

International Gathering in Rome of Salesian University Institutions

The sixth triennial meeting of IUS (Salesian Institutions of Higher Education) was recently held at the headquarters at Rome, 9-14 July 2012, taking stock of the developments and ensuring follow-up measures that need to be addressed in the near future.

The meeting was well attended, with about 60 participants from Salesian universities and Colleges worldwide – the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia. From Asia there were 12 of us from India, 2 from the Philippines & Papua New Guinea, and 2 from Japan. Though there are over 35 colleges and a university in India we were only 12 from India, with no representatives from the following Provinces: Delhi, Dimapur, Trichy, Bangalore, Hyderabad.

The Conference was organized by the new Secretary General – Bro Mario Olmos who took over from Carlos Garulo an year ago. There was the active participation of Fr Fabio Attard, the Councillor for Youth Department in nearly all the sessions. The Rector Major addressed the gathering in one session (totally focused on challenging the participants to ‘understand afresh’ the complex situation of the youth in our colleges and universities), and Fr Fabio delivered the key note address at the inaugural session. Fr Maria Arokiam, the Regional for South Asia and a few other Councillors attended some of the important sessions.

The Conference was organized around a review of the last 14 years of the IUS experience – the policy documents of the congregation, the common programmes of action, the continental conferences, and the attempts made so far to encourage institutional planning, human resource development (staff formation), and financial self-reliance and management. The Conference also approved a working plan for the next four years: 2012-16; and elected new members to the Executive Board (2 from South America, 2 from Asia, and 1

each from Europe and Africa). The two representatives from Asia are Fr Stephen Mavely, Vice Chancellor, Don Bosco University, Guwahati and Fr Innocencio Onofre, Philippines Province Coordinator for IUS.

It was an occasion for interaction between the member institutions and to draw up plans for exchange programmes of various kinds. Salesian College had welcomed four students and a staff from a University in Chile as a result of the previous general assembly and the networking of education group of IUS. There is a continued action proposed by the group to have an international (intercontinental) seminar on the theme 'Social Inclusion and Education' to be held in three stages – first at Madrid focusing on Europe, second at Sao Paulo, Brazil attending to Latin American reality and the third at Darjeeling, India, focusing on the diversity related issues of social inclusion in South Asia. The latter is scheduled to be held in March 2014 as a concluding event to the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

The statistical analysis of the data provided by the university institutions across the world shows that the presence of Salesians in higher education is highest in India. However, the average size of the institution going by the student strength is below one thousand, except for the older institutions, and the student strength is on the increase given the greater aspiration for entry into higher education among the college going age group of youth across the country.

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