My highlights as IOJ President

Presentation of Kaarle Nordenstreng
Professor Emeritus, University of Tampere, Finland

IFJ World Congress 2016
Preconference Celebrating Our Histories
Angers, 7 June 2016
Congress in Helsinki Finlandia Hall 1976: one year after the CSCE Final Act was signed in the same place – great moment of détente, IFJ attending first time
UNESCO 1978: consultative meeting of international and regional organizations of journalists
Consultative meetings 1980-83: International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism
UN 1982: Special session on disarmament
Letter from the IOJ

I bring you an important letter from Suleiman Al-Qudah (Jordania), elected President in the last IOJ Congress in Amman in 1995, and Manuel Tomé (Mocambique), elected Honorary President on the same occasion. They remind of the fact that the legal successor of the old FIJ of 1926 was the IOJ of 1946 and not the IFJ of 1952 and that today we should celebrate also the founding of IOJ as united movement 70 years ago.

Unity was arrested by the Cold War for forty years but now once it is over the movement is united again. The letter makes a historical statement that the IOJ has come to a natural end and that the heritage of the pre-war FIJ is now passed on to the IFJ.
Message to the 29th IFJ Congress in Angers, France, on 7–10 June 2016

Dear delegates – fellow journalists!

On this occasion we are invited to recall the history of our international movement. It is indeed a long and complicated story. The movement started over 120 years ago in 1894, when the first international conference of “press people” took place in Antwerp. But it took until after World War I for the first proper association of professional journalists to be established in 1926 with the encouragement of the International Labour Organization ILO and the League of Nations. It took as its name Fédération Internationale des Journalistes (FIJ) and its secretariat was located in Paris. The FIJ was destroyed by the German army’s occupation of France in 1940. During World War II the movement was hosted by the British Union of Journalists, which helped to set up the International Federation of Journalists of Allied or Free Countries. This federation in exile organized new beginning for the movement in 1946 in Copenhagen, where the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) was founded among Europeans together with Russians, Americans and Australians – as the legal successor of the FIJ.

The Cold War since the late 1940s led to a split in the movement, whereby the Western member unions left the IOJ and in 1952 established a new association, the present International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Meanwhile, the IOJ consolidated itself in Eastern Europe and spread to the developing world. The world of journalist associations was divided between the Prague-based IOJ and the Brussels-based IFJ, with some, like the French and the Finns, having membership of both. The two internationals followed the Cold War division between “Communist East” and “Free West” leading to a politicization of the movement and a competition for new associations in the Third World.
Today it is obvious that the IFJ is the sole representative of professional journalists around the world. This does not mean that the IFJ is the direct successor of the pre-war FIJ, whose legal heritage was passed to the IOJ. On this occasion of the 29th IFJ Congress in 2016 it is important that the IFJ perceives itself correctly in history as a successor of both the pre-war FIJ and the post-war IOJ. While celebrating the 90th anniversary of the founding of the FIJ, we should not forget that a common IOJ was founded in Copenhagen exactly 70 years ago, on 3–9 June 1946 – with high hopes, until it was split by the unfortunate Cold War.

Dear colleagues,

As the President of the IOJ and its Honorary President elected in the last IOJ Congress in Amman in 1995, we note that the historical development has led to a natural demise of the IOJ as an operational organization. While closing this page in history, we are pleased to pass on to the IFJ the heritage of the pre-war FIJ. We wish you every success in taking good care of this valuable heritage.

Amman and Maputo, 3 June 2016

Suleiman Al-Qudah, IOJ President

Manuel Tomé, IOJ Honorary President
Three moments of unity to celebrate

Looking at broad history of our international movement, let us note that there are three organizational moments which justify the celebration of unity:
First, the founding of FIJ after World War I in 1926
Second, the founding of IOJ after World War II in 1946
And third, the regaining of unity after Cold War – here in Angers where we got a notice that IOJ is finished with the heritage of old FIJ being passed to new IFJ
Three years: 1926, 1946 and 2016 – all in June
We are really witnesses of closing a page in history – here in Angers
Thank you!

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