



Regional Conference in Odessa, April 8th to 11th 2013

Report

The ICMA Mediterranean, Black Sea and Middle East Regional Conference took place in Odessa with the generous support of the ITF Seafarers Trust. The Regional Conference, originally planned for 2012, was postponed to 2013 due to the busy conference schedule among ICMA's members, including the AOS World Congress of November 2012.

Thirty chaplains from the region are gathered to network and to discuss experiences, challenges and achievements encountered in ministry to seafarers. The participants and speakers came from France, Morocco, Italy, Spain, Egypt, Ukraine, Russia, USA, the Netherlands and United Kingdom

Venue was on Hotel Velle Rosso.

On April 8th at 16.00 we started with the opening ceremony, which was chaired by the General Secretary of ICMA, Revd. Hennie La Grange. The President of the Ukrainian Marine Trade Mr. Maksym Sliusarevskyi welcomed the delegates.

First session was dedicated to regional reports.

Then we went to the Lutheran Church in Odessa where we had an ecumenical celebration, with the participation of the Greek Catholic Bishop, the Roman Catholic Bishop, and some Orthodox, Lutheran and Greek Catholic priests.



Afterwards we had a café style dinner near the church.

On April 9th we continued with reports of the region and we had following presentations:

Odessa Port Welfare Committee. Fr. Olex, together with Tatiana Tarasysk presented the new PWC in Odessa and explained the first undertaken steps and how they are organizing it..

Deacon Ricardo Rodriguez-Martos and Mr. Eros Andriani were invited to explain their experiences on PWC in Barcelona and in Genova respectively. They underlined that such a committee is a very good opportunity to meet people of the different organizations in port, and how this makes the work of a ICMA centre easier.



On the second session of the day, Deacon Ricardo Rodriguez-Martos (Barcelona), and Miss Emma Kouznetzova (Yalta) spoke about the cruise ships ministry, taking in account the circumstances of these ships, the needs of their crews and the difficulties to assist them, compared with the crews of cargo ships. There was a special presentation on the sport activities of both ports (being Yalta the one who organizes more football and basketball games) and also encouraging other ports to organize sport activities and to report it to ISS.

On the 3rd session of the day, Mr. Steven Evans (Ivittamobile) made a presentation on Communication technologies for seafarers, explaining the new plans and the new zyp2 system, that offers lower rates through internet connection.



On the 4th session of the day Toon van de Sande and Alexander Dimytrevych (Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Program (MPHRP) presented the topic: “Chaplains responses to the effects of piracy on seafarers”

This program is participated by several important maritime associations like ISF, BIMCO, ICMA, ISWAN, etc.

The objective is to encouraging a professional approach in responding to the humanitarian needs of all those affected by maritime piracy, including seafarers, their families, ship-owners, ship managers and manning agencies”

Rev. Toon van de Sande said: *Chaplains’ responses to seafarers affected by piracy requires common sense, not therapy. Pastors should be professional in fulfilling their limited but crucial role, and establish themselves as a vital resource.*

They are starting to organize courses to those that can be involved in such situations.



On the 5th session Mr. Oleg Grigoryuk (1st vice chairman of the Maritime Transport Workers Trade Union of Ukraine, made a presentation on the unions work in Odessa and Miss Nataliya Yefrimenko (ITF inspector) spoke about the ITF Seafarers Trust and all the help they provide for seafarers welfare.



At the last session of the day Miss Tatiana Tarasysk presented the twining centres program of the ISWAN, exposing its history, how many centers have benefit from this program, what is the aim of it and the conditions to take part on it. She announced that there is still some budget and that people interested on twining with another port, should contact her.



On April 10th, Mr. Douglas B. Stevenson, Chairman of ICMA and Director of the New York based Center for Seafarers Rights of ICMA member the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and New Jersey, addressed the ICMA Regional Conference in Odessa on the imminent implementation of MLC2006. "The MLC2006 is in the best interest of both seafarers and owners," he said.

Stevenson offered ICMA's personnel the services of the Center for Seafarers' Rights for advice on implementation and compliance and assistance in resolving problems in collaboration with flag states, if required.

He emphasized how ICMA centres can help to encourage authorities of those countries who have not ratify it to do it and in the case of countries that have already ratified it, to implemented properly from August 2013.



The 2nd session of the day was presented by Fr. Bruno Ciceri from the Pontifical Council regarding: "New Evangelization and Ecumenical cooperation". He made a short review on the history of ICMA, with a special mention to its Code of Conduct, which is an important tool to have it always present when we deal with seafarers. The most important way for our evangelization is the witness of our friendship and unconditional love.

We should serve all seafarers without discrimination. We should fight prejudice, intolerance and injustice of any kind. Let us respect diversity, and develop what unite us rather than emphasise too often what divides us.



Mr. Eros Andriani, presented the topic *News for seafarers. Networking among centres*. He informed the conference about the work done by AOS Genova, preparing every day news on board in 1e different languages. They are very appreciated by seafarers and it is also a good tool for networking.



On the last session we had the election of regional coordinator.
It was elected Fr. Oleksandr Smerechynskyy, AOS Port Chaplain in Odessa



Rev. Hennie La Grange, congratulated Fr. Smerechynskyy and thanked the outgoing coordinator, Deacon Ricardo Rodríguez-Martos, for the work he had done.

Finally, Rev. La Grange offered a very inspiring devotion.

In the last session, the participants of the conference approved following conclusions:

1. Port Welfare Committees: They are very important for achieving a better and more efficient assistance to seafarers. ICMA members should promote such committees in each port.
2. MPHRP: For cases of emergency or of piracy, the PWC is a good tool for showing the authorities in the port, the ship-owners and the ship agents the important role that Port chaplains can play on welfare response and first emergency response.
3. ICMA chaplains, volunteers and welfare workers should be aware about the ICMA code of conduct.
4. Networking should remain a continuous challenge among ICMA centres
5. Given that the contact with cruise ships is not easy, it was agreed that it would be good to prepare a short and simple directory about ports in the region, that get the visit of cruise ships, to be distributed among crews and crew coordinators of these ships.
6. MLC 2006 ICMA centres should be in touch with authorities to promote the ratification of MLC 2006 in those countries where it is not still ratified and to promote its implementation in all ports of the region.
7. Some participants of the conference have stated that given to the shorter turnaround and the lots of work on board, many seafarers have no time to go ashore. There fore, it is very important for ICMA centres to give special importance to ship visiting
8. Welfare committees and maybe groups of prayer should be promoted on board ships, whenever it is possible.
9. It is also very important the promotion of advocacy and promotion of seafarers rights

The conference ended with a visit to the port and also the International Seafarers Centre in Odessa and finally we had a nice typical dinner, which was enlivened by the music of a singer playing a *kobza* (typical old Ukrainian instrument).



Odessa, April 11th 2013

The out going regional coordinator

Ricardo Rodriguez-Martos