

Consultation History

The Consultation process was initiated in the mid-eighties in order to give new, broader, more transparent and more democratic leadership to MRA, which had become increasingly an uncoordinated grouping of national works and of individual initiatives since the deaths of Frank Buchman and Peter Howard in the sixties. Further, many people felt that they didn't know how decisions were made, or by whom. The consultations were designed to look at both issues internal to MRA and related to its calling and role in the world. Over the past twelve years, many who carry responsibility for the work, both "full-time" and "fully committed" working in jobs have attended these meetings, which were initially held twice a year and then, since 1995, annually. They have issued in new clarity about our "culture," about goals and about leadership and process.

(Through Cyprus there had been nine meetings, with 169 participants from 36 countries.)

1. April 1989 - Chantilly & Taizé, France

Focused on our responsibilities to the communist world and encouraged a sensitive but whole-hearted response to openings being given. Also emphasized MRA's "enabling role" and need to cooperate and explore with others (e.g. the Taizé community itself) what the Spirit of God is seeking to bring about in the world. Issue of universality of message discussed and importance of World Bulletin underlined.

2. October 1989 - Tokyo, Japan

Addressed "corporate culture," the training and development of people and strategies and priorities in East Asia and Pacific. Identified need for conscious efforts to remove unintended obstacles to the full participation and leadership of non-Christians, women, people in jobs, etc., affirmed the value of non-Western ways of doing things, discussed how finances are handled in different countries, and called attention to the need for more rounded development of full-time workers. Recommended alternating 'study course' between Australia and India and starting a student program in Caux. Some attempt to develop priorities in Asia. Destiny of Japan and neighbors as nations called to world responsibility highlighted.

3. April 1990 - Sao Paulo, Brazil

Exposed many to heart-power and grass-roots initiatives of Latin America for first time, and helped bring Latin Americans into full responsibility. Simultaneous translation provided. The value of direct social involvements by individuals effectively demonstrated. Called for decentralized decision-making through international coordinating groups organized around shared concerns, with responsible people identified, and emphasized that enlistment would more likely be a response to the boldness of our aims than to the type of training offered.

4. September 1990 - Digny en Vauche, France (near Geneva)
Focused on Caux. Recommendations to improve welcome and inclusion of newcomers, to strengthen Caux community, to intensify search for opportunities to let the facilities in the off-season, and to widen international responsibility for the practical carrying of Caux so that life-changing gets priority.
5. February 1991 - Asia Plateau, India
In the context of the Gulf War, a God-given opportunity to understand Islam more deeply and to explore the multi-faith dimension of MRA. Also, a search for inclusive ways to express publicly the universal essence of MRA. A reminder that "my life is my message." Conviction that "Asia Plateau" should become increasingly a home for the world and for MRA ideas, and that it should play a vital role in developing the experience, expression and aims of MRA.
6. September 1991 - Berlin, Germany
An opportunity to absorb the meaning of the new realities of Europe. Two major focuses: 1) the challenges of enlistment, with particular emphasis on clear aims, practical frameworks and continuing education; and 2) further steps in the development of the Consultative Process. Recommended various improvements to the consultative process, the holding of regional consultations and creating an international coordination group to help us set priorities, coordinate activities and resolve difficult issues.
7. January - August 1992 - Caux, Switzerland and London, U.K.
Three separate meetings to consider and ultimately establish the Coordination Group, including nominations and selection of those who would serve, terms of service, and the definition of its purpose.
8. October 1992 - Ottawa, Canada
A review of all aspects of MRA's world finances, including the different approaches around the world. A call for transparency, for more realistic costing of projects and actions, and for new ways of caring for the health and welfare of full-time workers, of finding new sources of funding, and of sharing responsibility globally, most especially for Caux.
9. November 1993 - Cyprus
Consideration of four issues: 1) MRA's global focuses, resulting in the agreed statement "MRA: Initiative for Change;" 2) Responsibility and leadership, leading to a call for stronger, collective leadership based on service; 3) Communicating our message, including readiness to change the name and our ways of projecting who we are and what we are about; and 4) the multi-faith dimension of MRA, with emphasis on the individual need for spiritual deepening.
10. October/November, 1994 - Kenya
This Consultation provided an opportunity to reflect on the quality of life we live together as a world team and on the life we offer to the world. There was particular focus on life-changing and what we mean by that, and also on the moral

standards and their meaning in the modern age. Meeting in Africa provided a unique opportunity to look at the tremendous needs of that continent and also to examine honestly the tendency for a “dependency syndrome” to develop in relation between Africans and those from the developed western world. Among other issues focused were the need to provide greater accessibility to full responsibility for the work of MRA to people in jobs and to women. Questions were also raised about the need to care for the heart of our world work, not least by preparing ourselves spiritually to make the most of the 50th anniversary of Caux in 1996.

11. October/November, 1995 - Tirley Garth

This meeting was less a Consultation than a spiritual retreat for those representing all the different faith traditions that are within the wider MRA family. The purpose was spiritual preparation for the Jubilee celebrations in Caux - a chance to prepare our hearts for whatever God may wish to give through that time. A unique feature of this gathering was that similar gatherings were held either simultaneously or at approximately the same time on every continent, drawing together people in the whole world work to pray for and to prepare ourselves for the Jubilee. One result of these gatherings was a collectively experienced inner resolve to give much greater emphasis to the spiritual nurture of our team so that all we undertake by way of work in the world is undergirded spiritually.

12. April 1997 – Melbourne, Australia

Focused on issue of participation and the development of people. Included cross-fertilization between those responsible for MRA training courses in several countries, and consideration of establishing ‘co-worker’ programs along the lines of the UK experience. The consultation addressed needs such as proper support mechanisms for those involved in MRA, including the possibility of individuals having a ‘mentor’. The ongoing and rounded development of MRA full-time workers received particular attention.

13. April 1998 – Jamaica

The Governor General, Sir Howard Cooke, gave his vision for what MRA is meant to be and do in the world. Reviewed MRA’s governing processes: how we make decisions and choose priorities, establish the kind of leadership needed, resolve disputes, as part of the process of renewal within MRA and discernment of our calling for the next millennium. Decision to establish a new International Coordinating Council (ICC), (later amended to International Council, or IC). Replacing the International Coordination Group, this group would be mandated to help discern priorities for our global work and marshal support. Recommended creating a Council of Elders, to advise and support the IC and to help resolve disputes as needed.

14. March 1999 – Chapel Hill, South Africa

Focused on MRA’s named programs and their relationship to the heart and core values of MRA. Confirmed, with some minor changes, the Jamaica proposals for the creation of the International Council and a group of elders and elected its first members through a process which sought consensus. Affirmed the work of

MRA's named programs, of related named programs and of a variety of national programs, viewed as springing from people with a "sense of mission and calling." Recognized certain possible unintended consequences of these programs and set out guidelines and recommendations for how the programs might be regularly evaluated and how they might better communicate and coordinate with each other and with the International Council.

15. February 2000 – Asia Plateau, India

Looked at the world and MRA's global priorities from a non-western perspective. Strong participation from Africa, Asia and Latin America. With respect to "internal MRA", looked at how to improve communications to and within certain regions, questions of finance, training and skills development, enlistment, team building and carrying forward the work of MRA with both full-time workers and those in full- or part-time jobs. With respect to outreach, called for more attention on the issues of global poverty and corruption. MRA's worldwide goals (Cyprus consultation) were amended to reflect the concern with poverty. Received and discussed papers from the IC on the MRA name, a Global HoHo, or gathering, central characteristics of MRA and the role of fully committed individuals who are working.

16. March 2001 – Richmond, United States of America

Addressed the theme "New ways of Living and expressing the ideas of MRA in a changing world". Discussions on the core principles and disciplines which have stood at the core of MRA over the years, aided by input from the "Conforum" (an e-mail discussion facilitated by Mike Brown for six months prior to the Consultation) resulted in the writing of the Richmond Affirmations, a statement on "who we are as an MRA fellowship". Three projects were discussed: a video series, a proposed book describing this framework for living MRA in more detail, and a global website. Five people were selected to serve on the IC, beginning in October 2001 and October 2002. Discussion on a new name for Moral Re-Armament resulted in two names being carried forward to a reconvened Consultation in Caux on August 6 and 7, 2001: *Initiatives of Change* and *Change International*.

16a. August 2001 – Caux, Switzerland

Over two days the two possible names for MRA which had emerged from the Richmond Consultation, along with additional suggestions, were considered. After a lengthy and vigorous discussion, accompanied by prayer and quiet, the consensus was that *Initiatives of Change* should be the new name in English, and that teams using other languages would find the translation which best expressed the spirit behind these words. The subhead 'From the Personal to the Global' was recommended to accompany the new name.