

World Federation of Science Journalists

Minutes of the General Assembly (London)

Wednesday 1st July 2009; 1630 to 1830
John Tudor room, 2nd floor, Central Hall Westminster, London (United Kingdom)

Present:

See attached list of association representatives that participated and voted, **Annex 1**

1. Pallab Ghosh proposed adoption of agenda and of the minutes of the 18th April 2007 General Assembly held in Melbourne. Both were adopted without modifications.

2. Report from Pallab Ghosh, President

Pallab said a few words about the accomplishments of the previous two years, particularly the SjCOOP project, which was a phenomenal success, and the development of the online course in science journalism, now available in six languages, the latest being Chinese, thanks to the work of Jia Hepeng.

Pallab said that the member associations can hope to see their Federation offer even more in the future. He took the opportunity to thank and introduce to the Assembly the members of the WFSJ Secretariat: Project Manager Ms. Olfa Labassi, ICT Specialist Augustin Denis, and Executive Director Jean-Marc Fleury.

Details of Pallab's report as WFSJ President from April 2007 to June 2009 can be read in the WFSJ 2007-2009 Report "Empowerment through Knowledge", attached as **Annex 2**.

3. WFSJ Advisory Board

Pallab, stressing the need for the Federation to keep the expertise and experience of previous board members and past presidents, proposed the following resolution which was unanimously adopted by the general assembly:

RESOLUTION

The Executive Board will select and appoint, utilise and reorganize as it deems fit a Board of Advisers made up of former presidents of the World Federation and such other notable individuals whom it determines may assist in advancing the aims and aspirations of the Federation.

4. Report from Deborah Blum, Chair of the Program Committee

Deborah focussed her report explaining that the Program team has decided to develop a project on the reporting of climate change.

Deborah explained that the Climate Change Project plans to deliver a multiplatform product that would include a book, a web site and a CD. The project will focus on 'what science journalists do that is unique in reporting climate change'.

The Climate Change Project will deliver examples of good reporting. It will explain how to understand such a complex issue, with tips sheets. It will become a learning resource. It will also take to the road as a series of traveling workshops.

Other information on WFSJ Program activities can be found in **Annex 2**.

5. Report from Nadia El-Awady, Chair of the Finance Committee

Nadia asked the Assembly to look at page 7 of the 2007 – 2009 Report, **Annex 2**. They could observe that, over the two-year period, the financial situation of the Federation has improved with its account increasing from \$27,604 to \$47,047.

That period also included the completion of the \$2 million SjCOOP project which, as required by donors, has been financially neutral for the WFSJ account. In reality, the SjCOOP financing covered most of the costs of maintaining the WFSJ secretariat, since the establishment of the Federation was one of the objectives of SjCOOP.

She ended by highlighting the fact that the Federation is now successfully collecting the membership fees from its members, a major achievement of the previous two years.

6. Questions and Discussion

Pallab then asked for approval of the reports by himself, Deborah and Nadia. The assembly unanimously adopted the three reports; see attached 2007 – 2009 WFSJ Report, **Annex 2**.

7. Amendments to the Constitution - I

A draft resolution on the creation of new categories of members was presented for approval by the General Assembly. Pallab explained that the new category of 'associate partner' would make it possible for the Federation to widen its funding and strengthen beneficial partnerships. Regular members, i.e. associations of science journalists and communicators, would keep the exclusive right to vote at the WFSJ General Assembly.

Deborah said this new category of members was initiated following the interest of the United States' Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) to join the Federation, mainly as an expression of support for the goals of the Federation. She briefly described CASW, stressing the complete sharing of goals between the two organizations. See CASW website: <http://casw.org/>

Following some discussion, mainly regarding the need to clearly distinguish 'associate partners' (like CASW) from 'commercial companies and private corporations', the General Assembly approved an earlier version of the amendment to the Constitution which now creates two new categories of members: 'associate partners' and 'corporate partners'. The adopted amendments produce a new version of article 3, the essential changes being the insertion of the new paragraphs b) and c). See the full text of the new modified constitution as **annex 3**.

The discussion on this amendment also led to a modification of sub-article 3.6, in the advent that the General Assembly would not be held within two years of the previous one.

Article 3: Membership and Partnership (new title)

3.1 The WFSJ is an "umbrella" organization; thus, its members are other organizations and associations, including mainly national associations of science writers, journalists, editors, and communicators. (no modification)

3.2 Individuals can be represented via a national or a regional association of science writers or journalists in their region or through the International Science Writers Association (ISWA). (no modification)

3.3 To become a member of the WFSJ an association must apply and be accepted in accordance with this Constitution. Membership and Partnership applications will be examined and accepted or refused by the Board of WFSJ. (new paragraph)

3.3 To become a member of the WFSJ, an applicant must apply and be accepted in accordance with this Constitution. Membership of the Federation shall consist of the following three categories: Ordinary, Associate, and Corporate. (new paragraph)

*a) **Ordinary Membership** shall be open to any association, network or group of professional journalists who support the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled appropriate by the WFSJ Board. Ordinary Members shall pay an Annual Membership Fee set by the Executive Board, and are entitled to one vote per member at the General Assembly. (new)*

*b) **Associate Partnership** shall be open to any association, council, organization, board, foundation, institute, network, or group which supports the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled to be appropriate by the WFSJ Executive Board. Associate Partners shall pay an annual fee which shall be set by the WFSJ Board.*

Representatives of Associate Partners may participate in debates on matters of business at any General Assembly, but shall not be entitled to vote. (new)

*b) **Corporate Partnership** shall be open to any statutory organizations, boards, corporations, and public and private companies which supports the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled to be appropriate by Executive Board of WFSJ. Corporate Partners shall pay an annual fee which shall be set by the WFSJ Board. Representatives of Corporate Partners may participate in debates on matters of business at any General Assembly, but shall not be entitled to vote. (new)*

3.4 Members who violate the spirit of the WFSJ constitution, or who do not fulfill duties and responsibilities of membership, particularly in regard to the timely payment of membership fees, will be warned by the Executive Board, and cease to be members if three such warnings go unheeded. (no modification)

3.5 Members who have not paid their contributions lose the right to vote. (no modification)

3.6 Board members are normally elected at the World Conference of Science Journalists. In the advent of a World Conference not being held within two years of the previous one, elections of the Board members will be done electronically. (new)

Pallab concluded his term as President thanking board members, particularly Past President Wilson da Silva and Vice-President Diran Onifade, who were leaving the WFSJ, having reached the limit of two terms on the Executive Board.

8. Amendment to the Constitution - II

At Pallab's request, Véronique Morin, former WFSJ President from 2002 to 2004, took over the chairing of the General Assembly.

She explained that there was a contradiction within the WFSJ Constitution which, in article 5.1 says that the Executive Board will include the Past President while in article 5.2 says: "A Board member can be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms". She proposed the following resolution to waive the 2 terms limit for a President who becomes Past President and has already served two terms on the Board.

The proposed changes, approved by the General Assembly, make article 5 modified in the following way;

Article 5: Executive Board

5.1 The Executive Board is the administrative and operational body of the WFSJ and consists of seven members: a President, a Past-President, one Vice-president, one Secretary, one Treasurer, and two at-large members. (no modification)

5.2 Members of the board are to be elected every two years when the General Assembly meets. The President of the WFSJ must be a science journalist who is an active member of a WFSJ member association, and a citizen of the nation that becomes the next host nation. All Board members have to be present at the General Assembly to be elected. The Board should reflect as much as possible its membership and cover most regions of the world. A Board member can be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms, except for a member of the Board who becomes Past President. Nominations for the board will be accepted one month prior to the General Assembly. (modified paragraph)

5.3 The Board acts within the regulations of the Constitution and those decisions imposed by the General Assembly, but also within the limits of a budget. (no modification)

9. Election of Board members

The General Assembly approved the election of new board members:

President	Ms. Nadia El-Awady	Middle East (Egypt)	Journalist
Past President	Mr. Pallab Ghosh	Europe (UK)	Science Correspondent, British Broadcasting Corporation
Vice-President	Ms. Valeria Roman	Latin America (Argentina)	Journalist, <i>Clarín</i> newspaper
General Counsel and Secretary	Ms. Natasha Mitchell	Asia (Australia)	Journalist, Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Treasurer & Chair of Finance Committee	Mr. Hepeng Jia	Asia-Pacific (China)	Editor-in-chief, <i>Science News Bi-weekly</i>
Member-at-Large	Ms. Deborah Blum	North America (USA)	Journalist & author
Member-at-Large & Chair of Programme Committee	Mr. Christophe Mvondo	Africa (Cameroon)	Journalist, <i>La Nouvelle Expression</i> newspaper

10. Word from WFSJ President Nadia El-Awady

Nadia expressed her gratitude for the trust put by member associations and the previous board members in her, to preside over the Federation, and direct the next World Conference of Science Journalists to be held in Cairo, in April 2011.

She described previous unsuccessful attempts at trying to establish sustained communications with presidents of member associations. She said she will work hard to establish communications and making sure associations 'tell us what to do'. She renewed the commitment of the Board to reach out to member associations and listen to their suggestions. Nadia announced that a new listserv for opening and maintaining a dialogue would be put in place.

She ended welcoming everyone to Cairo for another spectacular World Conference of Science Journalists.

Annex 1: Voting representatives of member associations at the 1st July 2009 WFSJ General Assembly, London (United Kingdom)

Voting representatives of member associations at the WFSJ General Assembly 1st July 2009, London (United Kingdom)		
Association	Representative	Title
African Federation of Science Journalists	Mr. Diran Onifade	Pres
Arab Science Journalists Association	Mr. Magdy Said	Pres
Association for Science Writers & Journalists Intellect - Russia	Ms. Ljubna Strelnikova	Rep
Association of British Science Writers	Mr. Ted Nield	Pres
Australian Science Communicators	Ms. Jenni Metcalfe	Rep
Bangladesh Science Writers & Journalists Forum	Mr. Mohammad Kawsar Uddin	Rep
Cameroon Science For Life	Mr. Christophe Mvondo	Pres
Canadian Science Writers' Association	Ms. Kathryn O'Hara	Pres
Catalan Association for Scientific Communication	Ms. Mercé Piqueras	Pres
Chilean Association of Science Journalists	Ms. Antonieta Garcia	Rep
Chinese Society for Science and Technology Journalism	Mr. Huang Anwen	Exec. Member
Danish Science Journalists' Association	Mr. Morten Busch	Rep
Dutch Association of Science Journalists	Mr. Elmar Veerman	Sec
European Union of Science Journalists' Associations	Mr. Hans-Joachim Neubert	Pres
Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists	Ms Raili Leino	Pres
French association of science journalists - AJSPI	Mr. Philippe Pajot	Pres
German Science Journalists' Association - WPK	Mr. Jan Lublinski	Rep
German Association of Science Writers - TELI	Mr. Wolfgang Goede	Rep
International Science Writers Association	Mr. Jim Cornell	Pres
Irish Science & Technology Journalists Association	Ms. Anna Nolan	VP
Italian Association of Science Journalists	Ms. Cristina Valsecchi	Rep
Japanese Association of Science and Technology Journalists	Ms. Mariko Takahashi	Rep
Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture	Ms. Sheila Ochugboju	Chairman
Medical Journalists Association of Japan	Mr. Kenji Makino	Rep
National Association of Science Writers	Ms. Deborah Blum	Rep
Nigeria Association of Science Journalists	Mr. Onche Onde	Rep
Quebec Science Communicators Association	Mr. Mathieu-Robert Sauvé	Pres
Rwanda Association for Science Journalists	Mr. Aimable Twahirwa	Pres
South African Science Journalists Association*	Mr. George Classens	Pres
Uganda Science Journalists Association	Mr. William Odinga	Pres
*The Secretariat of the WFSJ made an error that did not allow South Africa to vote, though the Association was a full member of the Federation. The WFSJ Secretariat regrets this error.		

Annex 2: Report by 2007 – 2009 WFSJ President Pallab Ghosh

See attached WFSJ 2007 – 2009 Report “Empowerment through Journalism”.

Annex 3: WFSJ Constitution (revised)

Constitution

World Federation of Science Journalists

Preamble

In the increasingly borderless world of the 21st century, a world dominated by international operating systems, global communications networks, and pan-national commercial, educational, and cultural institutions, science and technology journalists need comparable global organizations to match and 'counteract' these major socio-political-economic developments. Such global vision and access is all the more necessary as science and technology continues to evolve both as driver, and potential destroyer, of human progress. This applies to the industrialized as well as the developing countries. Although there are distinct centres of excellence around the world, much scientific research is no longer being confined by geographical barriers or political boundaries. Science news of interest and importance to people everywhere can originate anywhere. At the same time, many problems and challenges of the modern age -- climate change, runaway population, emerging diseases, environmental pollution, ecological degradation, and even techno-terrorism -- are global issues.

The concept of a truly international, non-political, all-inclusive organization -- a World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) -- is a direct response to the new awareness of science's internationalism. A proposal for such a federation was made at the First World Conference of Science Journalists in Tokyo in 1992 and later formally included as part of the statement issued by delegates to the Second World Conference, held in Hungary in 1999. This statement, known as "The Budapest Declaration", specifically recognized Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression ... without interference ... and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Within this framework, the WFSJ is designed to answer some specific needs of science journalists. Despite their independent nature, journalists can be influenced and educated by their colleagues from other countries. While many issues are the same no matter where one works, there are political, social, and cultural differences that shape both science and journalism in different parts of the world. It is professionally healthy to discover and appreciate the quality and quantity of good reporting and research outside one's national borders. Equally important, just as scientists benefit from the contacts made through international organizations, similar associations of journalists can create

invaluable mutual-assistance networks that can span the globe, especially in the era of the Internet.

On another level, the WFSJ is intended as an instrument for making major scientific questions and technical issues transparent and addressing the scientific illiteracy of much of the world's citizenry. This means that science journalists can no longer be mere translators of science ("clever spokespeople for researchers") but rather they must be thoughtful critics and commentators, linking the world of science and technology to the daily life of ordinary persons, clarifying the processes of research and discovery, and making the public aware of the social, economic, and political context of science and technology, and its impact on society.

The collective power and influence of the WFSJ and its worldwide membership may also encourage publishers and broadcast producers to dedicate more space and time to science (including health, technology, and environment) coverage and to lend support to the professional training of science journalists, especially young journalists in the developing world. One major goal is to assist the formation of science journalists' associations in countries where there are none and to energize existing organizations.

In short, the WFSJ has the potential to promote a new culture of science journalism, one that can cope with the challenges of the 21st century and live up to the principles of civil society and democracy. Only well-informed and educated people can understand the consequences of scientific issues, or the applications of research, and ultimately support or reject them.

Article 1: Mission

1.1 The World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) is a non-profit, non-governmental, international organization representing science and technology journalists' organizations in all parts of the world. WFSJ primarily represents the interest of associations of science journalists. The Federation is designed to encourage the creation of national associations, recognizing that it is a powerful tool for networking and improving science journalism. The WFSJ serves as a means for science communicators and journalists from all around the world to share in the mutual benefits of an international professional organization.

1.2 The WFSJ supports, respects, and works to promote the rights, safety, and livelihoods of science journalists in all countries, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, or sexual preference.

Article 2: Purposes and Objectives

2.1 The WFSJ strives to improve communication between the world scientific community and general society by promoting and defending the free flow of information both within that community and to the general public through the news and information media.

2.2 The WFSJ maintains a website and other means of global communication for disseminating information about advances, achievements, opportunities, and trends in science journalism, as well as current issues, problems, and threats to the field and its practitioners.

2.3 The WFSJ facilitates and encourages training, networking, and education for science journalists everywhere, and especially in the developing world.

2.4 The WFSJ organizes regular exchanges between its member organizations and their individual members, including site visits.

2.5 WFSJ members will convene every two years during the World Conference of Science Journalists, hosted by one member association.

2.6 The WFSJ helps to establish and maintain professional standards in science journalism.

2.7 The WFSJ encourages the foundation of national associations of science journalism where there are none.

Article 3: Membership and Partnership

3.1 The WFSJ is an "umbrella" organization; thus, its members are other organizations and associations, including mainly national associations of science writers, journalists, editors, and communicators.

3.2 Individuals can be represented via a national or a regional association of science writers or journalists in their region or through the International Science Writers Association (ISWA).

3.3 To become a member of the WFSJ an association must apply and be accepted in accordance with this Constitution. Membership and Partnership applications will be examined and accepted or refused by the Board of WFSJ.

3.3 To become a member of the WFSJ, an applicant must apply and be accepted in accordance with this Constitution. Membership of the Federation shall consist of the following three categories: Ordinary, Associate, and Corporate.

a) Ordinary Membership shall be open to any association, network or group of professional journalists who support the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled appropriate by the WFSJ Board. Ordinary Members shall pay an Annual Membership Fee set by the Executive Board, and are entitled to one vote per member at the General Assembly.

b) Associate Partnership shall be open to any association, council, organization, board, foundation, institute, network, or group which supports the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled to be appropriate by the WFSJ Executive Board. Associate Partners shall pay an annual fee which shall be set by the WFSJ Board. Representatives of Associate Partners may participate in debates on matters of business at any General Assembly, but shall not be entitled to vote.

b) Corporate Partnership shall be open to any statutory organizations, boards, corporations, and public and private companies which supports the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled to be appropriate by Executive Board of WFSJ. Corporate Partners shall pay an annual fee which shall be set by the WFSJ Board. Representatives of Corporate Partners may participate in debates on matters of business at any General Assembly, but shall not be entitled to vote.

3.4 Members who violate the spirit of the WFSJ constitution, or who do not fulfill duties and responsibilities of membership, particularly in regard to the timely payment of membership fees, will be warned by the Executive Board, and cease to be members if three such warnings go unheeded.

3.5 Members who have not paid their contributions lose the right to vote.

3.6 Board members are normally elected at the World Conference of Science Journalists. In the advent of a World Conference not being held within two years of the previous one, elections of the Board members will be done electronically.

Article 4: General Assembly

4.1 The General Assembly, composed of all members, is the primary deliberative body of the WFSJ. The Assembly is open to all individuals whose association is a member of the WFSJ. But, only member associations can cast a vote. Each association has one vote, and must nominate a delegate to cast its vote at the General Assembly.

4.2 World conferences, and therefore General Assemblies, should convene every two years. The choice of the host country is to be determined by the Board through a bidding process open to member associations, which takes place during the World Conference.

4.3 Proposals to change or amend the Constitution must be circulated to member organizations at least one month in advance of a General Assembly. A majority of

members must be represented at the General Assembly to make any changes or amendments to the Constitution, with such action requiring a two-thirds vote of those in attendance.

4.4 The General Assembly elects the WFSJ Executive Board and the President.

Article 5: Executive Board

5.1 The Executive Board is the administrative and operational body of the WFSJ and consists of seven members: a President, a Past-President, one Vice-president, one Secretary, one Treasurer, and two at-large members.

5.2 Members of the board are to be elected every two years when the General Assembly meets. The President of the WFSJ must be a science journalist who is an active member of a WFSJ member association, and a citizen of the nation that becomes the next host nation. All Board members have to be present at the General Assembly to be elected. The Board should reflect as much as possible its membership and cover most regions of the world. A Board member can be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms, except for a member of the Board who becomes Past President. Nominations for the board will be accepted one month prior to the General Assembly.

5.3 The Board acts within the regulations of the Constitution and those decisions imposed by the General Assembly, but also within the limits of a budget.

Article 6: Communication

6.1 The WFSJ website and e-mail newsletter are the key instruments for disseminating information among the members of the WFSJ and the Board. The Secretary of WFSJ is responsible for these communications; the Treasurer prepares and submits financial statements to the Board for transmission via the Secretary.

6.2 English is the standard language of use within the WFSJ.

6.3 The WFSJ Secretariat has to report a minimum of four times a year to the Executive Board usually during Board meetings. It is also responsible to keep the Board informed about the recommendations of the Finance committee and the Programme committee

Article 7: Finances

7.1 Funds may be accepted from non-profit, non-political sponsors and donors, provided such donors do not interfere with the independence of the WFSJ. World Conferences should also be a profitable source of income for the Federation.

7.2 The Executive Board is empowered to accept or refuse funds from donors and reports these to the General Assembly.

7.3 The Board may reduce or waive the membership fees of a member on request and will report this decision to the General Assembly.

7.4 Membership fees are set by the Board and reviewed at each General Assembly. Fees are mandatory.

Article 8: Dissolution

8.1 The WFSJ can be dissolved only by a three-fourths majority vote of all members.

8.2 In the case of WFSJ's dissolution, any assets remaining after legal and administrative obligations shall be distributed among the members.

Article 9: Activation

9.1 Amendments to the constitution are discussed and accepted by the Board. The General Assembly formerly ratifies or amends the Constitution.

9.2 For legal and administrative purposes, the WFSJ's headquarters are officially located in Gatineau (Québec), Canada.

Adopted in London, United Kingdom
1st July 2009