

Minutes of the 19th Annual Meeting of the Auroville International Association

held in Château de Méridon, near Paris in the valley of de Chevreuse, France

10th to 14th June 2003

HUMAN UNITY

Present:

Members of AVI Centers and Liaisons:

Brazil: Paulo Pereira;

Bulgaria : Tatiana Tasheva;

France: Satyakam Karim and Devasmita Patnaik, Croquette, Geneviève Bastian, Dominique Darr, Francine Finck, Dann Moulin, Sylvie Piot;

Germany: Friederike Werner, Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke, Uschi and Helmut Ernst, Raymund von Hammel, Isa Wagner, Sebastian Wagner

Spain : Alfonso Galiana, Trini Blanch;

Switzerland: Camille Egger, Ingo Wey

The Netherlands : Martin Schreurs;

UK: Sonia Dyne, Martin Littlewood, Diane Bowler, Paul Littlewood;

USA: Chandresh Patel, Julian Lines, Wendy Lines;

Aurovilians : Alain, Bhaga, Biggie, Diego, Jill, Tekeste, Tine;

Guests: Alex Lefebvre (Belgium), Denis, Elisabeth Gauthier, Hasi Grandcolas, Luce Guerin, Yanne Dimay (France), Verena Riffeser, (Germany), Amrit Khalsa (Mexico), Jettie Zwaans, Peter Weterings (The Netherlands), Daniel Métille (Switzerland),

(Total 47 participants)

HUMAN UNITY

The birth city of Mother has been chosen for this year's second Auroville International meeting. AVI France is hosting the meeting, which is the first one in France since the meeting in Le Kleebach in 1997, six years ago. Around 50 people from all over the world came together for 4 days to discuss and experience "Human Unity", as our hosts wrote in their invitation:

In the complexity of our present world, in this extraordinary cultural, social, economic diversity, we want to explore all possible ways to build a real 'Human Unity'. Even if we already discussed this topic often, we feel that the exploration of this question has no end to it. We would like that in the circumstances of today's

problems of fundamentalism, fanaticism of all kinds, of killings and destructions, that we explore again and again how we can bring Unity and Peace today into our small world. We must remember and give this message constantly, because we feel that this Unity is threatened everywhere, even in India and in Auroville. We would like that each participant prepares himself for this fundamental question, does his own research through reading, documentations, and then comes to Meridon.

The choice of venue by AVI France was a gorgeous castle, MERIDON, 35 kms away from Paris town, easily to be reached by metro and S-train from any airport and train station, complete with castle park, marble statue in the garden, and a small lake. A dedicated organizing team took good care of us foodwise and otherwise to make our stay a memorable experience. (For information on the Château de Méridon kindly visit the website www.meridon.com)

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Welcome address by Satyakam

After one day of preliminary discussions and preparations by the Board the official meeting started in the evening Tuesday 10th of June after reception and signing in of the participants during the day. The participants presented themselves.

Wednesday, 11th of June

Every day before breakfast, a programme of one hour mediation, hatha yoga or tai chi was offered by various participants.

After concentration and relaxation with Indian music, the first day began with a power-point presentation of the International Zone by Jill and Tine, members of the International Zone group. They showed photos of the Unity pavilion, of the construction site as well as the model of the Unity pavilion made by Aurovilian Piero Cicionesi, of the American pavilion, the Tibetan pavilion, and photos of the members of International Zone group and their work. They gave a comprehensive summary and update of all the activities and various concepts of the International Zone and the national pavilions. Although the full morning was reserved for this presentation, they could only touch superficially on the issues because of the abundance of activities and news, and they answered questions wherever discussions started. At the moment there are at least two different concepts on the table for the development of the International Zone: one from Helmut and the other one from Jana and Peter, all three are architects. Helmut's concept envisions a grouping of national pavilions around a focal point, the "Agora", with shared infrastructure, while the second plan foresees a free grouping of national pavilions anywhere in the International Zone, also on the Crown, with emphasis on land scaping and parks.

Sebastian Wagner from Germany, an architect, brought the morning to a close and presented his studies on the International Zone and the German pavilion with the help of some panels on the wall.

After lunch, we broke up into smaller groups in the garden. One group discussed 'Human Unity and Society and Auroville', and the other group continued the discussion on the International Zone. In these discussions in smaller groups, we could explore the details and deeper meaning of why Mother wanted an International Zone in Auroville. How to get the needed financial support for the International Zone, including the budget for the Unity Pavilion which will be ready in August ? Different ideas of funding took up the later part of the afternoon and it was quite creative.

Aurovilian Bhaga had arrived in the meantime and gave a workshop to the participants before dinner, theme: "Creating awareness in the cells".

In the evening Dominique Darr started to show us some of her famous slides: "Auroville au fil du temps" – "35 years of Auroville".

Afterwards we were treated to an Indian Dance show by Devasmitha, Indian dance, and by Paulo, contemporary and fiery Brazilian dances.

Thursday, 12th of June

General Assembly

1. Annual AVI reports

After hatha yoga and relaxation in the morning, the participants met in the big hall for the General Assembly. First point on the agenda were the annual AVI-reports, represented by the AVI-Centers and –liaisons themselves. All annual reports are being sent as an attachment to this email.

2. AVI-liaisons

Ample time was given to a new AVI-liaison for Switzerland. Jérôme, who has been our Swiss liaison person so far, was, obviously for family reasons, more or less inactive since some time. Michel and Camille Egger are translators and free-lance journalists, they have been visiting Auroville recently. They felt inspired to offer starting a new liaison for Switzerland. Ingo Wey from the German speaking part of Switzerland offered to cooperate. We asked Camille and Ingo to contact Jérôme and offer him to be part of the enlarged new liaison group. This was approved by the General Assembly and they were given a warm welcome to the AVI family.

Since the question came up regarding the requirements of starting a new AVI-liaison, here are some points:

New liaison persons must

- be known to Auroville and to AVI;
- get approval by the General Assembly;
- have sufficient knowledge of Auroville;
- have a fixed address;
- be willing to reply to requests regarding Auroville;
- represent Auroville in their country;
- refer to the Auroville website and/or to the AVI representatives;

- assist people in planning Auroville visits;
If possible they should attend the AVI meetings regularly.

3. AVI Association Finances

Alain gave an overview over the finances of AVI for the accounting year 2002 / 2003. The AVI board recommends to the General Assembly to assist the International Zone group with a monthly budget of 60 Euros from August 2003 onwards for the next 12 months, when the International Zone office will move into its new premises of the Unity Pavilion. AVI regrets that it is not in a position to commit a larger amount to the budget of the IZ. The request was approved by the General Assembly.

Visit to Versailles castle and park

After a picnic lunch, we distributed ourselves in nine private cars of the participants and drove to nearby Versailles. There we took advantage of several options: some people rented bicycles and explored the huge park, while others visited the big castle and/or the smaller annex castle.

In the evening, our French hosts had arranged for a French popular folk song group to entertain us with French chansons. Music sheets were distributed and people were encouraged to sing the chansons with the performers which everyone enjoyed.

Friday, 13th of June

After breakfast, some interested people checked the AVI website which Raymond von Hammel, the AVI web designer from Germany, has updated and improved. Then we had a common concentration after which parallel sessions took place:

The AVI board met on topics of AVI statutes, board elections, and the proposed AVI 2004 meeting in Brazil with Paolo, while the other participants discussed "Human Unity and disturbances" in the big meeting hall.

The result of the AVI board meetings will be reported on Saturday morning, the last day of the General Assembly.

Exchange between AVI Centers

The afternoon saw a fruitful exchange between the AVI centers. They exchanged their experiences with each other, and discussed how to learn from each other's best practices, like how to create members, how to attract money, how to organize activities and so on. AVI Germany, USA, UK and France were exchanging their views.

Presentation of UNESCO exhibition

Yanne from AVI France gave us a presentation about the Auroville exhibition in the UNESCO-headquarters in the beginning of April 2003, where four Aurovilians were

invited. She reported that exhibitions about Auroville at UNESCO were organized in 1972 (Sri Aurobindo's centenary), in 1993, 1998, and 2003. This year the expo was a full success. The Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Matsura from Japan, realized the potential of Auroville and wrote a five-line very positive feedback. Three resolutions were later passed in favor of Auroville. All information regarding the expo in Paris is available on the website of "Outreach" in Auroville.

Land fund and Auro-Traduction presentation

Biggie gave a presentation about the land. The good news are, that during the course of the AVI meeting and before, 3 times 1000-dollars were collected as donation for the land. This is part of a larger collection of funds for the land which aims at raising one million dollar for the land until 15th of August 2003. Kindly visit the website for more information:

Email: landfund@auroville.org.in

Website: www.auroville.org/index/land/htm

One Million Dollar Campaign: www.auroville.org/million/million/htm

Jill introduced Auro-Traduction, and Auroville Translation unit, and Bhaga did - parallel with Wendy's hatha yoga - awareness exercises.

In the evening we were treated to three videos: "Art in Auroville" by Pierre Legrand, "Commercial Units / Handicrafts in Auroville", and a film of "Hampi", presented by Biggie.

After the videos, everyone met for a last evening together in the garden of the castle around a fire, singing songs and cracking jokes. It was a very enjoyable evening !

Saturday, 14th of June

General Assembly

Sharing:

For the last day in Méridon Castle Francine had organized something special. In the big meeting room, there were more than 20 huge sheets of white paper arranged on the floor, the chairs in a circle around them. The sheets carried the year number from 1968, the year of the foundation of Auroville until 2003. A short description of the main world events in that particular year were listed on the sheets, as well as the main events in Auroville. Each participants was now to write on the paper his/her name under that year, where s/he came first in contact with Mother / Sri Aurobindo / Auroville and tell us something about it, and also give a feedback on the present meeting. This sharing was enchanting, and each participant added a pinch of soul quality to it.

Report of the AVI Board meetings

IAC

The International Advisory Council needs to be elected again. We expressed our concern that the IAC seems to be presently out of function. We decided to propose to the Governing Board Dr. Mary King and Dr. Norman Myers for renomination. As new IAC members we suggested several prominent personalities committed to the ideal of Human Unity, like the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela and the former Czech president and writer Vaclav Havel.

AVI 2004 in Brazil

Paulo, former Aurovilian who lives now in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, had been invited to Paris, Meridon, to help prepare the AVI meeting 2004 in Brazil. The board had a number of discussions with Paulo, and three teams will be formed to help organize that meeting: one AVI-team, one team in Brazil, and one team in Auroville. We are aware that this meeting will be a challenge in many aspects. It is proposed that the meeting will have two parts, one part AVI and the other part presenting Auroville to Brazil. For the later part, skilled Aurovilians should present different aspects of Auroville in workshops or presentations to the Brazilian public in various cities, either before or after the AVI meeting. One of the main challenges is fundraising for tickets for these Aurovilians. Tickets are less expensive when purchased early. We agreed to all work together on these challenges. Paulo reported that space has been booked in a seminar center in Belo Horizonte for the AVI meeting from 14th-20th of June, 2004.

AVI Board elections

Like every 2 years, AVI board elections were on the agenda this year. Some changes in the AVI board membership were proposed and ratified by the General Assembly. Coincidentally, all four changes which were proposed went from male into female hands.

Firstly, since the chairmanship expired after 2 consecutive terms as per AVI Statutes, **Wolfgang** rotated with **Sonia**, who graciously agreed to be the new chairman of AVI. We heartily welcome her!

We are grateful to Wolfgang for his dedicated and successful work for AVI during his two terms as chairman. As he confirmed to keep on executing his part of our common work as before we saw the necessity to create an office for his work on the "official front". Thus it was decided to have the office of an "Executive Director" which Wolfgang will hold for the time being.

Secondly, **Alain** permanently settled down in Auroville again. Thank you, Alain, for having been such a faithful and humorous treasurer.

Sylvie Piot will take up the work as the new treasurer, keeping the job in French hands. Sylvie was elected to the AVI board for the first time. Welcome, Sylvie !

Thirdly, the position of the AVI secretary which **Martin** held for countless years, went to **Friederike**. Also to Martin our thank-yous for his accurate reporting of AVI events and welcome to Friederike, who is already well known for her writing and

translating skills. Tine remains our AVI international secretary and contact person in AV.

The forth change involves **Satyakam**, French board member, to **Devasmitha**, his Indian wife and beautiful dancer, who will serve on the AVI board for the first time.

Changes in the AVI Statutes

Martin reported the summary of proposed changes in the AVI statutes to the General Assembly. Following changes were approved by the General Assembly:

Regarding Voting Rights:

The previous regulations were: Each AVI Center has one vote.

The changes are: Each AVI Center has one vote, each Liaison group has one vote and each Board member has one vote.

Regarding Terms of Office:

Before: Board members have to step down after two terms of office of 2 years.

Now: Board members shall hold office for 2 years and can be re-elected.

Regarding Chairmanship:

No changes. As before: The chairman shall hold office for 2 years and be re-eligible for another term of 2 years.

Co-opted members:

Before: The Board can co-opt up to two additional members.

Now additionally: These members have voting right.

Honorary members:

Before: no regulation

Now: The Board may appoint honorary members. They are seen as advisors but have no voting right.

Delegation for special jobs:

Before: Two Board members can represent the Board.

Now: AVI can be represented by two Board members acting jointly, appointed by the majority of the Board for a specific work.

New regulations:

- To ensure the continuity and efficiency of its work the Board can create special offices.
- Members of the Board may be suspended or dismissed by the General Assembly or by a majority of the Board until the next General Assembly, if they are not working in accordance with the ideals of Auroville or AVI;
- AVI-liaisons or -centers may be suspended or dismissed by the General Assembly or by a majority of the Board until the next General Assembly, if they are not working in accordance with the ideals of Auroville or AVI;

A Notary Public in The Netherlands, where the AVI association is registered, has to finally ensure that the changes are in accordance with Dutch law.

The revised statutes will be published on the AVI website.

New AVI Board:

1 Sonia Dyne, AVI UK, chairman

- 2 Sylvie Piot, AVI France, treasurer
- 3 Friederike Werner, AVI Germany, secretary
- 4 Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke, AVI Germany, executive director
- 5 Alfonso Galiana, AVI Spain
- 6 Chandresh Patel, AVI USA
- 7 Devasmitha Patnaik, AVI France
- 8 Eveline Preibsch, AVI Sweden
- 9 Julian Lines, AVI USA
- 10 Martin Littlewood, AVI UK
- 11 Martin Schreurs, AVI The Netherlands
- 12 Tine Zimm, AV/AVI international secretary

Honorary members:

- 13 Mia Berden, AVI-NL,
- 14 Mauna, AV;

Co-opted members:

There are presently no co-opted members.

The General Assembly approved all proposed changes.