



**Report for 2012-2014
Council Meeting Varadero-Cuba**

Members:

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Aim:

To carry out actions of international solidarity in the area of puppet theatre.

Agreed tasks :

In Chengdu the Commission amended its policy.

1. Emergency situations in which the Commission can intervene were defined more clearly as **emergencies linked to political, social or climatic crisis.**
2. The Commission may offer support in the areas of creation, construction, teaching, subsistence, training, lodging etc.

Commission meeting :

A plenary meeting took place in Chengdu in 2012 to discuss the Cambodian project (see below). A later meeting was planned to take place in Niger, under the auspices of the festival in Niamey and to better link to the projects of UNIMA Africa. Unfortunately military action in the region broke out in Mali and the situation in Niger quickly became very dangerous. I therefore cancelled this meeting. Subsequent project applications which were either accepted or refused support were debated fully with the members of the Commission with an exchange of opinions and ideas via email.

Projects receiving support from the Commission:

1. **Emergency aid to be sent to puppeteers in the Sahel affected by famine (July 2012).** Aid was sent to Djouli Djibir, a Nigerien traditional farmer and puppeteer, who had been particularly affected by the famine due to living in a very isolated and rural region. The president of UNIMA Niger and of the UNIMA African Commission, Cheik Kotondi, identified this person and delivered produce to him directly over a six-day journey. Thanks are due to him for this work. The Commission sent 600 Swiss francs (about 500€) for this aid.
2. **Emergency aid:** on 21st August 2012 I received a request for aid from Cheik Kotondi, from Niger. The overflowing river was flooding the town and its houses (which have mud walls) were beginning to crumble. This flood was the biggest in Niger since 1923, the river having swollen to seven times its normal size. That same day it continued raining. The area affected is inhabited by many performers. After discussions about the best course of action to take, a decision was made to assist in the construction of small dams in the roads to protect the walls of the houses. UNIMA sent the necessary aid to buy the quantity of building material needed (very hard tropical rock). The works were carried out by puppeteers themselves. 8 houses were thus secured, representing safety for around 200 people, as each 'house' comprises several buildings around a courtyard. The Commission committed 2,056.90 Swiss francs to this operation, or around 1700€.
3. **Project support : Setting up a construction workshop for *SBAEK THOM (Great Leathers)* in PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA);** project presented by the Association of Artists *KOK THLOK* during the year **2012-2013**. The project was supported by UNIMA to the amount of **3000 euros**. This amount was increased by 1000 Canadian dollars through extra support from UNIMA Quebec. The project was carried out in an exemplary manner, and fulfilled all its aims. As it is complex and rich in imagery, more information can be found on the internet.
4. **Emergency aid** for an individual, requested by UNIMA Costa Rica to cover part of the funeral costs for a Uruguayan puppeteer, M. Castiluce, who died far from his family. The Commission committed 300 Swiss francs and members of UNIMA Switzerland also donated the same amount (total approximately 500€) for this action.
5. **Project support: Mano in Quebec, 2014, ongoing.** Under the auspices of a large support project for Cuban craftspeople, UNIMA Quebec has decided to support the equipping of community workshops by sending materials and tools for Cuban artisans. This project is set up as a partnership with UNIMA Cuba. It will be initiated during the Council meeting in Matanzas-Varadero. The project is supported to the sum of 2000€ from UNIMA, and 500 Canadian dollars from UNIMA Quebec, plus a quantity of materials which has not been valued in monetary terms.

Actions of this nature could be adopted by multiple countries in the future.

Proposed and aborted projects

Following the banning of the Elkhatawi festival in Jerusalem, the Commission made local contact, and a proposal was created to send aid to enable puppeteers to perform so that neither local children nor puppeteers were disadvantaged. The contact made ended up being catastrophic; the project partners just wanted us to express our anger, not to set up something constructive together. This project was abandoned.

Future projects

The Commission hopes to develop a network of volunteer puppeteers who would be able to assist by travelling to situations of urgent need, based on the model of clowns sans frontieres.

Fribourg, March 1st 2014

Pierre-Alain Rolle