



Assembly Meeting

Saturday 7th September 2019

12.00pm-1.30pm

Human Rights Centre, Potsdam

Wissenschaftsetage, Lecture Hall H5

Minutes (DRAFT)

Member Institutions Present

- Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York, UK
- Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights, University College Cork, Ireland
- Centre for Human Rights Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany
- Centre for Human Rights Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa
- Centre for the Study of Human Rights Law, University of Strathclyde, UK
- Chair of Human Rights, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland
- Chang Fo-chuan Centre for the Study of Human Rights, Soochow University, Taiwan
- Erik Castrén Institute, Finland
- European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (UNI-ETC), Austria
- Global Campus of Human Rights, Italy
- Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh, UK
- Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, Sheffield Hallam University, UK
- Human Rights Centre “Antonio Papisca”, University of Padova, Italy
- Human Rights Law Centre, University of Nottingham, UK
- Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa, Canada
- Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM), Utrecht, Netherlands
- Poznań Human Rights Centre, Poland
- Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Lund, Sweden
- School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Member Institutions Represented by other AHRI Institutions (by proxy)

- EURAC Research - Institute for Minority Rights, Italy (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Human Rights Centre, Queens University Belfast, UK (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Human Rights Consortium, UK (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Human Rights Programme, Central European University, Hungary (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Institute for Human Rights, Abo Akademi University, Finland (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Institute for Political and International Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (IDEHPUCP), Peru (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland Galway (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Sussex Centre for Human Rights Research, UK (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights (SCHR), Switzerland (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- Transitional Justice Institute, UK (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- UCD Centre for Human Rights, Ireland (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Public Authorities, Spain (by proxy- AHRI chair)
- UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg (by proxy- AHRI chair)

Apologies Received by Member Institutes

- Australian Human Rights Institute, UNSW, Australia
- Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol, UK
- Law and Development Research Group, University of Antwerp, Belgium

New Membership Applicant Institutes present

- Addis Abba University Centre for Human Rights, Ethiopia
- Human Rights Institute, Binghamton University, New York, USA
- Minerva Center for Human Rights, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

New Applicant Institutes apologies

- Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Monash University, Australia
- Chair for the Theory of Law and Human Rights, Catholic University Law School, Lviv, Ukraine
- European Human Rights Law Institute, University of Montpellier, France

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed AHRI representatives and applicants to the Assembly. Meeting quorate.

2. Adoption of agenda

Decision: Adopted

3. Approval of minutes from Assembly Meeting on 8th September 2018 (Annex 1)

Decision: The Assembly unanimously approved the minutes.

4. Report of the Chair

The Chair updated the Assembly on the February 2019 Executive Committee meeting. Clarified that the Executive Committee meets twice per year. The publication plans have been put on hold whilst attention has been paid to streamlining some administrative processes. Highlighted the great opportunities as well as extra considerations in light of the growth of AHRI. The Chair highlighted the desire for non-Executive Committee member institutes to become involved in some projects of AHRI. One working group has been established in order to liaise with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and there is a plan to meet with them in Vienna in 2020. Ideas for possible collaboration will be presented to the Assembly, hopefully in September 2020.

The process of establishing AHRI as an International Association has been very complex, and more complex than anticipated, but the process is nearing completion. This will allow AHRI to open a bank account, which will help to streamline finance and facilitate the process for any institute taking over the Secretariat in future.

5. Financial Statement (Annex 2)

The Chair confirmed that there had been £8235 in membership fees last year, which was used towards the funding of the 2018 conference.

Sixteen member institutes have not yet paid fees. This is important because a figure is given to the conference organisers, who rely on this amount. The Secretariat will follow up with those institutes.

The Chair reminded institutes to please pay for any currency exchange fees on their side.

Traditionally all AHRI membership fees are transferred to the host institution. The Executive Committee has discussed whether it is necessary to transfer all of the membership fees to the conference organisers in future, and is considering transferring a fixed proportion to the conference organisers and retaining some funds within a to-be-established AHRI account. The remainder will be used, notably, to support early career researchers who may need to travel further afield in light of the expansion of the membership.

The Chair gave an update on a related discussion within the Executive Committee about changes to membership fees. The Executive Committee has discussed whether the Association could dedicate fees to pay an administrator to work on behalf of the Secretariat. It is necessary to consider how the currently voluntary work of the Secretariat will be sustained if AHRI continues to grow. With continued growth, extra time will be required due to extra administration and communications, and a need to professionalise processes and website maintenance. This may also encourage other members to host the Secretariat. There was discussion of potential modification to the membership fee arrangements, including raising membership fees for some on the basis of tiered structure. It was noted that the Constitution does not specify anything about how membership fees shall be spent.

Discussion was opened to the floor.

A number of points were raised including: acknowledgement of continued pressures within institutions, including in the UK, where there are increasing constraints, and concern that more than a minor raise might pose difficulties; suggestion that the Executive Committee could have discretion in exceptional circumstances, although noted that this would pose an additional burden on the Committee; agreement that it was a good idea to keep the current fee for lower income countries; agreement that as AHRI grows there is a need to professionalise some aspects of the administration.

The Chair acknowledged the pressure within institutes, including within the Secretariat institutions themselves. There is a key need to create a structure that can encourage other members to assume the Secretariat. Increasing the fees would allow some financial support.

The Chair asked whether there was a desire for a vote on the matter. No vote was requested and no objections. Unanimous agreement that the Executive Committee should finalise the arrangements for changes.

6. Admission of New Members (6 applications) (Annex 3)

The Chair welcomed the six applications submitted and invited representatives present to briefly introduce themselves and their institutions to the Assembly.

No representative was able to attend from the Chair for the Theory of Law and Human Rights, Catholic University Law School, Lviv, Ukraine. The supporting institute was not present. A question was asked about which institution was actually applying – the Chair or the School. The Executive Secretary clarified that it was the Chair of Theory and Human Rights. The majority view was that some more information was required and it was requested that the application be looked at again during the 2020 Assembly accompanied by some further information and the presence of a representative of the institute or a supporter. It was noted that there was a desire to signal support for the applicant institute by the well-established institute that had endorsed the application, and it was also noted that travel may be difficult for some representatives next year as the meeting will be held in South Africa. To overcome this, it was agreed that a video link would be made available for anyone who could not attend. It was asked whether the decision on membership could be delegated to the Executive Committee so as to avoid delaying the membership application until next year, but the majority view was that all applications had to be voted on by the Assembly, in line with AHRI's constitution.

There was a suggestion from the floor that it should be reinforced as good practice that a representative from a new member institute can commit to representation at the Assembly. A supporting statement was made from the floor that at least either the new applicant representative or a colleague from an endorsing institute attend the Assembly.

Another supporting statement was made about the presence of the applicant member representative, noting the advantage of having two sponsors so that there is a strong chance that someone will be able to speak on behalf of the applicant institute.

The current position was clarified: that representatives from applicant institutes were invited but not required to attend. It was agreed that the policy should change henceforth. The institute applying must be present or represented or at least one endorser should be present.

Introductions were given by Dr Wondemagegn Tadesse Goshu on behalf of the Addis Ababa University Centre for Human Rights, Prof. Alexandra Moore on behalf of the Human Rights Institute, Binghamton University in New York, and Prof. Tomer Broude on behalf of the Minerva Center for Human Rights, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Representatives present who had supported these membership applications were in attendance and also spoke to endorse the applications. The Assembly unanimously welcomed these institutes.

Representatives from the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law (Monash University, Australia) had sent apologies and the representative of a supporting institute spoke on their behalf (SIM). The Assembly unanimously welcomed the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law.

Representatives from the European Human Rights Law Institute (University of Montpellier, France) had sent apologies and the representative of a supporting institute spoke on their behalf (Danish Institute for Human Rights). The representative of the Global Campus of Human Rights, of which the Institute is a member, also spoke in support of the application. The Assembly unanimously welcomed the European Human Rights Law Institute.

7. AHRI Conference 2020

Dates have been confirmed for the 2020 conference. The Chair invited Prof. Magnus Killander (Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa) to provide an update. Prof. Killander gave an overview of the conference theme, which is broadly in the area of economic, social and cultural rights).

The Chair encouraged member institutes to plan in advance for travel arrangements.

8. AHRI Conference 2021

The Chair confirmed that the Executive Committee has been in communication with one AHRI member so far and there are issues of dates and timings which are still under discussion.

Prof. Michael Lysander Fremuth on behalf of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (Austria) signalled an early interest in hosting a future conference in 2022. The Chair gave thanks for expressing interest in future hosting.

9. Secretariat transition

The Chair confirmed that no institutes have volunteered as yet. There is still time to do so. The term of the current Secretariat will come to an end in September 2020.

There was a comment from the floor to thank the current Secretariat for the good work that has been undertaken to date.

A further comment for the floor suggested that we set a further and final deadline, for example in December, so that plans can be finalised at the next Executive Committee meeting in 2020.

10. Next meeting

The next Assembly meeting will take place in Pretoria. The date is yet to be finalised.

11. AOB.

The Chair gave an update on discussions within the Executive Committee to put in place a new process for any AHRI Declarations.

A proposal was raised this year to have a Potsdam Declaration linked to the theme of the conference in light of the 70th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

Attendees were given some time to read the draft, which was projected on the screen.

Four suggestions were made for changes to the wording and a question was raised about the length of the Declaration and the audience for the Declaration.

The Chair confirmed that the draft would be revised.