

August 2011

Dear Friends

This is my first letter to you since my election as IBBY President in September 2010. Time has flown by so fast that 11 months has already passed and it has been a truly exciting and rewarding time for me. Since the Congress in Santiago, the members of the EC have had the chance to meet in Bologna in March and soon we will meet again in Antwerp, Belgium.

As President, I have the good fortune of inheriting the strong foundation laid for IBBY by my predecessor Patricia Aldana and a team with diverse backgrounds in the current EC. I wish to inform you all that we shall continue with the direction and initiatives that had been started or put into place by the previous EC, especially as many of them are still *Work-In-Progress*. In addition to these, there are also new efforts initiated by the present EC to further strengthen and support the missions and objectives of IBBY throughout the world.

I continue to be inspired and amazed at the commitment and perseverance of our National Sections in their work in 74 member countries. Many of you have achieved so much with so little. Many of you have put aside personal grief and pain in order to help others. The spirit of IBBY is strong in our continuing campaign: *The Child's Right to become a Reader: Books for Children Everywhere*.

Through the IBBY-Yamada Fund, workshops and training programmes continue to be carried out. In 2011, the IBBY-Yamada Fund is supporting projects in Bolivia, Cote d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, as well as giving some support for the 1st IBBY African Regional Conference in South Africa. Some of the projects have taken off while others are pending. We will continue to share reports of the projects on the IBBY website.

We note that many National Sections have never applied for support from the IBBY-Yamada Fund. Therefore, I urge everyone to check the IBBY website for information and also the periodic communications from the IBBY secretariat about activities and deadlines. The IBBY-Yamada Fund has been running for five years and we have just enough funds to support projects in 2012 and 2013. This programme has been instrumental in the development and strengthening of many IBBY sections throughout the world, as well as in promoting local authors, illustrators, storytellers and others working in children's literature. We

are hopeful that the sponsor, the Yamada Bee Farm, will extend the fund once the present donation is exhausted. I was fortunate to be able to visit Mr Yamada at his bee farm recently – more about this visit later in this letter.

The IBBY Children in Crisis Fund continues to play a major role in assisting children in disaster-stricken areas. Shortly before the IBBY World Congress in Spain we launched an appeal for Pakistan following the disastrous floods that affected millions. Since then IBBY has raised CHF 22,000 for the children of Pakistan. IBBY Pakistan has used the donations to create 110 *Books Build Bridges* libraries, impacting some 12,000 children. I should mention here that a significant portion of the funds raised came from the Katherine Paterson Family Foundation, which has always come forward to generously contribute towards IBBY's causes. We are indeed grateful to Katherine and her Foundation.

The March 11 earthquake and tsunami that hit the west coast of Japan was a terrible disaster. More than 20,000 people lost their lives and still today, people are slowly recovering and rebuilding their lives. In May IBBY launched an appeal to assist JBBY in their efforts to help children in the worst affected areas. We began the appeal by contacting past winners of the Andersen Awards and were very pleased to receive donations from Wolf Erlbruch, Martin Waddell, Ana Maria Machado, Katherine Paterson and David Almond. Altogether we have raised and sent some CHF 17,500 to JBBY to support the EHON Car project. I had the opportunity to join this group of marvellous people in their work when I visited Japan recently.

These two initiatives are continuations of previous work that has been carried out under the IBBY Children in Crisis Programme, amongst other projects in Chile, Haiti, Indonesia, and Palestine. Our key challenge is to have continuous funds in our account to address disaster-related needs – most of which usually come unexpectedly. As you may expect, this is not easy and our funds are depleting. Nevertheless, we are still able to launch individual fund-raising appeals for specific needs, such as for Pakistan and Japan. We are grateful to the generosity of all the donors who have contributed to the IBBY appeals.

Elsewhere, I am pleased to note the various initiatives by National Sections in promoting the development of children's literature and activities related to it. Every initiative that is carried out contributes to an increase in the level of mutual respect and understanding amongst children and adults all over the world. I warmly encourage all National Sections to continue with such efforts. Furthermore, I also urge you to think about twinning and/or further collaboration among National Sections so that resources can be shared and mutual benefits be derived in our mission to build bridges among the children of the world.

As President, I would like to attend as many events as possible that are organized by our National Sections. However, given geographical and financial constraints, this may not just be possible. However, I have come to an

understanding with my colleagues in the Executive Committee that I may delegate or assign any of them to represent me or IBBY at relevant events or meetings. This move hopefully will provide more support for National Sections and pave the way for a better working relationship and understanding among us.

Hereby follows a brief summary of meetings and events attended by me or other members of the EC since the last General Assembly.

In December 2010 Vice President Wally De Doncker and IBBY's Executive Director Liz Page attended the 2nd European Encounter on Children's Literature, in Paris, which was organized by IBBY France. They also visited the *Salon du Livre*, in Seine-Saint-Denis, where IBBY France exhibits its work as part of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*. Later on in April 2011, EC member, Marilar Aleixandre met Wally and Liz in Lisbon for a preparatory meeting for the re-establishment of IBBY Portugal. Wally also represented IBBY at the prize-giving ceremony of the ALMA award in Stockholm in June. He and Liz attended a meeting with a representative of the European Union Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, in Brussels in June 2011, looking into opportunities for IBBY to receive some support from the EU.

Linda Pavonetti, Vice President represented IBBY at the IFLA Annual Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico in August. She spoke about IBBY and its work to the standing committees for *Literacy and Reading* and *Libraries for Children and Young Adults*.

Liz Page attended two meetings in London in December 2010 and June 2011 in preparation for the 2012 IBBY Congress. In addition, she gave a presentation about IBBY at the Children's Books of Ireland annual conference in Dublin in May, and will attend the first African Regional Meeting in South Africa in September with EC member James Tumusiime.

This coming September, the EC will meet again – this time in Antwerp, Belgium. Our colleagues from the Flemish Branch of Belgian IBBY are generously hosting the meeting, for which we are very grateful. It will also provide an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with children's literature experts and activists living in Belgium and the Netherlands. This is my first trip to Belgium and I am looking forward to meeting our Belgian colleagues and of course, seeing the beautiful country of Belgium.

Since becoming President I have had the pleasure of visiting South Korea or more accurately Nami Island in October 2010 in conjunction with the 5th Nami Island International Children's Book Festival. It was also at this event that Nami Island Inc. launched the anthology *Peace Story* featuring 22 illustrated stories from 22 different countries under the theme 'Peace'. It was indeed a great achievement by all, and was possible thanks to the generous sponsorship and hospitality of Mr Minn and his family who own Nami Island and the ever-creative and affable Mr Kang Woo-hyon, an accomplished illustrator and CEO of Nami

Island. IBBY's relationship and collaboration with Nami Island has brought tremendous benefits to both sides and the most significant being Nami Island Inc.'s 10-year generous sponsorship of our treasured Hans Christian Andersen Award.

In January/February 2011, I visited the IBBY secretariat in Basel and met with Liz and Luzmaria Stauffenegger. Luzmaria joined IBBY as the Administrative Assistant at the beginning of the year, replacing Forest Zhang who ended his contract at the end of December. Being there for the first time, I was impressed that the small office was spick and span and very efficient. I was given an overview of the administrative matters and we discussed preparations for the Bologna meeting and the press conference that traditionally takes place on the first day of the Bologna Book Fair. Financial matters were discussed as well and I had the pleasure of meeting Urs Breitenstein, former IBBY Treasurer and now a member of the IBBY Foundation Board.

On my way home I visited IBBY France, which is now based at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BnF). I had discussions with Jacques Vidal-Naquet, who is Director of the *Centre national de la littérature pour la jeunesse – La Joie par les livres*, Nathalie Beau and our EC member Hasmig Chahinian. I also met Jacqueline Sanson the Director-General of the BnF. IBBY France has adapted to its new home within the ambit of the national library and with support from the BnF, more activities under IBBY France can be undertaken.

At the Bologna Book Fair in March, we held our traditional press conference followed by the reception at the IBBY stand, which was as usual well attended. As well as an annual venue for the EC meetings, many other meetings take place during the fair and members of IBBY from around the world come by the stand to say hello, and catch up with the latest news. This is always such a pleasure at the fair! The ALMA winner for 2011 – Shaun Tan – was also announced during the book fair. We continue to hope that one day IBBY will be announced as the winner: winning the award would be the manifestation of the work that we do that touches the lives of children all over the world, regardless of race and colour or religion, building bridges of understanding and tolerance through stories and illustrations.

In June, I visited Thai IBBY in Bangkok. Led by Khunying Dr Kasama who was formerly the Director General of Education in Thailand, the National Section is made up of authors, illustrators, publishers, and others, and there is growing interest in children literature in Thailand. Their *Bookstart* programme has reached more than 20,000 children over the last few years.

In late July, I visited Japan and our colleagues at JBBY. My journey there was for a few reasons, one was of course was to visit JBBY and meet the new president of the section, as well as old friends. I also paid a courtesy visit to our partners and sponsors namely The Asahi Shimbun newspaper company that has been supporting our IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award for over 25

years, and Mr Hideo Yamada, President of the Yamada Bee Farm, and sponsor of the IBBY-Yamada Fund for training and workshops for the development of children literature. They were very fruitful meetings with our supporters and both have expressed satisfaction and happiness with the work that you have done around the world. We shall continue to update the two sponsors on all progress and plans and we are hopeful that both parties will continue with the support in the years to come.

During the same visit, I had the opportunity to attend several events organized or supported by JBBY and met many members and activists in children's literature. I also had the honour of visiting the Iwate Prefecture and the city of Morioka, which was one of the cities badly hit by the March 2011 tsunami. Evidence of widespread destruction remains and cleaning up is still in progress in many areas. Former IBBY EC and IBBY Foundation Board member Chieko Suemori set up and leads the EHON Car project, which is supported by IBBY and JBBY. The project involves collecting books for children affected by the earthquake and tsunami and distributing them by specially modified minivans suitable for carrying large quantities of books. These special vehicles are also adapted to move around the large areas of devastation where much of the infrastructure had been damaged. The books have been and continue to be donated by the Japanese people, publishers, etc. The project has collected more than 300,000 books and volunteers spent time unpacking, sorting and sending the books out to the schools and areas of greatest need.

I was impressed by the spirit of cooperation and keen motivation of the volunteers working with the project. Work is still in progress and it will be a long time before things return to normal. The threat of a nuclear disaster remains high and we hope for a speedy recovery, especially for the children who have lost their homes or loved ones.

We are grateful to friends and national sections who responded to our call for help. Funds are still needed and those wanting to make a donation may use the IBBY website or contact the secretariat to do so.

External relations and cooperation with other organizations with a similar mission as IBBY, continue to be pursued and encouraged. During the year, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CERLALC (*Centro Regional para el Fomento del Libro en América Latina y el Caribe*), the Latin America regional culture and book promotion institution. With this agreement, both parties can work and support each other on the agreed terms of conditions. In addition, a formal collaborative relationship is also being pursued with P.E.N (Poets, Essayists and Novelists). Amongst other aims, P.E.N. seeks to promote friendship and intellectual cooperation among writers and to emphasize the role of literature in the development of mutual understanding and world culture. Such collaborations in addition to the existing ones IBBY has with IRA, IFLA, CODE, BIB, SM and UNESCO, provide IBBY the opportunity to reach further around the world to where IBBY sections have yet to be established.

Furthermore, this cooperation can also prevent an overlapping or competition in activities where there already exists a branch of one of the partner organizations.

For better focus on the development of these collaborations, we have nominated specific members of the EC to act as liaison persons with these organizations, namely Ellis Vance (IRA), Linda Pavonetti (IFLA), Mingzhou Zhang (BIB), María Jesús Gil (*SM Fundación*), Marilar Aleixandre (P.E.N.), James Tumuiisme (CODE), Wally De Doncker (UNESCO), and Marilar Aleixandre and María Jesús Gil (CERLALC).

This year we welcomed the establishment of two National Sections of IBBY: Cambodia and Portugal. We have also accepted a new Individual Member from Syria who joins individual members from Morocco, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and a fellow illustrator from Syria. After lengthy period of preparation IBBY Cambodia has finally been established and we are very pleased that the section will be supported by IBBY Sweden for the first two years. It is great to welcome back IBBY Portugal who rejoined IBBY after losing their membership at the end of 2008. Portugal will be the guest of honour at the Bologna Book Fair 2012 and we look forward to their prominent presence again.

It has been a very busy year for the EC and it will continue to be the same for the coming year. As the economic turmoil throughout the world continues new challenges will confront IBBY and its members. Conflicts and disasters seem to occur more frequently and of late appear to be more intense and inflict heightened pain and damage. IBBY must be prepared to act in congruence with its mission. The children of the world are our children. They have the right to be cared for, the right to be read to, the right to quality books and pictures and the right to become readers themselves.

Best wishes to all our friends as we move on. I will be back soon with further updates of our work in IBBY.



Ahmad Redza Ahmad Khairuddin

IBBY President