

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK CRESCENDO

For a Human and Christian Ageing

<http://www.rcrescendo.net/>

ÉLECTRONIC BULLETIN



Christmas

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INDEX

EDITORIAL.....	2
EUROPEAN INSTITUTE ON AGEING.....	3
SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT: "THE POSITION OF THE HOLY-SEE ON THE FUTURE OF THE OIC CONFERENCE	6
HOLY FATHER'S MESSAGE TO THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE FORUM	7
THE FORUM.....	8
CRESCENDO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORUM.....	9

EDITORIAL

Christmas experienced in the family is the Feast of Love and Hope par excellence. May the joy of our family encounters not lead us forget so many people whose solitude will weigh on them all the more on this day. Recent studies show, alas, that affective isolation among the elderly is on the rise.

For the work of *Crescendo*, end-of-the-year perspectives are promising.

Among the conclusions of the Encounter in Léon, Spain, for the 5th anniversary of the International Plan of Action for Ageing, from Madrid, the participants of the Research Forum recommended the formation of a **European Institute of Ageing** in order to deepen research in this domain. Astrid Stückelberger, a very active expert at the UN, communicated this initiative to us. It responds, moreover, to the principle recommendations of the message that *Crescendo* addressed to the UN in 2002.

This text recalls with insistence the ethical value and the rights of the Elderly (regardless of their potential for productivity). This also corresponds with the principle appraisal in the message of *Crescendo* to the UN, which is also reproduced in this bulletin. We recognize the charism of our friend, Astrid, as an illustration of the influence that experts can have in the political establishment. The project for the creation of this Institute is also included in this bulletin.

Recently the Forum for Non-Governmental International Organizations of Catholic Inspiration took place in Rome. It was convoked by the Holy See to promote the spirit of communion and cooperation among these organizations, as well as with the Holy See. The *raison d'être* of *Crescendo* is precisely to encourage the Non-Governmental International Organizations with diverse charisms and disciplines to join forces and to work together on specific themes, in all their dimensions.

That may seem very simple and, so to speak, quite evident, but in reality, to live in permanent communion and cooperation, transcending selective alliances, is, above all, a spiritual attitude. By the way, I am happy to announce that Father J. Joblin s.j. has accepted to become the new Spiritual Counselor of *Crescendo*.

By opening an enlarged field of action, the Forum has given *Crescendo* a new élan, that will be realized in conjunction with the Committee (or Working Group) and with the Non-Governmental International Organizations of Catholic Inspiration that are also animated with this same élan.

We are reproducing in this bulletin a résumé of a preparatory message from the Secretariat of State sent to the International Catholic Organizations in November of 2006, the message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Forum, an article on the proceedings of the Forum, and a document which is the contribution of *Crescendo* to the Forum.

After the conversations during the Forum and the meetings at the diverse dicasteries, at the Non-Governmental International Organizations, and at one Congregation, that Sr. Anne and I had during the following week in Rome, I return with the strong conviction that we, at *Crescendo*, will see the first fruits of the Forum without delay. Information concerning these encounters will be included in the next issues of the bulletin and internal communications.

Spe Salvi, a new Encyclical Letter on hope from Benedict XVI, was distributed during the Forum. This message sheds a light on the somber horizon of our times. However, we repeat: the Forum itself, by its appeal for communion and cooperation, enlarges the path of hope while, at the same time, lancng an important challenge to the International Catholic Organizations, the Non-Governmental Organizations of Catholic Inspiration, and of course, to *Crescendo*! After all, the life of a network is a never-ending process!

Let us welcome the New Year with this hope at heart, while praying that the Lord will give us discernment and courage to contribute to the realization of this hope.

Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year !

Yours friendly,
Alberto



MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FORUM ON AGEING

AT THE UNECE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE IN LEON (SPAIN)

5-8 November 2007

We, the participants of the Research Forum, held on 5 November in Leon, Spain, would like to express our appreciation to the Kingdom of Spain for hosting and supporting the Research Forum preceding the 2007 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing.

wish to:

point out that the Leon Ministerial Declaration stresses the fact that research is vital to the development of effective policies and programmes,

underline that the Research Forum of Leon represents significant progress in different areas of research on ageing in the UNECE region,

.....

present our conclusions and recommendations as a discussion basis by the UNECE Member States:

Measures recommended at the strategic level

- Strengthening cooperation* among the policy-makers, researchers, NGOs and the private sector;
- Promoting the exchange of research and training*, within and among the countries of the UNECE, especially among the Eastern and Western countries of the region;
- Establishing monitoring and assessing mechanisms* for linking and adjusting future research and policies to the European Research Agenda on Ageing.

Measures recommended at the operational level

Establishing a European Institute on Ageing and corresponding infrastructures, to work in close collaboration with the *US National Institute on Aging* and existing institutions in the UNECE region (research, training, exchange, databank and information management).

.....We suggest that the Spanish government, with the support of other governments, *convene a Committee to create a European Institute on Ageing*, which would define its purpose, structure and management, and also update the European Research Agenda on Ageing to include the concern of the entire UNECE region.

Specifically, in order to better invest in efficient policy research programmes, we invite Member States of the UNECE region to:

- Encourage and enhance national and regional research and training programmes promoting the multidisciplinary approach;
- Integrate East-West collaboration in the UNECE region;
- Contribute to the exchange of research information, best practices and guidelines.....
- Training priorities should include life long learning and continuous education, strengthening initiatives such as universities and schools for 3rd age, and even 4th age, and including ageing issue in all levels of the obligatory school, professional and university curricula.

Establishment of monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the European Research Agenda on Ageing.

Reiterating that only a human rights-based approach and an ethical framework for research and its application can benefit a long-life society and the ageing population,

we urge governments to include systematically in all international and European ethical guidelines a section on “Ethics of Research with reference to Older Persons”

.....

we urge Member States to establish a stronger framework for the rights of older persons, as well as intergenerational legislations, taking into consideration the UN Principles of Older persons.....

Finally, we believe that in order to implement these proposals, we should join hands in pursuing the following tasks and projects:

- Convening a UNECE meeting of policy-makers and researchers to identify measures for cooperation between research and policy development and for consolidation of policy-related research on ageing.
- Exploring the feasibility of establishing a European Institute on Ageing for the countries in the UNECE Region.

Research being essential in implementing fully and adequately the UNECE Regional Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the research community will lend its full support to the objectives of the Leon Ministerial Declaration. We look forward to strengthening research capacities on ageing in order to collaborate more fruitfully with policy makers.

As researchers we believe in the role of science as a service to Humanity. Science can significantly improve the well-being of older persons and thus of “A Society for All Ages”.



Extracts from the message of Crescendo to the UN in the occasion of the General Assembly of Madrid , 2002

“It is urgent to promote a more humane vision on ageing, integrating the ethical and spiritual values recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Principles of the UN for the Older Persons (resolution 46/91 of 16.12.91)”.

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*“Crescendo maintains also a proposal to create **investigation programmes** which it considers indispensable for establishing the legitimacy of any social strategy, to establish it efficiently, to evaluate its progress and detect any new problems*

RESUMÉ OF THE DOCUMENT: "POSITION OF THE HOLY SEE ON THE
FUTURE OF THE ICO CONFERENCE"
PREPARATORY for the FORUM in ROME
15 November 2006

Globalization, or world-wide expansion, poses grave ethical questions concerning « *the frantic search for a new world order* ». It presents a difficult challenge to the presence of the Church along side international authorities. It has become necessary to undertake an effort to delve deeper into the area of doctrine, of advocacy and of lobbying before these authorities and governments, as well as « *a methodical explanation to inform public opinion* ».

The participation of Christians in international instances is one of the orientations of the Second Vatican Council.

In the Catholic Church, in addition to traditional Catholic organizations, numerous new movements and communities have appeared on the international scene, operating with a certain dispersion.

« *A new élan and a new methodology are necessary,* » without « *putting aside the rich patrimony acquired by the ICO.* » It is a question of creating a new space for interaction where the bonds among all the Catholic INGO and with the Holy See will be strengthened in view of a more efficacious collaboration. « *It is time – affirms the Holy See – to unite our efforts in a common strategy ordered towards the common good of humanity, towards the defense of the dignity of man, and towards peace in the world.* » On the practical level, this would lead to a re-grouping of Catholic INGO present in the international sphere. This re-grouping could be called a Forum or a Platform. It would be a space for the exchange of information, for reflection, and for a call to collaboration and coordination of activities.

Based on a minimum of structures, this Forum or Platform would be based on International Centers.



ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HOLY SEE, TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE FORUM OF CATHOLIC-INSPIRED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZAT

Saturday, 1st December 2007

EXTRACT

Your Excellencies, Representatives of the Holy See to International Organizations, Dear Friends,

I am pleased to greet all of you who are assembled in Rome to reflect on the contribution which Catholic-inspired Non-governmental Organizations can offer, in close collaboration with the Holy See, to the solution of the many problems and challenges associated with the various activities of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations.

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All of you have in common a passion for promoting human dignity. This same passion has constantly inspired the activity of the Holy See in the international community. The real reason for the present meeting, then, is to express gratitude and appreciation for what you are doing in active collaboration with the papal representatives to international organizations. In addition, this meeting seeks to foster a spirit of cooperation among your organizations and consequently the effectiveness of your common activity on behalf of the integral good of the human person and of all humanity.

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It is my hope that your study and reflection during these days will result in more effective ways of making the Church's social doctrine better known and accepted on the international level. I encourage you, then, to counter relativism creatively by presenting the great truths about man's innate dignity and the rights, which are derived from that dignity.

.....
.....

What is needed, in fact, is a spirit of solidarity conducive for promoting as a body those ethical principles, which, by their very nature and their role as the basis of social life, remain non-negotiable. A spirit of solidarity imbued with a strong sense of fraternal love leads to a better appreciation of the initiatives of others and a deeper desire to cooperate with them. Thanks to this spirit, one will always, whenever it is useful or necessary, work

in collaboration either with the various non-governmental organizations or the representatives of the Holy See, with due respect for their differences of nature, institutional ends and methods of operation.

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When experienced in solidarity, legitimate pluralism and diversity will lead not to division and competition, but to ever greater effectiveness. The activities of your organizations will bear genuine fruit provided they remain faithful to the Church's magisterium, anchored in communion with her pastors and above all with the successor of Peter, and meet in a spirit of prudent openness the challenges of the present moment.

FORUM OF " NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF CATHOLIC INSPIRATION"

ROME, 30 NOVEMBER TO 2 DECEMBER 2007

«Communion and collaboration on the international plan; perspectives for the future.»

The Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations of Catholic Inspiration having a consultative role before the authorities of the UN, assembled 30 ICO, within an ensemble of 85 participating organizations. The objective of the Forum was to encourage a spirituality of communion and cooperation, above all, for a greater efficacy in advocacy and lobbying.

In that sense, the Forum has opened a new era, because there was a consensus on this proposition. This spirituality of communion, of solidarity, and of cooperation would be realized in a global network formed initially by the reciprocal integration of the divers charisms and disciplines of the participants in the Forum. For this purpose, this global network will develop a program of information concerning the Social Doctrine of the Church and the formation of leaders on the strategy of working in a network for a more efficacious advocacy and lobbying.

In this global network, the principle of subsidiarity will be put into effect for the formation of thematic networks (according to topics) and regional networks (according to geographical realities.)

To set up this strategy, the committee that organized the Forum, composed of those responsible for the CICO and the International Catholic Center of Geneva in collaboration with the representatives of the Secretariat of State and of the Pontifical

Counsel for the Laity, has been charged to carry out this initiative. A new general Forum will meet in two years to evaluate and consolidate the results of this work.

The spirit and the conclusions of this Forum respond to the orientations of the Second Vatican Council, in particular in GS 90 which promotes : « *the participation of Christians in international institutions* ». The spirit and the conclusions of this Forum are also in continuity with the conclusions of the General Assembly of the Conference of the ICO in 1997, gathered in the Charter of Quito and its annexes. The time has now come to give a larger welcome to this spirit of communion and cooperation and to start afresh with a new creative élan.

12/12/07

ALBERTO



CONTRIBUTION FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF CRESCENDO IN THE FORUM IN ROME

30 NOVEMBER TO 1 DECEMBER, 2007

1) AGGIORNAMENTO OF CICO

The Holy See has made known its intention “*to greatly increase its investment in the establishment of a union of closer collaboration and coordination of Catholic efforts based on a sense of communion and on the responsibility of the members in a common strategy* ». In accord with the Holy See, CICO recognizes the necessity of an « *aggiornamento* » of the Conference, as suggested by the Holy See. It has elaborated « *a project for networks centered on thematic groups commissioned to propose strategies for responding to worldwide challenges.* » The new organization would be denominated « *network* »....

2) « DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION » : THE CHARTER OF QUITO AND ANNEXED DOCUMENTS

It is useful to recall the similarity --terminology aside-- between the present projects and the agreements issued by the 32nd General Assembly of the Conference of International Catholic Organizations at Quito (Ecuador) in 1997, contained in the Charter, the Orientations, and the Recommendations of this Assembly.

The Charter of Quito was inspired by Vatican II, especially G.S. n° 90/1, which says : « *Today, effective action, as well as the need for dialogue, demand joint projects.*» It underlines the fact, in Point 5 of its Preamble : that « *the member-organizations of the Conference enter into dialogue with all the active forces of the society...* » Recommendation 4 asks members «*to enhance communications and the exchange of information among themselves, as well as a sharing of resources (personnel, equipment, facilities), for a more effective action when relating with the international institutions in which they participate or in which they should be present*». Point 9 of the Orientations specifies : « *The General Assembly encourages its members to initiate and facilitate a process of regionalization in the various continents and regions...* »

The Charter, the Orientations, and the Recommendations of Quito were already inspired by what we call today « the network spirit » but, what has not been well understood is the importance of thematic networks. If the principle of the Charter would have been applied in a coherent way, the Conference would have been transformed into a network of networks.

We must now rejoice that these Principles and Orientations have been taken up again by the Forum convoked by the Secretary of State, and that the last General Assembly of the Conference has shown its willingness to welcome this proposition in a positive way.

3) THEORY AND PRATICE

However, if the Principles, Orientations and Recommendations adopted in 1997 at Quito were so valuable, why were they not put into effect? What can we learn from their insufficient application?

First of all, we must be aware of the fact that the appeal to dialogue and collaboration always meets strong resistance in practice. The forces of division, symbolized by the spirit of Babel, must not be underestimated.

Moreover, no innovation can be limited to declarations of principle. Innovations must be accompanied by an ongoing pedagogy in order to be applied with conviction.

Likewise, structures must be adapted.

If a new terminology is used, it must be clearly conceived and explained.

4) THE EXPERIENCE OF CRESCENDO

Today, all sorts of groupings of associations are called “networks...” At any rate, the title is secondary. What is decisive is knowing what we are speaking about. A network like *Crescendo* is founded on the strong conviction that together, we can do more and better than separately. Certainly, the Spirit gives rise to a great variety of vocations, but diversity does not mean division; the Spirit of Pentecost calls us to communion. What is decisive is how we welcome the appeal to dialogue and collaboration.

It is advisable that the identity of a network be clearly defined in its act of foundation, which completes and clarifies the civil or religious statutes. This act of foundation must clearly present:

- a) The finality of the network.
- b) Its fundamental principle.
- c) Its fields of action.
- d) Its style and strategy.
- e) Its structures

a) The finality of the Network

What characterizes a network like *Crescendo* is more the means than the end.

Convinced that the fact of working together multiples creative and dynamic potential, *Crescendo* invites the Associations and Congregations concerned with the question of « Elderly Persons and Ageing » to collaborate and to dialogue among themselves, without any protagonism, and with respect for the full autonomy of each.

The finality corresponds with the thematic of the network. For *Crescendo*, it is a question of promoting an Ageing both Human and Christian.

b) Its Fundamental Principle

For *Crescendo* this can be summarized in a key phrase: «*According to the divine plan, each individual human being lives a life of continual growth, from the first spark of existence to the moment at which the last breath is taken* ». (Christifideles Laici, N° 48- Apostolic Exhortation, 1998).

c) Its fields of activity

In the case of *Crescendo*, it is fourfold:

- 1) Declarations of principles and Advocacy before international authorities and governments, which are necessary but insufficient
 - 2) Indeed, the activity of international authorities and governments alone is incapable of creating a cultural space founded on respect for the dignity of each person in all the stages of life and on fraternal solidarity . The document of the Holy See of 15 Nov. 2006, point 1, refers to: « *the need for methodical explanations to inform public opinion*». In this regard, networks have an important mission in the formation of consciences in civil society.
 - 3) Moreover, it is logical that networks must intervene directly in these operations by concrete, ongoing commitments, as exposed in the Final Document of the *Crescendo* Seminar in Geneva.(2005)
- 4) Particular mention must be made of the Ecclesial Plan of Action into which all Catholic Networks should be integrated. As for the topic, “Elderly Persons and Ageing,” there is vital work to be done in areas of information, formation, and coordination for the development of a pastoral designed specifically for the elderly of our day. (*Crescendo*, together with *Caritas Spain* and *Vie Montante Spain* has published, in Spanish, a collection of the teachings of Pope Paul VI, Pope John-Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI on this subject).

d) Style and modalities of action

Networks must take the lead in the action aimed at international authorities and governments, on the one hand, and civil society, on the other.

What is more, Christian Networks cannot limit their activity to uniquely humanistic endeavors. They must contribute, no matter how modestly, to the building up of the Kingdom announced by Jesus. This, of course, is made possible only by being open to the Spirit of Pentecost.

Testimonies are not lacking. Would that they be better known! As early as 1982, Pope John Paul II, pointed out the need for a specific pastoral for the Elderly.

More recently, in 2006, the 5th Worldwide Encounter of Families, in Valencia (Spain) dedicated an important place to this pastoral, including in its program a Congress of Grand-parents and Elderly Persons. This year, 2007, at Aparecida (Brazil), the Fifth General Conference of Latin-American and Caribbean Bishops, in chapter 9.4- “*The Welfare of the Elderly*,” clearly expressed that the Church “*wishes to renew her pastoral structures, and to prepare even more persons who will work to expand this precious service of love.*”

The Worldwide Network *Crescendo*, in spite of its modest means, intervened in these two major ecclesial events, not to mention its contribution to the International Plan of Action for Ageing, Madrid (2002). This demonstrates well the efficiency of working in a network.

e) Structures

Structures are a necessary support for every enterprise, but the spirit comes first. A network is a living reality, which is born and develops within an ongoing combat against the powerful forces of division.

The functional structures at the service of a network are not different from those of any grouping of associations. What distinguishes networks is the structure of relationships among the members. While the relational structures within an association or federation are pyramidal, with a unique center for decision-making, the structures within a network are horizontal and light, with several autonomous centers. The unifying force is the finality, but each center remains fully capable of creativity and liberty in adaptation according to the conditions of its own milieu. There is, however, a primary center whose principle function is to promote the harmony of the ensemble, and to encourage and support the creativity of the other centers with respect for the diverse charisms. It is, so to speak, the heart of the system.

5) A NETWORK OF NETWORKS

Each human theme is but a different facet of the same reality, based on the same fundamental principles which are « universal and indivisible».

So it is with the theme, «Elderly Persons and Ageing,» which is closely linked with other themes, such as: the family, intergenerational solidarity, poverty, emigration, health, etc.

The potential for action of a thematic network depends, also, on its collaboration with other thematic networks.

Moreover, efficiency is enhanced by the sharing of means. , (Recommendation 4 of the General Assembly of CICO in Quito).

The project for forming thematic networks and gathering them into one large network seems therefore convincing and worthy of enthusiasm. But we must be aware of the difficulties inherent in such an enterprise. As with every innovation, this project demands a change of mentality and comportment.

The document of the Conference, "An International Catholic Presence – Worldwide Network of INGO of Lay Catholics" underlines three themes:

- a. Human Rights, Ethics and Direction.
- b. Social Economics and solidarity.
- c. Youth, Education and Formation.

The first two themes are extensive, but the document foresees that « *the first thematic groupings be realized progressively and worked out with a flexibility that is attentive to initiatives which might arise spontaneously ...* »

Crescendo, which is the first network of the Conference of ICO, falls under the first of the three themes. *Crescendo* was created in response to the appeal made by a religious, Mother Marie Antoinette de la Trinité, who, at the time (1995) was Superior of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Since then, *Crescendo* has progressively established its identity in function of its experience.

From this experience we can draw two principle lessons:

- The most important is the astonishing fecundity of a collective work, jointly welcoming the Spirit of Pentecost, who inspires working together for the coming of the Kingdom of God.
- The second is the importance of never underestimating the evil forces of division, symbolized by the spirit of Babel.

