

Report on the UN Vienna trip from my perspective: WSV President John Dussich

Day 1, April 23rd: This was the first day of the 16th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. It was filled with first attending the NGO meeting and supporting Irvin's pointed comments on how the WSV and other NGOs did not appreciate being not invited due to "inadequate space." I also met new people (especially those who were key to the objectives of the WSV); learning about the workings of the Commission and its related sub-groups and procedures; and, learning the UN "culture" and its relationship to what we are trying to accomplish. Irvin Waller was a dutiful teacher and devoted much time and energy to keep us (Marc, Hidemichi and I) on track. Much of the time was also devoted to distributing handouts that had been made by Irvin, Marc and myself (some examples are attached, including the new WSV brochure brought by Marc). Much of the time was spent promoting the WSV in conversation as well as learning about the countries that are the friendliest to the cause for victim rights' reforms, especially the idea of a convention for 2010.

Day 2, April 24th: On this day both Irvin and I registered to make our respective presentations; however, since NGOs are last, and since Irvin had to leave around mid-day, he could not present, he asked me to make a presentation in his place. Thus, late in the day, I presented information about crime prevention and victims from both his paper and mine. Afterwards, a number of persons complimented me on having represented victims. Having made a presentation, gave me visibility identified with the WSV and the cause for victims. Consequently, I was approached by a number of NGOs who wanted to support what we were doing. During this day, I became aware that the US delegation and the Canadian delegation were in a closed door session discussing the issue of the Victim Questionnaire and whether its use would be a valid way to assess the degree of implementation of the UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power. By the end of the day, the word was that they were deadlocked and it seemed the Americans wanted to cancel the entire project. Toward the end of the day, Marc and I both spent time speaking to government representatives who were interested: Finland, Canada, Netherland, USA, England, Brazil, Japan and Norway. Hidemichi was able to meet with the UNOCD Director of the Division for Treaty Affairs, Ms. Kuniko OZAKI. I had asked him to simply make contact and give her an overview of all the things that Japan was doing in the victim area. He was of the opinion that she was a bit reluctant to embrace the need for any major victim related initiatives. However, he did suggest she meet with me on the next day, and she agreed. He also introduced me to some members of two Japanese organizations (UNAFEI and the Japanese Bar Association), both groups were positive towards the victim issues and (in large part due to Hidemichi's conversations with them) were aware of what Japan had done recently for victims in their country.

Day 3, April 25th: The first thing in the morning, I replenished the main table outside the conference room where the Commission meeting was being held, with some of the flyers and WSV brochures we had prepared. I took the time to notice how various delegates went to the table and picked through the offerings. I was pleased to note how our handouts were often picked up, scanned and retained. All the more reason for preparing

ourselves better for the next Commission meeting next year! Just after noon time, I met with Ms. OZAKI. She was quite pleasant and, much to my delight, seemed eager to just chat about victims. I am sure her indoctrination by Hidemichi help a lot. She confessed being a bit naïve about things in general as this was a new position for her. Most importantly, she was eager to learn about how other countries were taking note of Japan's recent advances and was pleased to learn of about the countries that were aligned on the issue of victims. I spend about half of our time together, going over what the WSV was about, our role in coordinating the birth of the UN Declaration on Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, about the Victim questionnaire, some of my recommendations to increase the visibility of victim issues and about our intent to lobby for a Convention at the 2010 Congress. She invited me to come back any time to keep her apprised of how our campaign was progressing. Later in the day, I was finally able to meet one of the senior US delegates (John Bargeron) and handed him some of the WSV flyers and brochure and told him what our position was and how, as an American and the President of the WSV, I would like to be a resource for him on the topic of victims. This seemed to get his attention. He suggested we could get together outside the meeting room later. Although, I tried to follow up, he was not to be found. Toward the end of the day, Marc came to me and said the Canadian delegates told him, the Americans had relinquished their position to cancel the victim questionnaire and were now willing to consider making revisions to pursue the original objective to evaluate the extent of implementation of the UN Declaration. This was heartening news and it caused Marc and I to develop a long-term strategy that would lead to the successful adoption of the Convention for 2010 and would capitalize on the next two UN Commission meetings, the next EC meetings, and the use of our respective Institutes to host two expert meetings (this strategy will be further developed after the June EC meeting by the UN Liaison Committee). While in Mexico the following week, I met with Elias Carranza from ILANUD who stayed in Vienna until the last day of the Commission on April 27. In his speech to the Mexican Congress he commented on the results of the 16th Commission and presented the "Compendium of Standards and Norms of the UN on Prevention of Crime and Criminal Justice" from last year which were used as references for the 16th Commission's sessions. Four of the 55 standards he showed in his Power Point were focused on victims:

Victims

- a. 41. Declaration of basic principles of justice for the victims of the crime and the abuse of power (A/RES/40/34),
- b. 42. Implementation of the Declaration of basic principles of justice for the victims of crimes and abuse of power (ECOSOC/RES/1989/57),
- c. 43. Plan of action for the implementation of the Declaration of basic principles of justice for the victims of crimes and abuse of power (ECOSOC/RES/1998/21)
- d. 44. Directives on justice in matters concerning minor victims and witnesses of crimes (ECOSOC/RES/2005/20).

He inferred that the key victim issue, the Questionnaire to measure the extent of implementation of the Declaration (related to items #42 and #43), was accepted to be reworked so that the method would be more realistic and acceptable. He did not have

the official results, so these were his subjective assessments. I think the four of us made an impact. There is no immediate way to determine how much, but it was clear that much more work needs to be done and that we must prepare well in advance with a highly coordinated agenda. I also spoke with Irene Melop who want us to also have visibility at the UN in New York City.