

Highlights from the IFAJ Executive Committee meeting, Hamar, Norway, August 12, 2006

Prepared by Senior Vice President and Communications Committee chair Mike Wilson

The IFAJ Executive Committee met in Hamar, Norway, to discuss the business of the organization. President David Markey opened the meeting and discussed a wide range of items, including:

- a collection of articles presented to Messe Berlin and based on media coverage from the 2006 Green Week event;
- Planning for the 2007 Green Week meeting, which will include a special professional development seminar on how journalists can work more effectively with corporate public relations people; and
- The IFAJ executive committee meeting to be sponsored by Alltech and held in May 2007 in Kentucky, USA. Following a similar format as the Dublin 2004 meeting, this will coincide with the company's international symposium and allows the IFAJ to conduct a business meeting and communications seminar.

General Secretary Ulla-Mari Sundelin-Ryytty discussed the current IFAJ membership situation and recommended that the IFAJ terminate membership for Armenia and Moldova. The executive committee voted to terminate membership. She also stated that Uganda and Serbia-Montenegro are on probation since we have not had communication from them in several months.

Ulla-Mari told the group that the process for getting press cards has been improved. There is a new system and printing company in place. People who need press cards should contact Ulla-Mari. She also reminded delegates that the names of voting delegates for the Delegate Assembly meeting need to be provided by each country.

Treasurer Markus Rediger gave a financial report which showed that the status of the IFAJ was very sound. The auditors had scrutinized the report and determined that it was accurate. He also suggested that the cost of the press card might be reduced for members from poorer countries. His report was approved.

Senior vice president Mike Wilson gave a communications report and introduced Mercedes Colombes as the new executive committee representative from Argentina, pending delegate approval of the country joining IFAJ.

He also discussed several communications initiatives, including:

- A new relationship developed with the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center (ACDC), an on-line global research facility that focuses on agricultural communications documents. This service helps journalists retrieve published documents from around the world, enabling them to do a better job for their readers;
- The 50th anniversary DVD which will be used for future promotion of the IFAJ;
- Updated versions of the IFAJ brochure, with several new photos and in different languages;
- The revamped IFAJ newsletter which is now provided as an electronic version and is available on the IFAJ website. The first 'e-issue' was published in December, 2005. The newsletter is now available more frequently (bi-monthly) but the move to electronic format has saved the organization a lot of money;

- Revamped IFAJ website that now includes news and features on the home page, contest winners, and a member forum to discuss issues; and
- The establishment of a monthly email briefing to IFAJ executives. This briefing covers the latest news and information on IFAJ activities.

Masaru Yamada discussed the 2007 Japanese Congress. His organization has worked hard to secure sponsorship that will allow the Congress registration cost to be at or below 1,000 Euro per person, for a six-night congress which includes meals, accommodation and travel. He asked the executive to encourage members to participate. Information available on a special congress website will be hot-linked to the IFAJ website.

Membership committee chairman Hans Siemes (the Netherlands) discussed membership applications. Argentina has been approved for IFAJ membership. Haiti will be allowed to join IFAJ on a two-year trial basis, based on attendance at the executive committee meetings and dues/subscription fees paid.

USA delegate Joann Alumbaugh gave a presentation on behalf of the professional development committee. The committee recommends adding a new category to the writing contest, and adding a broadcast category provided IFAJ obtains sponsorship. These will be added later. The committee also recommends changing the contest deadlines to May 1st.

There were 28 photo entries in 2006. The committee needs to make sure the rules are clear and that entries are displayed on the website. She encouraged the IFAJ to establish a 'people's choice' award that allows website viewers to vote on their favorite photo.

Host country liaison committee chairman James Campbell (Ireland) reported that Belgium has committed to host the IFAJ congress in 2010. He said tentative itineraries for 2007 and 2009 are already set, but that the Austria itinerary for 2008 is yet unknown.

The executive committee also briefly discussed establishing a training program for journalists in developing countries, in conjunction with another organization.