

Northern Asia-Pacific Division



NEWS & VIEWS

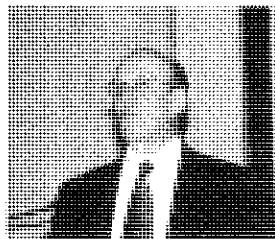
Volume 6, Number 63

5th World IRLA Congress in Manila

Religious Freedom or Security?

The 5th International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) World Congress was held at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel in Manila, Philippines from June 10-14, 2002. The IRLA world congress is conducted every five years and this was the first in Asia. Under the congress theme, "Religious Freedom: A Basis for Peace and Justice," the current issue of the world, "Religious Freedom or Security," was discussed.

There were over 350 delegates from 36 countries around the world. The names of the countries are as follows: Australia, Belgie, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, Columbia, England, Fiji, France, Hong Kong in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal,



**Denton Lotz,
IRLA President**

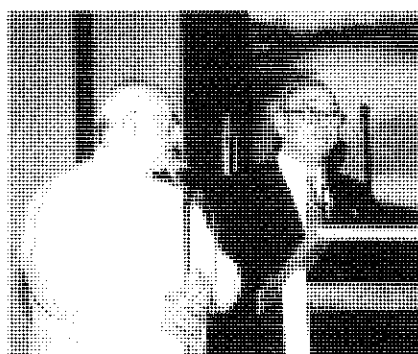


**John Graz, IRLA
General Secretary**

New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, U.S.A. including Hawaii and Guam, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

The delegates were religious leaders, politicians, ambassadors, lawyers, professors, judges, businessmen, NGO representatives, and etc. The religious leaders were from the world major religions including Catholic, Protestants, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhism, Judaism, and etc.

The keynote speaker was Abdelfattah Amor, United Nations Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights as well as Vice Chair of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. He said that religious extremism and intolerance together pose one of the world's greatest threats. So he added



**Abdelfattah Amor, UN Special
Rapporteur to the Commission
on Human Rights (right) & Bert
B. Beach, IRLA Vice President**

that one primary tool in dealing with religious discrimination is the use of education to promote tolerance and mutual respect.

Since the Philippines was the host country, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, president of the nation,

gave a written message as follows: "In a world of diverse religious beliefs, mutual respect and understanding should be the common goal of every religious group. Only when this goal is achieved, can they live in peace and harmony with each other." Because of her busy schedule during the week related to the Independence Day of the country on June 12, she was unable to attend the congress. Instead, the IRLA officers and several delegates visited her at Malacanang Palace, the government office of the Philippines.

Franklin M. Drilon, senate president of the Republic of the Philippines; Jose de Venecia, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the country; Raul S. Roco, Secretary of Education Department of the country; Lito Atienza and Peewee Trinidad, mayors of Manila and Pasay Cities, respectively, came to address the congress.

At the end of the four days' program, the delegates adopted a statement of main concern. The statement mentions ten countries which are urgently requested to change their intolerant policies towards religions. They are Turkmenistan oppressing some religious groups; China destroying religious buildings and persecuting people; Saudi Arabia and other

Gulf States jailing and deporting individuals because of their religious practice; Belarus considering passing a law which will limit religious activities; Indonesia overlooking the continuous conflicts between Christians and Muslims; Mexico allowing ongoing incidents of violence and intimidation against religious minorities in Chiapas; Sudan, North Korea, and some states in India violating religious freedom; and South Korea arresting conscientious objectors.



The Participants of the Congress

The main contents of the congress were lectures, messages and reports at the session; press conferences with the speakers; appeals at the hearing committee; a banquet with messages and music; and a tour to Corregidor Island. There were over 50 speakers during the congress. Ildon, a Buddhist nun, commented, "I think the meeting was very helpful to me, as I could get many religious leaders' opinions on 'Religious Liberty,' and recognized the religious liberty situations around the world. I felt deeply in my heart that it is time to open our mind to one another and have dialogues by mutual concessions."

Some of the presentations were as follows: "Freedom of Religion: The Missing Dimension of Security," by Robert Seiple; "The Role of Justice in Protecting Religious Freedom" by Rosa Maria Martinez de Codes; "Freedom of Religion or Belief and State Security" by Jeremy Gunn; "Religious Freedom and Individual Rights" by Mitchell Tyner; "The Promotion of Religious Liberty" by Alberto de la Hera; "Proselytism and Religious Freedom" by Bert B. Beach; "Conscientious Objection in the Republic of Korea" by Suk Tae Lee; "Religious Freedom and Peace in the Teaching of the Catholic Church" by Roland Minnerath; "The Baptist Tradition of Religious Freedom" by Denton Lotz; "Religious Freedom: Islamic Perspective" by Taha Basman; "Religious Freedom: The Hindu Perspective" by Shakuntala Vaswani; "Religious Freedom in Buddhism" by Yong Pyo Kim; "A Jewish Understanding of Religious Freedom" by Paul Rosenberg.

It was a precious opportunity for the attendees to meet people from different countries and religions around the world and to make friends through listening and speaking with one another. If such a spirit of the congress covers the earth, there will be no religious conflict, but will be a

peaceful coexistence of different religions.

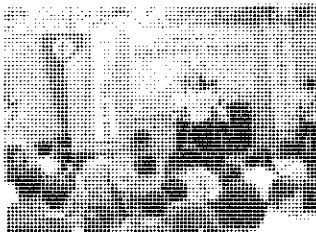
Tadaomi Shinmyo, *Communication/PARL/Publishing/SOP/ATN Director*

The Nationwide Anti-tobacco Campaign drawing the Public's Attention in South Korrea

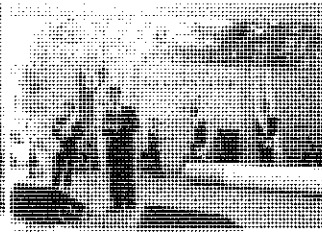
Recently almost every year around the 31st of May we can hear awakening voices throughout this country, Korea - the Adventists' active campaigns joining the International Temperance Association Korea (ITAK) proclaiming anti-tobacco nationwide.

This year, about 10,000 people from teens to old at 58 places gathered to campaign for no-tobacco on streets and many soccer stadiums warning the harmfulness of smoking from May 12 to June 15. This includes the Kids' No-smoking Speech Contest on May 26, hosted by the ITAK.

This year's event was more exciting compared with the other years because it overlaps with the Korea 2002 World Cup.



Youth group is singing the songs of no-smoking.



Keynote Speaker Cho, Won-woong, KUC Health Min. Director

The overheating soccer fever could take partial sides with the campaigns. Thousands of people came out to march on the streets for the movements. They have distributed more than 50,000 of no-tobacco scarves to soccer fans in the stadiums.

Among the many rallies in the various places where the events were conducted, the College Street rally wonderfully drew thousands of young people. On May 25, the campaign in the Marronnier Park of College Street, Seoul, known as "Cultural Space for Youth," was marked as a milestone to the anti-tobacco history in Korea.

It was the biggest nationwide campaign hosted by the

ITAK and sponsored by the Korean government, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, along with the Commission on Youth Protection and Korean Sahmyook Foods. The anti-smoking walking campaign together with a variety of meaningful programs drew wide public attention, joined by neighboring students and residents of around 2,000.

The event which began with showing a strong will of stop-smoking by the ceremony of cutting huge model tobaccos went forward to stirring remarks of a keynote speaker, Cho, Won-woong, general secretary of the ITAK; an anti-smoking oratory of Ko, Sung-min who is attending an Adventist school, Taegang Sahmyook Elementary School; and featured songs as well.



People Joining the 2002 Signature-Collecting Campaign against Tobacco

Then, the proclamation of launching a 2002 signatures-collecting campaign for no-smoking with a meaningful wish of a successful 2002 world cup was made, and a boy and a girl read the statement of stop-smoking before marching down the streets.

The march headed by a drum and pipe band of Yumsang Women's High School and flags formed a tobacco-funeral procession symbolizing an indomitable will of perpetual banishment of tobacco from the earth. Also, 100 soccer balls and the red T-shirts of boys and girls added more colorful air to the streets. A huge placard, pickets and a big screen car showing an anti-smoking video supported by the Commission on Youth Protection awoke thousands of young people and local communities to the dangers of smoking.

The breaking campaigns through the nation were very successful, gaining strength as they were especially supported by the government, police stations, and many NGOs, including the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korean Association of Smoking and Health, People's Coalition for a Smoke-Free Korea, Commission on Youth Protection, and Korea Association of Health Promotion.

"The nationwide campaign has drawn the public's attention and strengthened the smokers' will to quit smoking providing a good motivation to quit it," said Cho, Won-woong, general

secretary of the ITAK and health ministries director for the Korean Union Conference. He added, "Those activities including the street marching campaigns have been contributing to the promotion of our denomination's image. I believe they are compared to organic farming bearing healthful fruits."

The ITAK was organized by the Seventh-day Adventists in Korea in 1970, and promotes principles of healthy living throughout the country. Last year it was granted a legal corporation identity and supported by the Ministry of Health and Welfare of the Korean government.

Sung Sub Song, *Assistant to Editor*

International Women's Day of Prayer in Tokyo, Japan

This is a report of the joint prayer and song service program held at the SDA Tokyo Central Church in Japan sponsored by the Women's Ministries Department.

Our Church is located in the central Tokyo metropolitan area. On Sabbath day, there are services done in three different languages, all in our church building who praise and worship the Lord.

The Japanese group of average 160 adult attendees meet on the second floor, while the English speaking group of 120 on the first floor, and the Latin group from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries of average 25 gather at the basement.

We used to have one church service in Japanese church, but as the English speaking members increased, it became necessary to start Tokyo International Church (TIC) in 1991. The Latin group has had their own worship for 4 years. Every Sabbath, the three groups have their regular Sabbath services but seldom have a common worship service together.

In celebration of the Women's International Day of Prayer in March, 2002, TIC women's ministries leader Emma Ballesteros led the prayer song service program that involved the three different language groups. The program consisted of praise and prayer that was participated by about 80 women. The Scripture reading was done in English, Japanese, Spanish and Portuguese. Men from the USA, the Philippines, Ghana, Brazil, Africa, and other Asian countries joined the program by offering praises to the Lord.



The Attendees singing at the Tokyo Central Church

It was quite an exciting experience. We still have many limitations in this world, including language barriers and differences between cultures, but praise the Lord who can unite us despite our different backgrounds. This allows us to taste a bit of heaven on this earth. Amen!

Ayako Yokoyama, Member of Tokyo Central Church

Six Projects Completed in Kosovo by ADRA Japan

For the past one year and two months, ADRA Japan has built four elementary schools and two high schools at a cost of US\$267 million funded by the Japanese government. The writer participated in the opening ceremonies for a technical school on May 29, a high school gymnasium on May 30, and an elementary school on May 31. Especially, the technical school's opening was a great gathering of 3,000 people



An elementary school in Malisevo built by ADRA Japan in December 2001,

including Mr. and Mrs. Ambassador from the Japan Embassy in Yugoslavia. He commented, "ADRA is really doing a wonderful work." ADRA has engaged in not only building construction but also in education on mine cleaning and environment conservation.

Shako Hashimoto, ADRA Japan Reporter

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