

## Council of Europe receives international bioethics prize

The International Bioethics Society (SIBI) honoured the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, **Bruno Haller**, with its coveted "Bioethics Prize," in recognition of his contribution to the promotion of bioethical issues in the Council of Europe. The Prize was conferred in Strasbourg, by a delegation of members of the SIBI Scientific Committee, headed by **Professor Marcelo Palacios**, SIBI Founder and Chairman of the Scientific Committee.

As member of the Scientific Committee and Vice President up to October 2002, the B.I.O. President partici-



ated in the delegation, along with Dr. Conrad V. Fernandez, Rev. Professor Maurice Dooley, Professor Santiago Grisolia, Professor Carlos Maria Romeo Casabona, Professor Jose Egozcue

Cuixart, and the Mayor of Gijon.

The delegation visited Strasbourg on January 27 and 28, 2003, in order to confer the Prize, and met with members of the Parliamentary Assembly and other officials. A series of roundtable discussions took place among the members of the delegation, who planned the upcoming SIBI III World Conference on Bioethics to convene in Spain, in September 2004.

The visit to Strasbourg concluded with a reception in honour of Secretary General Haller, hosted by Ambassador de Grandes, Head of the Permanent Representation of Spain at the Council of Europe.

## Ethics of biomedical research - Pontifical Academy for Life

The Ninth General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life took place at the Vatican from 24 to 26 February. This year it was dedicated to a crucial theme with a strong social impact, "Ethics of Biomedical Research for a Christian Vision."

It is evident that, especially in recent decades, biomedicine has developed in an extraordinary way, owing to the enormous progress in technology and computer science that have vastly extended the possibilities for experimentation on living beings and, especially on the human being. There have been tremendous breakthroughs, for example, in the fields of genetics, molecular biology, as well as in transplants and the neurological sciences.

It follows that the experimental sciences, and biomedicine itself, as "instruments" in human hands, are not complete in themselves, but must be directed to defined ends and put in dialogue with the world of values.

In his keynote address at the General Assembly, **Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan**, President of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance of Health Care Workers, dis-



cussed the need to place the whole issue of bioethics into a "New Paradigm" framework, one which includes values that can inspire a culture of peace:

*There is a need for bioethics to promote harmony with God, with the whole of mankind and with the total environmental context.*

love, sharing, care, comradeship, respect for life, freedom, justice and fairness, mutual respect and integrity. Furthermore, Archbishop Barragan referred to the need for an authentic, objective bioethics, that will be open to the pro-

ject of man and promote harmony with God, with the whole of mankind and with the total environmental context.

As Corresponding Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, the B.I.O. President participated in the General Assembly and contributed to the deliberations by stressing the importance of an all-encompassing respect for bios and the environment by biotechnology and the medical sciences. In her speech, the B.I.O. President pointed out that:

"It is very encouraging to see a growing environmental awareness in bios. Respecting the environment and all forms of life is our fundamental responsibility towards the work of the Creator and the miracle of life. We cannot reconcile our existence with the deterioration of Creation. For bioethics to be effective in responding to the increasing challenges of society, it is necessary to exit the confines of medical issues and promote the protection of the environment and all forms of life. Bioethics should also be concerned with quality of life, which can only be afforded by a safe and well-balanced environment."

## Nature, science, technology, religion – our new bioethical issues

### An international dialogue – Chennai, India

The All India Bioethics Association, the Asian Bioethics Association, Korea/Japan and the Eubios Ethics Institute, Japan/NZ, are sponsoring a major bioethics conference, themed "Nature, Science, Technology & Religion: Our New Bioethical Issues - An International Dialogue," to be held on 25-29 November 2003, in the historic city of Chennai (Madras), India. The aim of the conference is to provide a common ground for diverse people from different backgrounds to face the challenges of the ethical, legal and social implications that arise due to scientific and technological advances, besides identifying common areas for fruitful co-operation in these areas of common interest.

Due to the rapid strides of science and technology, humanity is facing new challenges. These include the ability of human beings to decode the genomic information of natural organisms including human beings. The dictum "technology is power" is often replacing the familiar enigmatic statement "knowledge is power." The new issues that face humanity due to the biotechnological revolution are in the field of genetic engineering technology, by which nature can be modified by anthropocentric intervention.

Dialogue is an effective method of communication, which builds bridges among groups of people. Between religion and science there has been an engaging dialogue among theologians and scientists to understand the theological reasons and scientific basis of nature. Both religion and science agree that there is an intrinsic vital value in nature, which is the web of human survival in the biosphere. Such a fundamental agreement has led to the common belief that nature is intelligible and amenable for human understanding. Science has interpreted nature as having a cause while religion holds that there is meaning in natural order. The Conference will therefore focus on

the following themes:

- ▶ Philosophy and sociology of science and technology
- ▶ Environmental ethics, biodiversity, food crop varieties, natural resources and pollution
- ▶ Medical ethics, ethics of health care, AIDS and support for people living with HIV, NGOs, bioethics committees, institutional review boards, gene therapy, cloning, status of the embryo, genetic screening, human stem cell research
- ▶ Globalisation, intellectual property rights, privatisation of natural resources, role of multinational corporations, globalisation of ecological justice

*By focusing on the fundamental human right of living in a clean environment, every endeavour can contribute to the building of the necessary moral framework for a global appreciation of bios.*

- ▶ Genetic engineering, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), genetically modified food and food products
- ▶ Assisted reproductive technology, embryo transfer and surrogate motherhood, biological parenthood, euthanasia, problems of the elderly population, and child abuse.
- ▶ Information technology, business and professional ethics
- ▶ Nature, religion and culture, religious movements and environmental and natural resources, relationship between religious beliefs and environmentally ethical human behaviour
- ▶ Nature and human consciousness, grassroots environmental activism, spirituality in human ecology, spiritual empowerment and social justice
- ▶ Bioethics in education and the mass media
- ▶ International co-operation and global peace

The following workshops have been planned: (1) Science and religion, (2) Population pressure and food insecurity, (3) Bioethics education, (4) Challenges and promises of technology, (5) Medical ethics and faith.

**Dr. Jayapaul Azariah**, President of the All India Bioethics Association, invited the B.I.O. President to participate as keynote speaker in the Conference and discuss our ethical responsibility to preserve bios on our planet.

## Asian-Pacific Economic Co-operation



The Ambassador of Thailand, **Precha Pititsant**, invited the B.I.O. President to be the keynote speaker at the monthly APEC (Asian-Pacific Economic Co-operation) luncheon, hosted at the Embassy of Thailand in Athens, on March 14, 2003.

Ambassadors from APEC countries – Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand – meet once a month, in an informal atmosphere, to exchange views with members and officials of the Greek government, as well as with outstanding personalities. The B.I.O. President discussed her thoughts on current events and environmental issues, stressing the need to strengthen international co-operation in environmen-

tal protection as a vehicle for peace.

The luncheon was attended by the following ambassadors:

Ambassador Tae Kyu Han, Korea; Ambassador Francisco Xavier Lopez Da Cruz, Indonesia; Ambassador Stuart H. Hume, Australia; Ambassador Zhenqi Tang, China; Ambassador Lourdes Morales, The Philippines; Ambassador Toshio Mochizuki, Japan.

APEC was formed in 1989 as a new mechanism for multilateral co-operation among the economies of the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to sustain growth, development, and improved living standards in the Asia-Pacific region and the world and to promote free trade. APEC provides a forum for ministerial discussion on a broad range of issues related to these goals.

## Bio-diplomacy – Balkan co-operation Institute of Inter-Balkan Relations

The B.I.O. President participated as keynote speaker in a conference sponsored by the Institute of Inter-Balkan Relations on February 2, 2003. The conference took place in Athens, with the participation of academics, diplomats, and other people of influence, and stressed the importance of co-operation among the Balkan countries in all areas of development.

In her speech, the B.I.O. President referred to the fact that, in the Balkans, traditional societies based on varying cultural backgrounds meet in the course of globalisation and are not only confronted with each other but also with the processes of new technologies and with environmental concerns. To meet the far reaching demands of change, new structures of cultural understanding and international co-operation have to be developed.

"The Balkan countries can join

forces in environmental initiatives, leading to long-term international strategy and co-operation. Concern over environmental questions is an international task; individual and social responsibilities and the fact that environmental protection involves confronting conflicting interests must be acknowledged. Every individual is encouraged to actively engage in the search for new paradigms and to join in bio-diplomacy, an international effort in defence of the environment."

Other eminent speakers included the Ambassadors of Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia, the Chairman of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) organisation, the President of the University of Indianapolis in Athens, and representatives from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies.

## Biocentric curricula in Argentina

**Professor Francisco Parenti**, Director of the Interdisciplinary Bioethics Programme, and **Professor Dario Maiorana**, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Arts at the National Rosario University in Argentina, invited the B.I.O. President to visit the University and discuss the development of

Biopolitics programmes and academic curricula in Argentina.

The visit has been tentatively planned for June 2003, with the hope of leading to long-term co-operation in bio-education, within the framework of the activities of the International University for the Bio-Environment.

## Youth Bios Olympiad – Bios-Schools St. Petersburg, Russia



tance of co-operation among technology and the arts in the race to save the environment. Through scientific projects, oral presentations, poster sessions, theatre, song, dance and music competitions, the young participants develop their skills and creative thinking in relation to all aspects of bios and the environment.

The Youth Bios Olympiads have as their mission to promote: new approaches and methods of solving environmental problems; promising environmental youth projects; environmental development and the furtherance of biocentric values in society; bio-environmental, bio-cultural and bio-athletic values.

In addition, Bios Schools are organised in the St. Petersburg region, in March, April, October and November 2003. The purpose of this initiative is to encourage school children and students to develop a greater awareness of nature and the environment.

Owing to the dedicated efforts of **Professor Alexander Shishkin**, Head of the Laboratory of Ecological Standardisation at St. Petersburg State Technological University for Plant Polymers, the VIIIth Youth Bios Olympiad will take place in St. Petersburg, September 19-23, 2003.

The Youth Bios Olympiads bring together children and young adults from Russia and other countries, in order to raise awareness of the impor-