

International Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

9th Meeting, Partnerships for Sustainability”

Report of the Closing Session, 3rd November

In the Closing Session, we set out to summarise the principal issues we had discussed during the previous two days. This final report incorporates comments made by Friends on the draft version circulated earlier.

1] Message to Mrs Mubarak

We agreed to write to Mrs Mubarak reporting that we:

- a) had successfully concluded the 9th annual meeting,
- b) retain our confidence in the importance of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina,
- c) recognise what it has already achieved and the exciting challenges that still confront it,
- d) see ourselves as enthusiastic partners in tackling those challenges.

2] Promotion of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

These challenges include the continuing need to raise the international profile of the BA. This can be undertaken through clearly identified groups including:

- a) Egyptian embassies and consulates,
- b) international institutions linked through bilateral agreements with the BA,
- c) the International Friends,
- d) supportive governments and NGOs including Foundations.

Each of these groups needs information prepared in a manner which enables it to use it most effectively. We reviewed some of the materials published by the BA. These included :

- a) **Annual Report.** This excellent document could benefit through being published in a summary format (4 pages) maybe similar in size to the *Alex-Med Newsletter*. This report could be distributed to all the above groups. It could be posted on the BA website also.
- b) **Bibliotheca Alexandrina.** This attractive quarterly journal is surely too expensive to distribute in large quantities so we encourage its posting on the website. [We are unsure whether this is intended to replace the existing *Alex-Med Newsletter*, also quarterly]
- c) **Guides to Alexandria.** We welcomed the Alex-Med Centre’s new publication *Cultural Routes of Alexandria*, comprising seven walking tours through the city.
- d) **General promotional leaflets** We have noted in our own countries that the Egypt Ministry of Tourism still fails to properly promote Alexandria. Its stand at the 2006 World Travel Market (London, 6-9 November) offered such an example. Among its many publications, two mentioned Alexandria:
 - i) *Alexandria and the Mediterranean Beaches* (colour, 30pp) published by the Ministry of Tourism. This is poorly produced and edited.
 - ii) *Classical Egypt*, a folded sheet with three of the eleven panels devoted to Alexandria and the North Coast.

We suggest the Alex-Med Centre and the Alexandria Governorate seek to influence the nature of future publications relating to the promotion of the city.

3] Assisting the BA in its programmes

a) Fund-raising strategies We reviewed the process by which funding had been sought for the purchase of the *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* (PCC). While it appeared that funding for this series might lead to its purchase this year, we welcomed Prof El Abbadi's offer to summarise the particular merits of the PCC, its usefulness to the BA and the amount of funds still required. By following this procedure in future fund-raising projects, we are confident we can promote them more effectively and raise funds more easily.

c) New Website We greatly welcomed the proposed website, now live. We recognise that it is for us to make it a success, using it to share ideas, and to promote the BA worldwide.

4] The Institute of Peace Studies We welcomed the inauguration of the Institute of Peace Studies (IPS) and we were enthused by the address made by Ambassador Ali Maher. We noted that he had written to about 400 foreign peace institutes and allied institutions introducing the IPS. Several Friends indicated they had strong links with such institutions in their countries and offered to assist strengthen the IPS's links with them. We supported a proposal concerning UN Security Council resolution 1325 which is introduced separately. We hope that the Alexandria Conference on Women titled *Steps Towards Achieving Reform* (11- 13 December) will assist in promoting this initiative.

5] A Common Sense of Values The Egyptian Friends proposed that we should seek to define and agree a common sense of values, one that would bind us together more firmly. In recent years, our meetings, both formal and informal, have reflected such hopes for the International Friends who comprise a collection of national groups which we believe to be unique worldwide. No other institution has a similar international network of voluntary supporters so it is reasonable for us to examine that commonly held sense of values that keeps us together. Also, we should consider how we can apply this to the greater good, using the platform of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, an institution that looks both in and out, both East and West.

We are reminded that the ancient Bibliotheca Alexandrina hosted the encounter between peoples of many countries and their ideas. Only a few decades ago, the city boasted a world-renowned cosmopolitan character even though it also manifested inequality and poverty. Now, the new Bibliotheca seeks to make the whole world more accessible and to welcome the ideas of different cultures, social transformations and technological advances.

If this initiative is seen as a challenge, even a threat to the culture of the community in which the Bibliotheca is located, how can the International Friends help? We can show that our commonly held sense of values is one that unites us, not differentiates us. How should this debate start? How can this partnership show sustainability? The creation of a BA webpage devoted to the International Friends offers us that opportunity. Through 2007, we must use it to share ideas and to help each other. When we next meet, we should devote time to reviewing our efforts to strengthen dialogue between the International Friends groups and dialogue between them and the BA.

6] The International Friends

a) Access to the BA We welcomed the proposal by Dr Sohair Wastawy that registered members of recognised International Friends associations could gain priority access to the BA's library. We are confident that this privilege will encourage us to renew membership programmes in our own countries.

b) Fund-raising We look forward to assessing how well we can use the new website. We will continue to review novel techniques to raise funds including working with UNESCO to create a Book Fund.

c) Post conference Tours Prof M El Abbadi and Lorenzo Montesini, Australian Friends agreed to meet to discuss how this might be arranged for future meetings.

d) Thanks We thanked Dr Ismail Serageldin for his invitation to the Bibliotheca and thanked those members of his staff who gave addresses and those who attended informally. We thanked Mrs Mona El-Nashar and her colleagues for arranging the meeting and we thanked the Egyptian Friends for their hospitality.