



## In this edition:

- Forewords from the President of the movement, Rifat Odeh Kassis
- Letter of introduction by Ileana
- IEC meeting
- It is official: Liberia is now an associated member of DCI
- Next International General Assembly 2011 in Uganda
- DCI-Congo gives life to a National Observatory on children's rights
- Haiti press release-statement
- DCI-Israel Director visits the International Secretariat in Geneva
- DCI-Netherlands moved its office

## Welcome to the Defence for Children International (DCI) Newsletter

### Forewords from the President of the movement, Rifat Odeh Kassis

Dear sections,

As you all know, Laetitia will be leaving her position as Director of the IS at the end of this year [2009]. I would like to thank Laetitia for her dedication to DCI, her efforts and the energy she has invested in our movement. On behalf of DCI, I wish her success and all the best in her future undertakings.

From 7 January 2010, Ileana Bello will take up the challenge of running the IS as its new Executive Director. Ileana is Italian and holds a master's degree in International Cooperation for Development and Project Design. She has extensive experience working at the governmental and non-governmental levels, as well

as in the academic field. Among other things, she has worked as a project consultant for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nicaragua, and has been a project manager and head of mission of the Italian NGO CRIC (Centro Regionale di Intervento per la Cooperazione) in Macedonia and Kosovo.

Let us all help her assume her new tasks and work jointly towards the strengthening and growth of the DCI movement.

Season's greetings to all and a blessed 2010 full of achievements in the field of child rights!

Rifat

### Letter of introduction by Ileana

Dear friends,

The aim of this introduction is to let you know a bit more about me and for me to become closer to all of you.

I come from Rome (Italy), a place I like very much! I am a proud mother of two little daughters, and decided to move to Geneva with my family after some time spent abroad.

My background experience is linked to NGO work: I spent three years in the Balkans working in humanitarian/emergencies operations. Later on I worked at the headquarters of an organisation in Rome that dealt with activities in the Middle East (particularly Iraq), and in Nicaragua in supporting the capacity building of a local authority.

My studies focused on human rights, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Children's rights was the focus of my first post-graduate experience.



I am very glad to be a part of DCI, of such a powerful and long-lasting movement.

I want to reaffirm my commitment towards the organisation and my engagement in leading the IS and the movement forward. I hope that I will be able to meet all of you personally and that there will be opportunities to share



January 2010

Vol. 8, No. 1

## Letter of introduction *(continued from page 1)*

with you challenges and concerns regarding the rights of the child today. I am ready to listen to you and to learn from your experience, and I am also available to support you if you need any assistance.

I am sure we will all get along well, discussing, confronting and sometimes even

arguing, but keeping in mind that our goal is the same and that we should cooperate to reach the best interest of the child.

With great respect,  
Ileana

## IEC meeting in Geneva *(13, 14 and 15 January 2010)*

Despite the snowfalls affecting Geneva and several other European cities—which managed to temporarily strand Rifat Kassis in Paris and Abul Manaff Kemokai in Brussels—the IEC meeting took place from 13 to 15 January 2010. The following are the main conclusions of the meeting:

- The great majority of the objectives for 2009 were met. Two regional meetings took place in 2009 (one in Latin America and one in Africa), and it is hoped that in 2010 there will be one in Europe.

The Latin American regional meeting was held in August 2009 in Buenos Aires, coinciding with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the CRC. The meeting had a good audience, which has improved DCI's visibility in the region. The results of the meeting were transcribed in the "Declaration of Buenos Aires. Juan and Marcos have developed a regional plan of activities for 2010-2011 which will be further improved to become more operational.

The African regional meeting was organized in October in Sierra Leone, with the support of Cordaid. Despite the fact that it was not possible to bring the totality of DCI's section in Africa to Freetown this time, the outcomes of the meeting were very positive and it was decided that, on the regional level, Africa will focus on juvenile justice. A strategic plan for this was drafted.

- DCI will remain a member of the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and will continue to host its secretariat. However, we would like to take more of a leading role. A discussion with the Panel's steering committee is underway and the terms of the collaboration will be clarified and put in writing.

- Funds: The IS is still undergoing a financial crisis and, unfortunately, few funds have thus far been secured for the future. The IS and IEC will therefore focus all their efforts on fund-raising, trying to re-build relationships with core funders and finding new opportunities among Permanent



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January 2010

Vol. 8, No. 1

## IEC meeting *(continued from page 2)*

Missions, foundations and the EU.

- Priorities for the juvenile justice programme:

1. The International Secretariat will continue producing annual reports on juvenile justice. The next will be on the topic of child participation in juvenile justice.

2. The IS should play a more proactive role in encouraging national sections to submit alternative reports to the CRC.

3. DCI's advocacy committee should be reactivated, with input from the future Advocacy Officer.

- Participation of DCI in international fora:

1. DCI-Palestine decided to withdraw from the Coalition on Child Soldiers, since it was determined that the yearly membership fee is too high.

2. The Working Group on Juvenile Justice (of the NGO Group for the CRC),

which was co-hosted by DCI and Terre des Hommes, will be closed, as it was not operational.

3. The International Secretariat will remain a member of the working groups on Violence against Children, and of the Human Rights Council. The IS will be an observer of the working groups on the new complaints mechanism for the CRC and on alternative care.

- A proposal to set up an advisory committee was accepted. The committee would be comprised of all former presidents, internationally known child rights experts, former CRC members, etc. The various roles and composition of the committee should be further discussed.

- The IS, in collaboration with Abdul Manaff Kemokai, will prepare guidelines for gender mainstreaming for the movement

The meeting was also the occasion for a farewell dinner for Laetitia van Haren. The dinner took place on the 14th of January at a restaurant on a river island in Geneva.



## It is official: Liberia is now an associated member of DCI

The IEC accepted the candidature presented by DCI-Liberia to join the DCI movement. According to our statutes, only the IGA can accept new members; therefore the IEC accepted DCI-Liberia as an "associate member" for the time being.

The IEC and the IS welcome Liberia into the DCI family and wish Executive Director Fodday M. Kawah and the rest of the team great success in their activities!



January 2010

Vol. 8, No. 1

## Next International General Assembly 2011 in Uganda

The next IGA will take place in Uganda, most likely from the 12th to the 16th of September 2011. As in the past, the Assembly will be followed by an International Conference

Two Committees were established in

order to organise both the Conference and the Assembly. Fundraising remains a priority and the IS, in collaboration with the Uganda section and with the regional office, will work to secure funds for the proposal.

## DCI-Congo gives life to a National Observatory on children's rights

DCI Congo (Republic Democratic of) recently established a National Observatory on children's rights, conceived to

follow-up to the recommendations issued after the UPR of Congo last year in Geneva.

## Haiti press release-statement

Following the 12 January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, several national sections raised the question of international adoptions of child quake victims. Indeed, as underlined by the ISS / IRC, the risk of illegal adoptions and trafficking of children increases sharply in a situation of war or post-natural disaster. In its statement, DCI-France stresses the importance of "the rule of law in the best interests of Haitian children". Too often children are classified as orphans when they were in fact only temporarily separated from their families.

Hasty conclusions made in the heat of great emotion can lead to a dangerous and uncontrollable situation of child trafficking. DCI-Argentina therefore strongly discourages the temporary evacuation of children. DCI-France also states that any child victim should be moved only if his or her identity and parentage have been established and only if a judicial authority legally entrusts the child to an approved host organization.

For that, DCI-France calls on:

- Haitian authorities to quickly organise the reunion of lone children with members of their families;
- Airline pilot unions and shipping companies to not take onboard children who do not have the documents required by the International Convention of the Hague of 1993;
- Journalists to transmit this warning to the world; and
- Parents wishing to adopt to not let themselves be abused by associations offering the quick adoption of a Haitian child.

DCI-Argentina and DCI-France both stress the importance of rebuilding the future of Haitian children in their own country before considering any international adoption. The rule of law in the best interests of Haitian children must absolutely take priority over emotions caused by this dramatic event.

[Click here to download the full statement from DCI-Argentina and DCI-France](#)



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January 2010

Vol. 8, No. 1

## DCI-Israel Director visits the International Secretariat in Geneva

**D**CI-Israel Director Hadeel Younis visited Geneva recently to represent Israeli NGOs on the occasion of Israel's review of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. During her time in Geneva, Ms. Younis met with the team of DCI's International Secretariat to share information on ongoing programmes and activities and to discuss other subjects of common interest.

DCI-Israel is a small section, with only one paid staff member (the Director) and a large number of volunteers who help run the different programmes in the field. Activities include providing support to children in conflict with the law; lobbying authorities to allow NGOs

to visit places of detention; and working with NGO coalitions in a number of the-matics (juvenile justice, Internet safety). The Israeli section is active as well in trying to reduce violence and abuses by the Israeli army against young Palestinians. The section also collaborates with DCI-Palestine on a number of issues, including facilitating access to Israeli authorities in order to register complaints and make requests. A more detailed presentation of DCI-Israel's activities on juvenile justice will be presented in the February edition of the Juvenile Justice Newsletter.

Contact DCI-Israel: Hadeel Younis, Director, [info@dci.org.il](mailto:info@dci.org.il).

## DCI-Netherland moved its office

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Please note that the articles contained in this newsletter are the individual contributions of DCI's national sections and the International Secretariat, and as such do not constitute the official position of the IEC members or the movement as a whole.