

Statement

From the second meeting of Association Presidents and International Delegates
World Council of Anthropological Associations
July 10-13, Osaka, Japan

This second face-to-face meeting of Presidents and International Delegates of the member associations of the WCAA, which also benefited greatly from the participation of Leslie Aiello, President of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, provided us with an invaluable opportunity to:

- review the aims and objectives of the Council as defined by the founding document prepared at the first WCAA meeting in Recife, Brazil, in 2004;
- consider whether any further goals should be added to WCAA's mission;
- reflect on the best way of achieving our aims and objectives in terms of procedures and organization.

Given that the number of member associations has doubled in the four years since WCAA's foundation and further growth remains likely, an in-depth review of this kind was essential. One of the major results of the meeting was agreement amongst the delegates to hold similar meetings of the entire WCAA Council every two years in future. To make this practicable, given that we could not normally expect to receive the level of support that had been so generously provided by our hosts in Osaka, it was agreed that such meetings should coincide with a conference convened by one of our member associations, to maximise the opportunities for delegates to obtain support from a variety of funding sources, and that they should have a thematic agenda relevant to advancing the primary goals of the WCAA.

The meeting reaffirmed the three primary objectives of our founding document, which were:

- To promote the discipline internationally
- To promote cooperation and sharing of information among anthropologists worldwide
- To promote jointly organized events of scientific debate and cooperation in research activities

Dissemination of anthropological knowledge, originally included in the third of these objectives, has now been promoted to a fourth primary objective within what will now become the constitution of the WCAA. This reflects our conviction that we need not only to promote better understanding among anthropologists working in different languages and national and regional traditions, but also better *public understanding* of the work that anthropologists do and its relevance to major issues of public policy and social concern at national and international levels.

Our discussions thus led us to a series of concrete proposals about how we could best further our aims that can be divided into activities and initiatives internal to the WCAA and those that are externally orientated towards society and the public sphere. In terms of the internal development of WCAA, as a framework for bringing

associations together, WCAA is concerned with recognizing and debating a diversity of views and perspectives within world anthropologies whilst also seeking to identify and disseminate common concerns and conclusions. WCAA will act as a clearinghouse for communication of news, ideas and knowledge, and as a network facilitating the exchange and flow of information. This will include ethical codes, to promote global discussion about how the profession can best respond to contemporary challenges that are themselves often the product of forces and relations beyond the level of the individual nation-state. We aim to strengthen the circulation of ideas and knowledge by facilitating the translation of anthropological work into a multiplicity of languages to improve knowledge of world anthropologies on all sides, counter-act the hegemony of English-based knowledge production, and to enable different local publics to learn about the results of anthropological research in their vernacular languages. WCAA-sponsored panels will be organized at meetings of member associations, with a target of three per year, and our website will be developed to make it a more powerful instrument for providing up-to-date information and facilitating scholarly exchange. WCAA will also seek to promote international networks of postgraduate students, as already requested by national student networks in the UK and Australia.

In terms of external orientation, WCAA will continue the work it has already begun to improve the profile and image of the discipline through different forms of public engagement. These will include a focus on deepening and broadening anthropology's presence in the education system, especially secondary schools, and encouraging anthropologists to contribute to public debates on issues such as multiculturalism, cultural diversity and immigration, by seeking to clarify the meaning of key terms on which anthropologists hold expertise and by practising appropriate forms of political advocacy. The WCAA itself will seek, when there is a consensus among its member associations, to issue public statements that reflect anthropological knowledge on issues such as indigenous and minority rights, as well as draw attention to arbitrary acts on the part of states and other groups towards such groups, and to threats to the lives and welfare of anthropologists and others. We will also issue statements on matters of worldwide professional concern. These include the impacts and potential biases of academic evaluation processes on the development of anthropology and of changes in funding models and the institutional organization of teaching and research in different national contexts. In some cases, such developments may raise ethical concerns and pose threats to academic freedom. As past WCAA actions have shown, the positions taken by member associations at national level are likely to be greatly strengthened by the support of the other WCAA member associations.

In order for advocacy statements to be made by the WCAA itself, the meeting reaffirmed the principle that this requires the unanimous support of all member association representatives, but clarified the original article by agreeing that two weeks be allowed for a response to ensure that WCAA could respond opportunely to events. To ensure the viability of the new rule, it was also agreed that each association should nominate an alternate to the official international delegate to the Council, who is usually although not necessarily the association president, so that two people would receive all communications by email from WCAA. In order to strengthen the authority of the WCAA facilitator as spokesperson of the Council in communication with the external arena, it was agreed that this office be renamed that of "Chair". It was, however, also agreed that the Council made up of all member association

delegates remains the sole decision-making body, and that this could be underscored by renaming the existing Executive Secretariat an “Organizing Committee”, dedicated to managing the Council’s business and oversight of ongoing activities.

Our meeting did, nevertheless, agree some further changes to the loose governance structure specified in the founding document, whose inadequacy had already been recognized by the constitution of an executive secretariat. The work of the organizing committee will be overseen by the Chair, serving for a non-renewable period of two years, supported by a deputy chair who will take over the Chair’s role in the next two-year period. There are now four other committee members, each of whom will take on a particular oversight task: organization of the upcoming biannual WCAA meeting; facilitation of WCAA-sponsored sessions at member association meetings; liaison with Wenner-Gren and other funding agencies; oversight of the website (previously the responsibility of the facilitator). A system of rotation will be developed to ensure that the entire committee will not change at the same time, and continuity in the immediate future was ensured by the re-election of former facilitator Junji Koizumi of JASCA to the post of Chair and former executive secretariat member Thomas Reuter of AAS as deputy-chair. Henk Pauw of ASnA and Gustavo Lins Ribeiro of ABA also agreed to stay on as committee members, but the voluntary retirement of John Gledhill of ASA allowed two new members to be elected, Setha Low of AAA and Shalini Randeria of EASA. The new organizing committee therefore has an improved gender composition whilst conforming to the condition that the organizing committee should include members from five world regions (The Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania) with no more than two members from the same region.

These improvements in our organization are essential if WCAA is to pursue its mission effectively in the future, but WCAA will remain a network rather than seek to build a substantial and costly bureaucratic infrastructure. It will be necessary to seek funding for a webmaster if the website is to be kept up-to-date and fulfil its role in the development of new WCAA dissemination initiatives, but no further infrastructure investment should be necessary. WCAA does not seek to duplicate the role of the IUAES as a world anthropological body organizing congresses and extensive commissions on sub-fields of the discipline. Our role is to facilitate the collaboration and integration of world anthropology by bringing the representatives of the different international, regional, national associations and organizations of anthropology together to pursue shared goals and pool their resources to the benefit of anthropology worldwide. As a result of the Osaka meeting, we are confident that we now have the consensus on aims, objectives, procedures and organization necessary to move forward substantively on the agenda that we have set ourselves for the coming years.

In the aftermath of the meeting, Deputy Chair Thomas Reuter in consultation with the Organising Committee has written and lodged an application for institutional funding of the WCAA with the Wenner-Gren Foundation. the application is pending but a decision should be reached by end of November 2008. The new constitution will be circulated for approval by WCAA members within the next few weeks.

Thomas Reuter, Deputy Chair
On behalf of the WCAA Organising Committee
28 October 2008