



Strasbourg

Winter Session

26-29 January 2015



What's new for MIAMSI at the Council of Europe?

The Council of Europe's winter session took place in Strasbourg from 26 to 29 January 2015. It took on a certain importance as it was just after the Paris attacks. On its part, the INGO Conference elected a new chairman and board. The CINGO (Christian International Non-government Organizations) met to reflect on the speech made by Pope Francis in Strasbourg and exchange views on the terrorist attacks and the consequences linked to publishing new cartoons of the prophet Mohammed (as in Niger for instance). During this meeting, the Holy See's new permanent observer, Monsignor Paolo Rudelli was warmly welcomed.

Human Rights Commission:

1. A report on the previous year emphasized several important points :
 - ✓ The **social charter** which supplements the largely unknown Human rights convention,
 - ✓ The need to promote "**living together**" even from infancy (cf. the charity "regards d'enfants")
 - ✓ The importance of combating hate speech.
2. Several working groups delivered their findings; others have come to be such as "Human rights and the digital world". We remain in two groups: **combating extreme poverty and combating hate speech**.

Culture and Education Commission:

As a preliminary, the great importance of education was underlined today when freedom of expression and freedom of religion are under threat. Faced with threats to social cohesion and the radicalization of young people with no future, it is urgent to take on one's responsibility. The educational dimension is to be favoured.

Several working groups have been extended or set up:

- The teacher in interaction with his/her environment (participation of MIAMSI – Europe)
- On the proper use of digital media in educational practice
- Teaching history
- Educating for intercultural dialogue – living together in Europe (participation of MIAMSI – Europe)

Democracy Commission:

The 2014 activity report was presented at the start of the meeting, before the urgent debate on the 11 January 2015 march following the racist attacks based on discrimination. A debate with several journalists and officials of intercultural and interfaith associations.

It is urgent to recover the meaning of democracy and develop "Living together" at all levels: individual, local, national, international.

The INGO Conference

1. Two **recommendations** were passed during this session concerning :
 - The terrorist attacks on 7, 8 and 9 January in Paris
 - The place of "Civil society, for peace and democracy in Ukraine"
2. **Elections** were held to renew :
 - The chair: Mrs Anna Rurka, from Poland (From the INGO: European committee for special action for children and families in their environment).
 - Several vice chairs and reporters were elected including one from the International Catholic Teaching Organization (OIEC).

3. The next **World Democracy Congress** in November 2015 on the topic:
“The balance between control and freedom”

The Christian INGO group (CINGO)

1. A large part of the meeting was devoted to the two speeches made by Pope Francis on 25 November last to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. They were very well received. It was an encouragement for all the Christian INGOs to enhance and develop their involvement in the Council of Europe. It was decided to work on two specific points from the speeches for the next meetings:
 - **The transcending dignity of the human person,**
 - A line of enquiry given to us: **take care of fragility with strength and tenderness.**It was decided to send a letter to the Holy Father via the permanent representative to thank him for the words he uttered on that occasion to the European institutions and all the stakeholders.
2. The other major topic of the meeting was that of **combating poverty** and the Turin message on eliminating poverty according to article 30 of the European Social Charter.