World Scout Parliamentary Union

PROMISING PRACTICES

The World Scout Parliamentary Union (WSPU) is an international organisation that unites the National Scout Parliamentary Associations which exist in some 90+ countries world-wide. Its object is to strengthen National Scout Organisations and World Scouting through the influence of parliamentarians who believe that Scouting is an effective educational method.

WSPU Office Bearers at the 3rd General Assembly in Warsaw, Poland

The establishment of the World Scout Parliamentary Union was the result of a discussion in Cairo, in 1989, between the Honourable Kim Chong-Hoh, President of the Korea Scout Parliamentary Group and Dr. Jacques Moreillon, Secretary General of WOSM. The idea quickly took shape and the Constitutive Assembly of WSPU met in Seoul on August 7, 1991 when the WSPU Constitution was adopted.

The Results

At the first General Assembly of WSPU in 1994, the 'Commitment of Valparaiso' was adopted. This statement sets out a six point programme of action in favour of the youth of the world. The six points are:

1. *to make their best effort in order to establish a permanent dialogue with young people and their organisations, listening for themselves what they have to tell them and approaching them in their parliamentary work.*
2. *to emphasize the legislative issues that affect them, especially those concerned with education, health, employment and environmental protection.*
3. *to legislate for the promotion towards an organised participation of young people and the support given to local and national organisations in which they come together.*
4. *to promote non-formal education and legislate in favour of its development as an integral part of the overall educational process.*
5. *to endeavour so that, making use of all the available legislative instruments, youth policies become a State issue in order to assign the required importance, resources and stability to them.*
6. *to struggle for a more equitable distribution of resources in favour of young people, their most representative organisations and the State organisations responsible for applying the policies that affect them.*

The support to non-formal education was further strengthened by the 'Manila Declaration' at the second WSPU General Assembly in 1997 and the 'Warsaw Conclusions' in 2000 in Poland.

Through WSPU there is now a greater awareness, at both the international and national level, of the importance of Scouting, not only for character-building and citizenship-building but also for nation and peace-building.

At national level there is greater support for Scouting, from law-makers of all parties and beyond Scouting, for non-formal education and for national youth policies.

WSPU

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The Reasons

The World Scout Parliamentary Union was started because it was recognised that there was potential support for Scouting which was untapped. This support existed in parliaments and governments in a non-political and non-partisan fashion.

It was also realised that most parliamentarians who have been Scouts have a limited perception of Scouting, based on their own personal experience. Bringing together parliamentarians, who have been Scouts, into an international gathering, opens their eyes and minds to the actual world-wide potential of Scouting. This compares to the transformation that young people experience when they attend a World or Regional Jamboree and are exposed to the truly international dimension of Scouting.

The most important results and impact however are a result of the work that is undertaken back in the parliamentarians home country. One of the outcomes has been the adoption of national youth policies in countries, taking the lead from the paper produced by the seven key youth organisations on 'National Youth Policies'.

WSPU also provides Scouting with an opportunity to explain the topics currently on the agenda of World Scouting: whether these are the needs of young people in a rapidly changing society, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS awareness; the education deficit and non-formal education; or the links between young people and society and even World Scouting's strategy itself.

The Methods

WSPU is an idea that became a reality through informal discussions at an international event. It builds on the existence of National Scout Parliamentary Associations and the interest and commitment to Scouting from former Scouts, who are now members of parliament.

Meeting together in General Assemblies requires countries and parliaments to host these events. There are usually a number of countries prepared to undertake this for their own particular reasons.

At each Assembly an Executive Committee is elected and this group meets between Assemblies. A permanent secretariat provides support from Warsaw. A web-site has been developed which contains information on the history, aims and future plans for WSPU. http://www.wspu.org

Representatives of World Scouting assist in preparing the agenda for the Assemblies and support the events.

Our Learning

The importance of introducing parliamentarians to the international dimension of Scouting cannot be under-estimated. This is really the trigger to broaden people's horizons, helping them to realise how truly universal Scouting is. The values that Scouting promotes are expressed and aspired to in almost all countries of the world and in almost all political parties.

The participants, who have been Scouts, recognise that the values to which they were introduced at an earlier age are still important to them, and to wider society, today. It confirms the saying *'once a Scout, always a Scout'*.

Our Future Plans

There are plans to continue meeting. At this stage Senegal, Spain and Armenia have expressed interest in holding future events.

The parliamentarians will continue to support Scouting through their work in individual countries, particularly in respect of non-formal education and the adoption of national youth policies. It is important that these policies are pro-active rather than reactive to help young people respond to the rapid changes in society.

Members of National Parliamentary Associations are an important group of people who can provide support to Scout associations as they prepare to celebrate the centenary of Scouting. It is important that parliaments are aware of the celebrations and invited to take part in the centenary celebrations in National Scout Organisations during 2007.

WSPU General Assemblies have attracted Parliamentarians from 87 countries

To date Scout parliamentarians from 87 countries have attended 3 WSPU General Assemblies and it is hoped that in the near future the number of countries represented, across all continents, will exceed 100.

For further information on WSPU, contact Piotr Uhma, Executive Secretary WSPU, secretariat@wspu.org or visit their web-site http://www.wspu.org

World Organization of the Scout Movement
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout

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