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Vida ascendente internacional  
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# **ELDERS, ACTORS OF EVANGELIZATION**

*in a multigenerational  
and multicultural society*



**9<sup>th</sup>**  
**International Meeting**

19 to 23 November 2018  
**SANTO-DOMINGO**

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Cathedral Santa Maria la Menor  
First Cathedral of the Americas

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# Editorial

*The 9th international meeting, which is held on a statutory basis every four years, was held in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, and gathered about 40 national and intercontinental leaders around the executive board.*

**T**he theme of this meeting «Elders, actors of evangelization in a multigenerational and multicultural society» was chosen by the Steering Committee in session in Lisieux in May 2017.

From one meeting to another, undeniably, there is a certain continuity: The Spirit is at work!

Invited to deepen our role as witnesses (2010 *Witnesses in a world in crisis*), to take up the challenges of a new civilization (2014 *the elders in a changing world*) we go one step further, being «actors of evangelization» we must act to share the treasure of faith, in ways that take into account the developments that have shaped a «multigenerational and multicultural society».

This leading thread, our speakers, Mgr. Maupu, Professor Minaya, Mgr. Fernández declined each according to his responsibility or his culture. This bulletin gives you back the essence of their message; I invite you to consult the site of LAI: their interventions are presented there in their entirety.

The Pope keeps reminding us of the mission of evangelization that has been vested to us at our baptism: let us be “a Church on the way out”, let us commit ourselves “so that the values of the Gospel penetrate the economic, social and political realities of our world” (EG 122). Isn’t LAI this the path on which, in a certain number of countries, the elders engage, to “change the world”? In the speech of Dr. Scelzo, you will find a track for this transformation of the world: relaying, with ardor, the thought of Pope Francis, he invites us to change the way our contemporaries look at old age and to act so that older people have their full place in society and in the Church and become for them a moral and spiritual resource.

“Being evangelizing actors in our world... is to be convinced of the timeliness of the Gospel message for the world of today; let us, with the joy of the disciple and the apostle happy to collaborate in the work of the Master, report of the novelty of the Gospel, permanent and, I dare say, revolutionary.

**Monique Bodhuin**

# Speech of Dr. Vittorio Scelzo

*of the Dicastery of the Laity, of Family and Life, director in Rome of the Office for the Elderly and Children*

**A**t the beginning of his speech, Dr. Vittorio Scelzo, invited to Santo Domingo for the international meeting of LAI, introduced us to the institution he leads by stating that, very recent, created two years ago, it is an example of reforms implemented by Pope Francis.

Dr. Scelzo gives us the meaning of his coming to Santo Domingo and his intervention with the members of the international meeting: “society must take another look at the elderly, we must be the actors of this change of mentality towards the elderly”

At the beginning of his mandate, Dr. Scelzo wanted to listen to what is happening in different countries, to approach the realities, by being at the service of the local churches; he is ready to create networks between the Curia and the actors in the field. He especially wishes to help those who, engaged in pastoral care, are those who carry the message of Jesus.

His first mission was to contact the Episcopal Conferences to see what existed; and to note that the development of a “pastoral of the Elderly” was not, far from it, the first concern of the bishops, except for Argentina and Brazil. For France, the link was made with the MCR and LAI. That’s why he contacted the LAI president, Marta Melo Antunes, to find out what was going on there. He was able to begin to understand the important work done by lay people in many countries of the planet: it is essential for the Church today.

Demographically, Dr. Scelzo recalls the ever-increasing share (figures show) of elders in society; unfortunately, “these last disturb, they are intended for the EHPAD with the same facility that a coat is placed in the wardrobe” says in substance Pope Francis; another word of the pope:

“Society tends to forget the old ones but the Lord leaves none of them”

In our societies, old age does little and, because of fragility and vulnerability, is considered a contagious disease from which we must protect our-



*Monique Bodhuin and Dr Vittorio Scelzo*

selves. Hence, this marginalization of the ancients reflected in certain observations: in Japan, thousands of elders commit suicide because of loneliness; in institutions or retirement homes, elderly people, cut off from their familiar environment, no longer feel the urge to live and die faster than at home; in Africa, lynching of ancients accused of witchcraft are sometimes witnessed, “for stealing their years from the young.”

For Dr. Scelzo, it is urgent to give our full attention to this segment of the population that are “the old”, to change the way we look at old age, to no longer consider it a curse but to contrary, as in the Bible, to see in longevity, a sign of blessing; we must help the ancients to give meaning to the years that remain them to live.

Dr. Scelzo had this surprising formula: Young people are not the future of the Church but the present, **old people are the future of the Church**, they are the ones who are building the future.

The time of old age raises questions about the meaning of existence and, as such, the religious dimension of life becomes more important; the pastoral attention to the elderly should not be episodic: in response to the questions of the elderly, it is necessary to develop a pastoral care for the elderly.



**Our societies are not ready to recognize the full value of old age; there has been no real reflection on the meaning of age and our elders are marginalized; this can be the mission of an association like yours:** LAI must respond to the pope's concerns about the elderly, relay forcefully the words of the Pope for whom "old age is a vocation", translate into action his speech on old age by being, in each of our countries, active relays, inventing and acting to make recognize that older people have a role to play in society and a mission to accomplish, make sense of this time of old age from a life-giving spirituality. More specifically, we have a role to play as grandparents in the "transmission of faith" to overcome the shortcomings - or the indifference - of parents who are often cornered, perhaps much more than we were, through their professional activities and everyday tasks.

Dr. Scelzo gives some tracks to feed our thinking:  
→ **What does it mean to no longer work, no longer to be productive?** how to highlight the meaning of free?

→ **What does fragility mean?** The Pope gives the example of prayer, we can always pray, make an intercessory prayer to the Lord. The ancients can be these intercessors.

→ **What does pain, suffering?** What does it mean to live when one suffers, to be a Christian when one is in mental confusion?

→ **What does it mean to have more time?** what is the meaning of this availability?

→ **Think about the death** that limits all life.

There is therefore a great deal of thought to be given to the world of old age, the sense of age, the aging and vocation of the aged within the Church; indeed, this time of old age is and brings something fundamentally new to society. We are in the best position to make it known; our demographic weight, our experience of life, the wisdom

acquired through the difficulties are all assets that can make us leaders in the Church: it's up to us to play!

In conclusion, Dr. Scelzo tells us of his strong expectation of seeing us:

- "to adopt" the pope's thought on the elders
- to implement initiatives showing that we are a movement that engages in the Pastoral of the Elderly
- to work concrete projects that will show that the elders are the future of the Church; one of the tracks could be a collaboration between young and old people who would find a beautiful illustration at the next WYD.

In conclusion, Dr. Scelzo says being listening to what is happening, but he is also thinking about a meeting in the Vatican of the Pastoral of the Elderly. He admits he does not know enough about the realities of the field. He asks us to send the details of the persons in charge for the organization of this meeting. Recalling the importance of having meetings in the Church, he regretted that the proximity of Panama's WYD made it difficult to meet young people and old people.

Dr. Scelzo concludes by expressing his thanks for the opportunity to know us and to understand everything that is done by our teams around the world. ■



# To grow in faith

*In his intervention Dr Scelzo talked about the spirituality of the elderly. I propose them “to grow in faith”. I propose this to seniors but also to all persons called for being actors or actresses of evangelization.*

**G**rowing up is aging; aging is growing” writes Geneviève LAROQUE, a senior specialist physician.

**What is growing in faith?** Pope Francis answers this question, in an interview with the priests of the Diocese of Rome: “Growth in faith occurs **through encounters with the Lord throughout life**. These meetings are kept as a treasure in the memory and are our living faith in a personal history of salvation.

To grow in the faith is not to decide, in a voluntarist way, to believe more; nor to learn more and more things. Doctrinal formation is a good thing; it can accompany growth in faith. In the apostolic exhortation on the lay faithful, St. John Paul II presented the christian formation (which is broader than the doctrinal formation) as “a continual personal process of maturation in faith and resemblance to Christ, according to the Father’s will, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit “.

**The faith of Israel** is based on a reminder of the great deeds of God: its benefits, its historical action. The prophets and the psalms are filled with the reminder of God’s actions for his people, those reported by the historical books and especially those that are told in the books of the Pentateuch, beginning with the book of Exodus and the Exodus from Egypt. “I remember the Lord’s deeds. Yes, I remember in the past, your wonders. The waters saw you ... “ (Psalm 76)

Saint Catherine of Siena made God say in the Dialogue on Providence: “To my creature, I have given memory to keep the remembrance of my blessings.”

**The Apostles** have never forgotten the moment when Jesus touched their hearts. “It was about



Mgr Maupu

the tenth hour» writes Saint John (1, 39), this particular moment that you never forget.

**In my personal history** also, the Lord came to seek me, or to put me up, or to pick me up. To nourish my faith, I can wonder how many beautiful things God has done for me.

Pope Francis evokes scars: those that recall an injury and healing. On the occasion of a medical visit, the doctor asks: “ Why was this surgical procedure wich you keep a scar?” Scar of the soul, reminiscent of the interventions which the Lord has carried out in his mercy.

There are **A Psalm** Which expresses the faith of Israel by appealing to the memory and resaying at each evocation “ Eternal Is his love. “ It is Psalm 135. You can write your own psalm 135 and Remember your meetings with the Lord (“ Eternal Is His love”), of his promise which set you on course in the Christian Life (Eternal Is His love”) but also of your moments of straying away from him (“ Eternal Is his love “) and moments when he joined you and put back on the right path (“ Eternal Is his love “).

In this reminder of the blessings of God there is room for **the people** who have helped you, guided you, counseled you. “Remember those who directed you: they told you the Word of God. Meditate on the end of the life they have led and imitate their faith “, according to the invitation of the Letter to the Hebrews (13, 7).

This work of memory, understand it well, is not to lock us in the past. It makes the life of faith possible today. This is where, according to Pope Francis, hope and discernment come into being.

**Hope** open faith to God’s surprises. It leads to finding new things in the past, in the treasure of memory. It makes possible to look at the neighbor as God looks at him, seeing in him new possibilities. In particular, “hope,” writes the pope, is to see on the face of the poor that I meet today this Lord who will one day judge us.

We then understand the role of **discernment** that makes faith active, “working through charity” (Letter to Galatians 5, 6). We do not stay at “I believe and that is enough”. To discern by taking a step back and not being deceived by the force of evil but seeing the victory of the Cross of Christ in all human situations. To discern where concrete

and real love for the neighbor is expected. To discern that Christ is there, in the poor, in the lost sheep. He is there showing himself or, on the contrary, without being noticed: a small step towards Him is a progress in the faith.

Faith that is not acting and active becomes fossilized or volatilized. Fossilizes: the love received is kept in a museum. But that’s not why it’s given! Or it volatilizes: it is more than a virtual reality!

To conclude, I find **In the Catechism of the Catholic Church** (No. 162) this beautiful phrase that will synthesize my words: “To live, Grow and persevere to the end in faith, we must nourish it by the word of God; we must implore the Lord to increase it; It must act through charity; be carried by hope and be rooted in the faith of the Church.

**Mgr François Maupu**



*Jean-Michel Siméon, Mother superior of the Congregation of the Hermanas Hijas de la Altagracia, Mgr Maupu, Marta Melo Antunes, Sister Nayda, Dr Scelzo*

# Evangelization : Challenges and buds

*Professor Minaya reported on the responses to the preparatory questionnaire, sent by different countries of the Movement. He introduced them by identifying challenges and buds; here is a summary of his compilation.*

## What promotes evangelization?

The testimony of the elderly person in the family and in society is a key factor in evangelization, especially in secularized countries where religious training has been abolished in schools. This evangelizing action is reinforced by Church movements, such as Ascending Life, which promotes an apostolate and a volunteer service based on the charisms of the elderly person.

Some countries have developed pastoral programs to promote evangelization; This is the case of Mauritius and the Dominican Republic which launched its first pastoral plan in 1982; in these national programmes of apostolate, the pastoral care of older people occupies an important place ; it responds to their spiritual concerns.

## Evangelize when you are elder?

### → Difficulties

The main challenges are isolation, displacement and health problems. Older people need help to overcome these barriers; it is not always easy to ask for help: we must overcome indifference, accept the gaze of others.

As a result of the breakdown of the family, the elderly take care of the guard of the grandchildren, which mobilizes them a lot and does not always allow them to devote themselves to personal activities.

The catechesis cycle that accompanies the sacramental life of the person does not always lead to a Christian life project.

The Church sees in the elderly person a recipient of evangelization action rather than an actor of evangelization.

### → Opportunities

The family is the first place of evangelization.



*Professor Mario Minaya*

Elders also evangelize when they visit sick people or people living in retirement homes to break their loneliness.

Movements such as Life Ascending can help the older person better integrate into modern life. It is there that they also find the resources that will make their witness of life a factor of evangelization. Hence the importance and necessity of providing them with a deep and solid spiritual formation; they will be able to better resist the current proliferation of evangelical groups.

In principle, the elderly person has the time and energy to devote himself to charity work and to perform certain works in the parish: liturgical readings, maintenance of places of worship, distribution of the communion.

### → Prayer

At this stage of life, prayer, participation in Eucharistic celebrations and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are of great importance to nourish their life of faith.

The Delegations unanimously insist on the need to promote the prayer of the Rosary



## Do some activities in your movement relate to Evangelization? Which ones? How?

The reports of Argentina and Uruguay point out the lack of activities outside the Movement because of the lack of support from priests. In other countries, many seniors are involved in other movements, such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Charismatic Renewal, Caritas... These activities complement the monthly reflection in meeting.

The groups of Life Ascending are very active in all areas. As examples here are some activities mentioned in the preparatory work:

1. They visit residences, hospitals and the poor on the periphery
2. They perform active voluntary service in charitable institutions, associations that provide care to expelled persons or support to the emigrant, who accompany the poor, who advocate for life etc..
3. They promote gospel meditation through the daily reading of the gospel.
4. They publish books or spiritual documents: annual thematic booklet to accompany the reflection of the teams, booklet on the spirituality of the movement, monthly letters of Father Monferrand in Latin America.
5. They *Promote* the formation, courses and spiritual exercises.
6. They encourage the renewal of knowledge, so that their members can adapt to the progress of modern life, including new technologies.
7. They organize visits (religious heritage, churches, exhibitions), projections of religious films, concerts of sacred music.
8. Their members commit themselves as liturgical readers and carriers of the communion.

## In our country, in our Church, in our movement, how is the Good News announced to the poor?

Let's note the statement of the delegation of Peru: the country being eminently Catholic, the Church and the Movement rely on the words of Pope Francis for the announcement of the Good News and try to be present with the poorest.

This contrasts with the statement made by the Swiss delegation that this commitment to the poor is hindered by fear, indifference and comfort.

Episcopal Conferences take charge of the pastoral care of the Word for the poor. The Life Ascending movement is associated by engaging in parishes for the announcement of the Good News; elders collaborate with other movements such as the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development, the Legion of Mary, charismatic groups, parish support, networks of messengers, the family action, parish teams, mission houses, etc.

This evangelization reaches the periphery of the cities. In some countries, the Members of Life Ascending are part of the least favoured class: they are therefore the recipients of this evangelization.

All of this underscores that the announcement of the Good News to the poor is at the heart of the mission of Life Ascending. ■

# Excerpts from the address of Mgr Ramón Benito Fernández, *Auxiliary Bishop of Santo Domingo, Secretary General of The Episcopal Conference*

**A**dvances in medicine have prolonged life, leading to a sharp increase in the number of seniors; society hardly gives them the place they deserve because, all too often, the elderly are left alone, having no active role.

Longevity coupled with a decline in birth rates in developed countries only increased the importance of older people in the population; this imbalance is the great challenge for the future of our societies; the Church must respond to it with a new pastoral dynamic for the elderly: why would not she be ahead of politics in accompanying elderly people? Pope Francis invites us to say that the quality of a society is measured by the treatment it gives to the elderly and the place it reserves for them in the life of the city; he doesn't stop to denounce this "culture of waste" which is expressed through the abandonment in which the elderly are rejected.

There is a need for the Church, for committed Christians as we are, to give back all the value it deserves at this time of old age. Are the elders not "reservoirs" of wisdom, resulting from their experience of life; The Holy Scriptures often recall this contribution of the ancients: "Do not

go away", says Ecclesiastes, "from the conversation of the elders, because they have themselves learned from the conversation of their parents: from them you will learn to be smart and give an answer at the right time. "In the Bible, old age is a grace, a blessing of God.

The Dominican Plenary Council, in 2000, dealt with all the themes of the pastoral life of the Church; **Paragraph 1.366 of the document issued by this council states:** "Attention must be paid especially to prisoners who are far from their homeland; to the sick, mainly those with AIDS; **elderly people**; pregnant and less protected women. (See DSD 180)"

Chapter V of the document of the Pontifical Council for the Laity "The dignity of the Elder and his mission in the Church and the world" lays the foundation for the pastoral care of the elders: he values the gift that they represent as **Witnesses of the tradition and faith** (cf.: Sal 44,2, Ex 12,26-27), **Teachers of life** (cf.: Ecl.6,34,8,11-12) and **charitable agents**.

These are the areas that are best suited to the testimony of elders and their participation in the life of the Church:

1. The charity domain
2. The apostolate. Extraordinary field of community life
3. The liturgy. Participation in lay ministries
4. Participation in Associations and Movements
5. The family, first place where they can testify of their faith, where they can transmit their values and serve as a bridge between the generations
6. Contemplation and prayer
7. Training of agents and the awakening of vocations.





*Mgr Fernandez and Mgr Maupu*



*Jaime Tamarit and a Latin American group*

**The APARECIDA Document**, a reference document in the Latin American world, deserves to be better known at the global level; here are some sections that concern us:

- **Paragraph 447**, “Children and elders build the future of peoples. Children because they will continue the story, the elders because they transmit the experience and wisdom of their lives”

- **Paragraph 448**: “The word of God calls us in many ways to respect and value older people and our elders. He even invites us to learn from them with gratitude, and to accompany them in their loneliness and fragility.”

- **Paragraph 449**: Our Seniors “are true missionary disciples of Jesus through their witness and works. They deserve to be recognized as children of God, called to share the fullness of love, and to be loved especially for the burden of their sorrows, the decreasing of their abilities or loneliness. The family should not only look at the difficulties involved in living with them or attending them. Society can not consider them a weight or a burden. It is unfortunate that in some countries there are no social policies that deal with elderly people who are retired, pensioners, sick or abandoned. So, we call for the design of just and supportive social policies that meet these needs”.

- **The Paragraph 450** declares “the church feels committed to seeking the full human attention of all the elderly, also helping them to live in following Christ in their present state and to integrate them as much as possible into the evangelizing mission. Therefore, while appreciating the work already done by the religious and the volunteers, she wishes to renew their pastoral structures and to prepare even more people to extend this precious service of love”.

One of the proposals for Life Ascending could

be the training of volunteers in the service of older people by developing a global unified plan of empowerment and training.

### **Apostolate of the elderly and National Council of the Elderly (CONAPE)**

CONAPE is the entity responsible for the design, implementation and execution of national policies for senior citizens; its mission is to guarantee the fundamental rights of the elderly by promoting a change of model towards **active, productive, participative and protected Aging**. This is to implement **a new model of the elderly person in the Dominican Republic**. The growing importance of the elderly in society (20% of the population in 2050) changes the expectations and needs of the society: for Conape, it is to consider these new demands for specialized services in the areas of justice, family leadership, health, technology and political rights. Thanks to the Concordat regime, CONAPE is involved in the pastoral of the elderly. ■

# Statutory General Assembly of 22nd November 2018

## Reports 2014-2018

were presented successively and approved:

- The reports of the Continental coordinators
- The report of the Executive Committee
- The financial report

## Elections

### Executive Committee

Were elected:

- President: Mrs Monique BODHUIN (France)
- Vice president: Mr. Jaime TAMARIT (Spain)
- Treasurer: Mr. Christian LIEBENGUTH (Belgium)
- Secretary: Mrs Monika PTAK (France)

- Mr. Jean-Michel SIMEON is delegate for finance/ accounting
- And Mr. Christian LIEBENGUTH webmaster

### Coordinators:

The Choice made by each continent have been ratified by the Assembly:

- English-speaking Africa: Mr. Modest MAMBO (Tanzania)
- French-speaking Africa: post to be filled
- Latin America: Mrs. Susana ZONNI ECHENIQUE (Argentina)
- Asia: Mr Abraham LEE (Taiwan)
- Europe: Mrs Monika PTAK (France)

### Membership fees:

In accordance with article 5.4 of the statutes, the General Assembly has set the amount of membership fees for the next two years:

	2019	2020
Countries group 1 (and ex Group 2)	0.38	0.42 € *
Countries group 3	0.19	0.21 €
Countries group 4	0.12	0.13 €

The rates for the years 2021 and 2022 will be proposed by a working group end 2019 or early 2020 and submitted to the Steering Committee.

\* Per member



## A WORLD DAY FOR ASCENDING LIFE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENTS

Following the proposal made by the movement of Peru, the Assembly considered the possibility of planning a Day of the Life Ascending International common to all our countries.

This suggestion was unanimously approved and among the various dates proposed, the one that was retained is the 1st October (which is already the day of the elderly set by the UN).





## *Anthology of photos of the meeting*





# Conclusion

**A**t the end of this ninth international meeting we leave, the spirit enriched by the contributions of the speakers, the heart enlarged by the happiness of having experienced moments of conviviality, exchanged smiles and words of friendship: so many reasons for action of grace.

Let us express our sincere gratitude to Marta for serving LAi for the past four years

Let us go in joy to this mission of evangelization to which we must respond; together we are working to «make humanity new again».

Let us pray for each other so that everyone knows how to accomplish this mission with conviction and determination, without giving way to discouragement when facing obstacles.

**Let us be proud to belong to LAI**, a movement that is not an innocuous association since it is in the name of Christ that we meet.

**Let us unite our talents and our energies**, to develop, according to the culture and local specificities, a pastoral of the elder

**Let us witness by our life and our actions** the message of love of Christ, to our grandchildren to make them discover the treasure of the faith.

**Let's associate our wisdom of elders** with the enthusiasm of youth to build the future of the Church.

**Let us build together** a world more in keeping with God's plan by denouncing the scandal of inequality and poverty, as «Laudato si» calls us to do.

Monique Bodhuin



# Archdiocesan House “Maria de la Altagracia”

## *International Centre, Santo Domingo*

**T**he history of the Archdiocesan House goes back to the 90s of the last century. The author of the construction project is Kiko Argüello, Spanish painter and co-initiator of the Neocatechumenal Way. The construction of the site, in collaboration with the Bishop of Santo Domingo, Cardinal Rodrigo Lopez lasted 18 years. The Centre comprises four formation houses, a church, an independent dining room, as well as training facilities (conference rooms) and leisure facilities (swimming pool) and a cemetery. The additional chapels are numerous: there is even a chapel of the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The set is located on the grounds of a large park. 500 to 600 people can stay there at a time.

The land for the construction of this formation Centre was donated by Joaquin Balaguer, then President of the Dominican Republic, the material resources for its construction having been brought by the members of the Neocatechumenal Way. It must be emphasized that in the Dominican Republic there are nearly a thousand communi-



ties of this kind of commitment in the Church. Nearly 300 000 people are deepening their faith.

The goal of the Archdiocesan House is not only the Christian formation of the sympathizers of the Neocatechumenal Way. The Centre serves the faithful of parishes throughout the Dominican Republic as well as various professional groups, for example teachers, opening at the same time to the collaboration with the local administrations. Regular meetings of the Dominican Episcopal Conference are also organized on site.

Service in the house is provided by lay people, especially consecrated virgins and volunteers.

Spiritual accompaniment is provided by priests the rector and a spiritual advisor.

Father Roman Chromy  
from Poland



# List of participating countries



- ✧ Argentina
- ✧ French speaking Belgium
- ✧ Dutch speaking Belgium
- ✧ Brazil (1)
- ✧ French speaking Canada
- ✧ Colombia
- ✧ Ivory Coast (1)
- ✧ Ecuador

- ✧ Spain
- ✧ France
- ✧ Mauritius (1)
- ✧ Uganda
- ✧ Paraguay
- ✧ Peru
- ✧ Poland

- ✧ Portugal
- ✧ Republic Dominican
- ✧ Republic Central Africa (1)
- ✧ Senegal (1)
- ✧ Switzerland
- ✧ Taiwan
- ✧ Tanzania
- ✧ Uruguay

**Santo-Domingo  
9th international  
meeting**

(1) Participation in the preparatory work only