theme is being worked through either positively or negatively"

## NGO FORUM RECOMMENDS WORLD REPORT

Cole Durham Jr., Brigham Young University Law School, Salt Lake City, UT, USA (World Report Advisory Board.) and Juliet Sheen served on a committee to draft recommendations for Working Group E at the NGO Forum. As a result, the NGO Forum recommended our World Report to the World Conference on Human Rights.

## ESSEX MEETING

The first meeting of the management team for the World Report was held at the University of Essex, Human Rights Centre, on June 16-18, 1993. Topics for discussion included: structure, list of countries to be studied, format for the country reports, feedback from Vienna and budget.

An International Advisory Board for the WR will be developed over the next three months. Professor Theo van Boven, University of Maastricht, The Netherlands, will chair this board. The Editorial Board will be chaired by Professor Francoise Hampson, an expert on measures to protect human rights in armed conflicts, from the University of Essex. Geoff Gilbert, senior lecturer in the Law School, University of Essex, will handle computer communications. Susan

Rhodes from University of Essex administration will be responsible for budget matters. The Editor-in-Chief, Kevin Boyle, will be assisted by Alison Jolly.

Professors' Sheldon Leader and Carolyn Hamilton from the University of Essex presented policy papers at the two day meeting.

John Taylor and Juliet Sheen attended as consultants to the World Report. Ray Dabrowski, editor of the Intern'l Journal of Religious Freedom, "Conscience and Liberty," St. Albans, England, attended one of the afternoon sessions.

Recent graduates from the University of Essex Master's in Human Rights program attended. Said Essaoulami, Borislav Petranov, Rosario del Cuevas and Suzanne Gee will be helping the management team to organize proposed regional workshops for writers in 1994. Project Tandem was represented by Barbara Forster and Mike Roan.

**BELIEF & STATE**, will examine themes, countries and methods of collecting information in the next issue. For information contact:

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