

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)	
Document nr	RC 24-01-2
Agenda Item	2
Subject	Minutes, Regional Council Meeting, 7-8 December 2023
From	Alejandro Santa, Chair
Purpose	Approval of the Minutes
Date	17 January 2024
Note	
Recommendations	That the Regional Council approves these minutes

MINUTES

**The fourth meeting of the 2023-2025 IFLA Regional Council
was held on Thursday 7 December – Friday 8 December
in person in The Hague, 9:30am – 1pm, and 2pm-5pm each day**

Participants: Alejandro Santa (Chair), Jeannette Lebron Ramos, Diane Koen, Ayanda Lebele, Saif Al Jabri, Ertugrul Cimen, Lin Li Soh, Te Paea Paringatai, Vicki McDonald (President)*, Loida Garcia Febo (MLAS Chair)*, Michelle Lau (RO), Lindi Nhlapo (RO), Isela Mo Amavet (RO), Eiman Al Shamari (RO), Jinmin Hao (LC), Mandiaye Ndiaye (LC), Sharon Memis (HQ), Helen Mandl (HQ), Vesna Vuksan (HQ)*, Louis Takacs (HQ)*, Farah Almazouni (HQ)*, Cristina Baro Miro (HQ)*, Kristine Paberza-Ramiresa (HQ)*, Vesselina Vassileva (HQ)*, Lidia Putziger (HQ)*, Stephen Wyber (HQ)

* Only there for some of the time

1. Welcome, apologies and agreement of agenda

RC 23-12-1

The agenda was agreed, with the addition of items on the situation in the Middle East and emerging leaders' participation at Regional Council meetings.

2. Agreement on the minutes of the previous meeting

RC 23-12-2

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without comment.

3. Welcome by the Chair, updates from Governing Board, Professional Council, Headquarters

Oral report

The Chair thanked all those present, including the President, staff, SIGL Board, volunteers, RC members, Regional Offices and Language Centres, and the PC and MLAS chairs, and noted the situation in particular of those living through conflict. He underlined the value of in-person meetings, and thanked SIGL for making this possible. He appreciated the possibility for people to speak in their own language.

The President welcomed the impact of the new regional structures and their meetings, while the SG underlined the positive energy from regional workshops. The PC Chair noted a strong commitment to partnering for impact, and was keen to understand better what the strategic priorities of the RC are. The MLAS chair noted interest in engaging, given her committee's focus on capacity building.

4. Reminder of the Communications Special Meeting

Oral Report

The chair noted the value of sharing on communications. Questions focused on the role of the new Information Coordinators (although this was becoming clearer), how HQ can help identify priorities, positives and negatives from using different social media platforms, and the potential to use communications to spread understanding of what IFLA is about both among potential members and partners. There was also discussion about respective roles between Chairs and Information Coordinators, with the latter in one region putting materials out to different platforms while the chair has more of a strategic communications role.

The Chair noted that we would return to communications and how to define this at a subsequent meeting, including how to take a more sophisticated approach.

5. Deep-dive: cooperation between Professional and Regional Units

Oral report

RC 23-12-5

The MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) chairs, who are leading on this issue, noted their initial work, and the value of working through Professional Division Chairs to identify opportunities. A first step will be to share the possible collaborations already identified in action plans and take things from there. The Chair reminded the Council about its own Action Plans too, and the need to communicate these actions clearly.

The SSA Chair noted the potential of having one or two joint actions which could serve as an example (beyond more direct work between Divisions and Sections), a point the PC Chair echoed as a means of developing a strategic approach. Ideas included digital inclusion, skills for working with the SDGs, the post-2030 Agenda, increasing diversity in elections and increasing diversity at Congresses. Issues to address included language in particular.

The PC Chair noted that it would be valuable to seek further views from the PC on the paper, and that a joint session could be valuable, perhaps using a 'birds of a feather' approach'. The value of inviting Section members from regions to RDC meetings was underlined, as was a report from RC meetings on the Officers' Basecamp, and more broadly to build the RC Chair's profile with professional units.

RC members also talked about their own collaborations with Sections, as well as between libraries in regions and with external organisations. Work between Divisions and MLAS was noted. There was particular interest in job-shadowing schemes – Pasantías – in LAC. The RC also talked a little about how to raise funds for partnerships.

The RC agreed to look at putting together a collection of good practices in collaboration, as well as to chose topics for collaboration at the next meeting.

6. Advocacy Look Ahead

RC 23-12-6

The Chair highlighted events such as the High-Level Political Forum and engagement in Voluntary National Reviews which have been successes, but which require preparation. He noted how SIGL

funding enabled much of this work. In addition, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and World Urban Forum were important, as was work to promote the Marrakesh Treaty.

It was noted that having a North American at HLPF would make sense, if they can talk confidently about libraries. Other topics raised included AI, democracy, refugee integration, support to deal with the fentanyl epidemic, and disinformation.

7. Deep-dive: a look forward to the SDGs in 2024

RC 23.12-7

The Chair noted the potential to share experience of the SDGs Observatory in Argentina, and to offer training and experience sharing. Others talked about their experience with VNRs and how they have built relations with government, and in particular how to go beyond traditional reporting ministries.

It was asked if the UN could explicitly recommend working with libraries. While this may not be easy, there were other routes in, through UNESCO, New York missions, and Resident Coordinators.

IFLA HQ invited suggestions for contributors to the Development and Access to Information Report from LAC, MENA, SSA and NA, and would share more by e-mail.

The Council discussed the value of making closer links with Ambassador to the UN, as a means of advancing our agenda there. It was noted that there was lots of experience with Argentina, and the Qatari ambassador was helpful. The Council agreed to return to the topic of what contacts we have at the next meeting.

On topics to focus on in approaching the post-2030 Agenda, it was noted that lifelong learning could be strong, as was the idea of knowledge as a public good.

The Council agreed that a topic at the next meeting could be to bring together perspectives from each region about how the place of libraries in society had changed. Possible angles included how far they were used for technology, how they had reacted to wider social phenomena, recognition of the need to address misinformation, the value of community space, the experience of young people, how governments see libraries, questions around whether there are enough staff with the right experience, AI, book bannings, and more.

8. Regional Council Action Plan (Part 1)

RC 23-12-8

It was noted that the RC would add the training session on libraries' contributions to the **SDGs in Q1 2024**, rather than Q2. This would be led by Alejandro Santa, RC Chair from Library of Congress, Argentina.

On digital inclusion, we would start with Africa in 2024, then MENA in 2025. Education to be led by Asia in 2024, then Europe in 2025. We would leave a webinar on capacity building on copyright (North America) to 2025, Library laws as an issue (led by LAC), potentially drawing on networks of parliamentary libraries. It was noted that a format for webinars, and a sense of what is to be achieved would be developed.

Other topics of interest included mentoring between associations, communications, and following up on RC Action Plans, with the agreement that we would look back at these every six months. On the Regional Advocacy Priorities Survey, it was agreed that the goal was to get this ready in time for the next Regional Council, but we would need promotion.

EXTRA: Damage to Heritage in Gaza

The MENA Chair noted the damage to heritage in the Gaza Strip and asked about a potential statement. The Chair noted discussion at the GB, and the President noted agreement to include reference in any further statement. The Europe chair noted that there were often calls to act, and close attention to what IFLA says in order to see if different approaches are being taken.

EXTRA: Engaging Emerging Leaders

The Chair noted an interest in bringing two emerging leaders from two regions each to meetings each time – they should be young, dynamic emerging leaders. They could come from RDCs or outside. This was a practice in LAC, and had worked well. The Council discussed the idea, and decided to return to it at a following meeting, and in addition to share more about practices around engaging emerging leaders in RDC meetings.

10. An Overall Model for Developing the Strength of Regional Library Fields

RC 23-12-10

The meeting discussed the document presented, highlighting as potential priorities training and education, governance, advocacy, structures for engagement, emerging leaders, communications, partnerships, delivery capacity, and reach across the field. Some suggested having an item about sustainability (although this could also be an overall outcome from this work).

There were also recommendations to simplify it and get everything onto a single page, and to be clearer about how it could be used. There was a suggestion that guidelines could be developed on each item, and a question about how IFLA could help.

On another topic, it was suggested that Professional Unit chairs could record or produce short introductions to their work in order to explain it to others. Language Centres could then translate into their own languages, to boost visibility ahead of election – there was still too little knowledge of who is registered or which section. In general, we could do more to communicate about the benefits of IFLA membership – there was then discussion about what these were.

11. IFLA Communications in the Coming Year

RC 23-12-11

The SG noted a thank you to the comms team for all the work done around the Brussels workshop, while the Chair recognised a positivity about the shift in communications, so people liked there being.

The IFLA HQ Communications Team was happy about this feedback, and keen to hear more about what is needed. They asked regional units to share plans in advance, to use hashtags, and to try to

do more to promote IFLA globally. Areas of focus included optimal social media platforms, a review of the newsletter, and training for those responsible for communications.

Suggestions from the Council included media kits adapted to regional needs, training on how to capture and document events, branding, clear protocols for working with IFLA HQ, a calendar of key events coming up, a template comms plan (this could be adapted from the material made available for Professional Units), a simple way of promoting all of IFLA's different channels, a standard adaptable PowerPoint, and clear branding guidelines (it was noted that these already existed, and would be shared again). It was noted that there would be tougher action to address situations when logos are not used properly.

12. IFLA Membership in the coming year, WLIC

Oral report

The Deputy SG introduced the topic, and handed on to the Membership Engagement Officer, who highlighted the most recent data on members. It was noted that it remained a strategy to get a member from every UN Member State.

The meeting discussed plans to share more about potential and inactive members, and how to coordinate reaching out to them. Both RDCs and ROs had a role, and there would be data protection agreements with ROs to make it possible to share more data. This work would need to be coordinated in order to avoid contacting people too much.

In addition, the Membership team would run a survey to understand members and their needs better, and create a possibility to share ideas about potential members, given that traditional lists of major universities etc tended to be focused on rich countries.

Other efforts would focus on better communicating the events calendar as a way of attracting members, as well as helping people in institutions understand that their employer/host is a member. It was noted that outposts of universities in other countries could join as institutional sub-units.

A member of the membership team would be invited to the communications meeting in January, and it was noted that translating materials could help. Outreach to universities could also feature in the action plan.

On the Congress, the Deputy SG asked for recommendations of cities to approach. It was noted that the situation around Dubai had discouraged MENA applicants, but the Chair felt that it was a matter of time before we came to the region. More broadly, it would be helpful to explain more about how it works, and show what is possible. It was noted that there was a review process underway, which would allow us to address wider questions about the operation of the Congress.

It was noted that there was no anticipation of an extension of the January deadline for expressions of interest in hosting the 2025 Congress.

13. IFLA Elections 2025 – an early look ahead

Oral report

IFLA's elections coordinator shared about work both to bring together experiences of the elections, and to test out the idea of a pre-nominations phase, based on the models used elsewhere. Taking part in such a phase would not be obligatory, but could help match nominators and nominees. Other questions concerned how far we can control what people claim about themselves, and by what point people need to pay membership fees in order to participate.

14. Starting to look at our language policy

RC 23-12-14

HQ presented the paper. The Chair proposed using remote conference booths to improve interpretation at the Congress, both for quality and because there is more privacy.

The Council also discussed how to ensure the quality of translations, and what the decision-tree should be around who translates what and when. He was concerned that sometimes texts appeared in Spanish which hadn't gone through the Language Centre. Suggestions included using national associations to check things (although this also depended on capacity).

There were, nonetheless, fewer requests for translation than in recent years. It would help to know what should be translated. It was noted that with more and more IFLA output going directly on the website in html, auto-translate offered more possibilities than before. However, this was less helpful for Arabic, which rendered badly on the site.

It was suggested that more translation could see an increase in membership, and so shouldn't be seen as a cost. There was particular reference to the repository, and how to make it easier to look across languages there.

The Council will return to this issue in future.

15. Regional Council Action Plan (Part 2)

RC 23-12-8

The Vice-Chair noted that she would include the action about contacting Ambassadors, as well as university contacts for membership and communications meetings, and that the action plan would be on the agenda at the next Council.

16. Planning meetings in 2024

RC 23-12-16

The Council decided that there was already enough on the agenda for the next meeting, and so would return to this theme subsequently.

17. Regional Chairs' reports

Oral report

There were no reports.

18. Any other business

The chair of the PC noted that the Terms of Reference for defining a Code of Conduct for volunteers had been agreed, and was looking forwards to advancing this work.