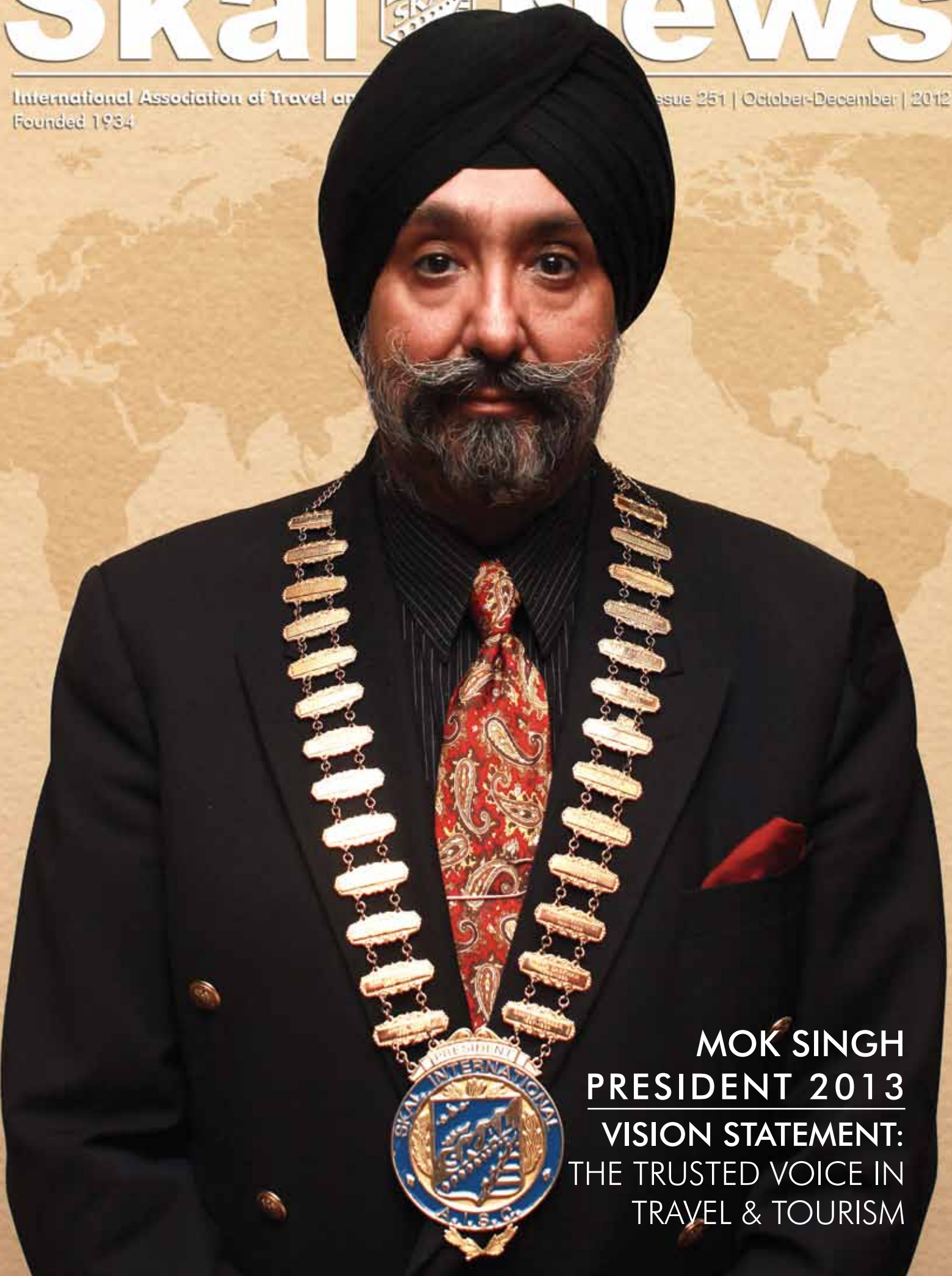


Skål News

International Association of Travel and Tourism
Founded 1934

Issue 251 | October-December | 2012



MOK SINGH
PRESIDENT 2013

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Consolidating Skål International's Core Values and Vision

Dear Fellow Skålleagues,
Greetings!

First and foremost I must thank you all from the bottom of my heart for electing me President of Skål International and to be a leader among leaders. I will do the very best I can for you and our organisation, which has given me so much. Thanks again.

I am looking forward to working with my newly elected Executive Committee and have made the following portfolio assignments:

Karine Coulanges: Senior Vice President | PR and Communications

Marianne Krohn: Junior Vice President | Finance

Ann Lootens: Director | Young Skål and Florimond Volckaert Fund

Salih Cene: Director | Membership Development (Primary Responsibility), Business Affairs (Secondary Responsibility)

Graham Blakey: Director | Statutes and Special Projects Asia

Nigel Pilkington: Director | Business Affairs (Primary Responsibility), Membership Development (Secondary Responsibility)

Bernhard Wegscheider: Secretary General | Membership Development, Sponsorship Growth, Corporate Affiliate Development, Revenue Growth, Cost Control, Skål Representation on World Bodies.

I have listed all these responsibilities so that you know with whom to get in touch when you have queries, ideas or offers of assistance.

At the farewell event of the Seoul Congress on 6 October, I was pleased to introduce my team and to clearly enunciate our core objectives, and areas of focus for this coming year. They are:

- Maintaining the core value of friendship and amicale in our organisation
- Membership growth
- Adding membership value and membership benefits
- Finances... growing revenues and containing costs
- Website management
- Positioning Skål to enhance our brand by promoting our mission and vision to be "The Trusted Voice in Travel and Tourism", through meaningful participation in world bodies of which we are a part.
- Protecting our environment and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Membership growth will clearly be the responsibility of Bernhard, Salih and Nigel, and these good people can do little without your help. I need each Skålleague and club around the world to commit themselves to the goal of net membership growth in 2012/2013. Please call on these gentlemen to help you achieve your objectives.



There were also two Statutes amendment proposals passed at the AGM on 4 October which have a direct impact on membership. We are now authorised to induct "Active Individual Members" in areas where we do not have clubs. The other opportunity lies with the new Corporate Affiliate area. More detailed information will be forthcoming on these two important initiatives.

Adding membership value and benefits... Bernhard, Nigel and Salih will be focusing on this objective and, again, we cannot achieve progress without your help. We have a tremendous opportunity in our new website "Benefits" section to convert your unsold inventory into revenue while at the same time greatly benefiting our fellow members and the Skål organisation. Our new website offers a great channel for Skålleagues to offer discounted travel benefits to other Skålleagues in an automated format. Please get in touch with Bernhard for more details.

In the finances arena, the AGM approved the reduction of the Executive Committee by one member, down to six, thereby paving the way for a reduction in our operation costs. This amendment takes effect from three months after the end of the Assembly and will begin to produce results in the 2013/2014 year.

The key objective with regard to enhancing our brand and representing us on world bodies will rest primarily with Bernhard. Our mission statement is: "Through our leadership, professionalism and friendship, work together to enhance our vision, maximise networking opportunities and develop a responsible tourism Industry." Bernhard will be preparing Skål position papers on all the policy areas where we want to make an impact and will be following through on presenting our positions to these world tourism bodies. Your input on these matters is welcome.

With regard to a Presidential theme for the year, which has been a past tradition in Skål, I have decided to adopt our vision and mission statements and our core values as my theme. I believe that propagating a new Presidential theme each year is confusing and our basic values form a great declaration of what we stand for:

- Peace through tourism and friendship
- Quality in tourism
- Protection of the environment

- Protection of children and preventing their exploitation in tourism
- Promoting sustainability in tourism
- The ideal of world peace

We will be partnering with organisations such as Green Globe for Sustainable Tourism and the International Institute for Peace through Tourism to enhance our Skål brand.

Several years ago, Past President Hulya Aslantas, in setting up the Task Force and commissioning the 2009 Skål Membership survey, set in motion a series of progressive events which have led to many changes in how we move our organisation forward. This was followed by a further survey in 2010 and companion Task Force studies and reports. With your help, we are making, and will continue to make, the changes which will sustain us into the future.

Skålleagues... We need your help and support to achieve these goals. I have asked all my team members to form sub-committees as and when needed so that all of you can help support your organisation's goals and objectives.

As I said at the AGM and again at the farewell event in Seoul, it doesn't matter where we are: we are nowhere compared to where we can go. Together we can make our organisation better. Let us do it!

Regards and best wishes,

Skål International President - Mok Singh

FLORIMOND VOLCKAERT FUND

How does it work?

If a Skålleague is in need of help, an application should be sent to the three Trustees. They will assess the request and quickly come to a decision as to the form the assistance will take.

HOW TO DONATE NOW

Donations can be made by :

Bank transfer to the Florimond Volckaert Fund account:
Banco Bilbao Vizcaya
Plaza Costa del Sol 9, 29620 Torremolinos, Spain

US\$ Account No. 0182.0481.62.201121003.9
Swift: BBVAESMM
IBAN ES89 0182 0481 6220 1121 0039
EURO. Account No. 0182.0481.65.0011510764
Swift: BBVAESMM
IBAN ES94 0182 0481 6500 1151 0764

Cheque to the following address:
Skål International
Av. Palma de Mallorca 15, 1º
P.O. Box 466
29620 Torremolinos, Spain

Appointment of New Trustees

Florimond Volckaert Fund Coordinating Trustee Trygve Sødning (President Skål International 1993) and Trustee Alfonso Passera (President Skål International 2001) have reached the end of their respective second four-year terms and the Executive Committee has appointed, in consultation with the Trustees, Mary Bennett (President Skål International 2003) and Jan Sunde (President Skål International 2006) as the new Fund Trustees. Richard Hawkins takes over the position of Coordinating Trustee and continues for a further term. We take this opportunity to thank Trygve and Alfonso for their dedication to the Fund over the past eight years.

Your Trustees are:
Richard Hawkins (Coordinating Trustee)
President Skål International 2000:
richard.hawkins@hawkrentacar.com
Mary Bennett
President Skål International 2003:
marybennett@eircom.net
Jan H. Sunde
President Skål International 2006:
jan.sunde@tide.no

How to Apply for Grant

Go to our website and click on Members Only and Florimond Volckaert Fund. Here you will find the application form. Fill it out, and send it via your International Councillor or Club President to the three Trustees.

You can also send it directly to the Trustees, but then the process might take longer.

FVF RAFFLE

The Florimond Volckaert Fund raffle held during the recent Skål World Congress in Korea raised the significant amount of Euros 2,000 approximately. The Trustees would like to express their gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the raffle.

COUNCILLOR'S CORNER

Reassuring Skål growth in Venezuela

Venezuela currently has five active Skål Clubs, as well as one suspended at its own request (Maracaibo) and another (Oriente) that ceased operations four years ago. Each one of these Clubs is organised along different lines: some hold well-established social events for long-time members, while others focus more on professional activities and less on the social side.

Following is a brief overview of the evolution of each Club in recent years...

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL CARACAS

At one stage the Club had 94 members, held monthly meetings attended by at least half the membership and during the year organised three or more social activities, highlighted by the Christmas Dinner. Today, the membership oscillates around 75. In recent years the Club has had a limited participation in the National Committee and Area North Committee, but this trend is changing and, since May, there have been closer contacts, prompting expectations that this new relationship will be consolidated and lead to a more internationalised Club.

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL DEL CENTRO

The Club was very active up to four years ago, when its activities and membership began to decline. Meetings failed to attract large numbers but recently the National Committee decided to re-activate the Club by hosting a well-attended monthly meeting. Elections are pending (as I write this) and it is hoped that the minimum membership will be achieved to enable the Club to remain active.

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SAN CRISTOBAL

The Club has been very stable and participatory from the start, though it did suffer an activity crisis two years ago, which has been resolved. The Club is known for hosting extremely attractive events in its area, and members meet regularly and have positioned Skål in a solid position in the community. They have an excellent attendance at the National and Area Congresses, and maintain a stable membership of between 20 and 22.

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL CENTRO OCCIDENTE

This Club has always been extremely participatory, at both a national and international level. Its membership has not changed much over the years, and one member is the current President of the National Committee – which, without a doubt, serves as a major motivation within the Club.

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL ISLA DE MARGARITA

The Club's members are highly-valued professionals but not greatly committed to the customary Skål guidelines. Some are extremely busy; others just passing through or simply figurative. After five years of practically no activity, the Club is starting to re-organise and is hosting monthly committee meetings and events. It is hoped that the current membership of 24 will rise to 30 by the end of the year.

The Skål movement in Venezuela was born over 50 years ago with the formation of Caracas Club. The oil-producing country was experiencing major economic growth at the time, and Skål quickly brought together leading members of the tourism industry. At the end of the century, there were seven active Clubs in Venezuela, with more than 250 members.

The changing economic and political circumstances of both Venezuela and Latin America made it difficult to maintain this leadership, and in recent years changes in Venezuela, as well as to the dynamic of the Skål movement itself, around the world, have had a serious effect on the Venezuelan Clubs.

Time-honoured organisations such as Skål International need to evolve in harmony with the times, and it seems as though our movement fell asleep – costing it a generation of potential members. The key strategic changes implemented at the turn of the century led to the essential opening up of the movement but we should also remember to remain true to the way of our founders – with simplicity and transparency.

Long live Skål!

By Igor Vilorio
Skål International Venezuela



Skål International

73rd World Congress

Incheon & Seoul (Korea) | 2-7 October 2012

HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS, AWARDS, CULTURE AND TOURISM

Nearly 600 participants representing 153 Clubs attended a hugely successful 73rd Skål World Congress in Incheon and Seoul (Korea) from 2 to 7 October. The local **Organising Committee**, led by Chairman Robert Sohn and William Oh, President of Skål International Seoul and PCO, did an outstanding job in the lead up to and during the Congress.

The rest of the Organising Committee team are: Young Kil Lee, President Skål International Incheon; Jeong Bo Shim, KTO; Katie Han, VKC; Maureen O’Crowley, STO; Gyeong-Suk Min, IDTC; Adam Simkins, Hyatt Regency Incheon; Brian Harris, Grand Hyatt Seoul; Henry Oh, Global Tour; JP Sho, Travel Press; and Arnold Song, Korean Air. The fantastic staff led by Youngrai Cho, June Yoo and JK Lee were always happily ready to help the Congress participants.

The Congress would not have been possible without the generosity of the **sponsors**, to whom Skål International once again extends its thanks. The main sponsors were Korea Tourism Organization, Incheon Development and Tourism Corporation, Seoul Tourism Organization, Visit Korea Committee and Korean Food Foundation. We are also grateful to Korean Air, the Congress official carrier, whose support was essential to facilitate the attendance of participants.

The **Ecumenical Service** was held on Tuesday 2 October at the Hyatt Regency Incheon with the Buddhism and Chundokyo faiths represented on this occasion. The Get-together Party was also held at the Hyatt Regency Incheon, where the participants enjoyed the first Congress gathering. HeyYa, a fusion Korean traditional music group of four ladies, performed at the Get-together Party.

On Wednesday 3 October the **Opening Ceremony** was held at Songdo Convensia, a new Convention Centre in Incheon. The ceremony was presented by Stephen Revere and Olivia Bae, members of Skål International Seoul, and the special guest of honour was Mr. JK Lee, Senior Vice President of Korea Tourism Organization.

The Opening Ceremony began with a spectacular drum performance, followed by the Korea national anthem and Skål hymn. The ceremony included the roll call of nations and the parade of flags, as well as speeches of welcome by the dignitaries present.

The results of the **Skål Club of the Year** competition were also announced, and the winner of the competition for 2012 was Skål International Stavanger (Norway). Second was Skål International Launceston (Australia) and in third place Skål International Alanya (Turkey).

The winners of the **11th Sustainable Development in Tourism Awards** were also announced during the Opening Ceremony. The 2012 awards were sponsored by Diversey, who designed the trophies and certificates for the winners and, for the second time, presented a Special Recognition Award to one of the entries (see full details of the SDIT Awards at the end of this report).

The ceremony ended with the performances of Sand Art and PID. The lunch was held at Songdo Convensia with the presence of the Mayor of Incheon Metropolitan City, Mr.



Song Young-gil. After the lunch, participants enjoyed a fantastic tour of Incheon.

After dinner at Paradise Hotel Incheon, participants were transferred by coach from Incheon to Seoul.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The **General Assembly of Clubs** was held on Thursday 4 October at the Grand Ballroom of the Grand Hyatt Seoul. The morning coffee break was sponsored by Skål International Berlin, who were presenting their candidature for the 2014 Skål World Congress.

Vice President Mok Singh presented various Statutes amendments proposals, which were voted on and approved by the Club delegates.

President Enrique Quesada was the master of ceremony of two **Twinning Agreements** signed during the General Assembly by the following Clubs: Adelaide (Australia) and Christchurch (New Zealand); Istanbul (Turkey) and Seoul (Korea).

Non-delegates participated in a full day city tour of Seoul including lunch.

In the evening, participants enjoyed Korean cuisine at the Insadong Art Street, one of the most memorable attractions in Seoul, representing the focal point of Korean traditional cuisine and crafts.

That evening the annual meeting and dinner of the Honorary and Past Presidents was held at the Grand Hyatt Seoul.

TOURISM FORUM

On Friday morning 5 October the Tourism Forum was held from 9.00 to 10.45 am at the Grand Hyatt Seoul Ballroom, with the theme "New Boundaries in Tourism", and had Mr. Charm Lee (CEO of Korean Tourism Organization) and Ambassador Ms Young-



Shim Dho (Chairperson of UNWTO ST-EP Foundation) as keynote speakers.

It was followed by a panel session with Mr. Stephen Revere (Managing Editor of 10 Magazine, Seoul) as moderator and Mr. Jean Keijdener (General Manager, Somerset Palace, Seoul) as Forum Coordinator. The panellists were Mr. Robert Koehler (Executive Editor, Seoul Selection), Maureen O'Crowley (Vice President, Seoul Tourism Organization) and Mr. Stefan Phang (Director, Environment, Health & Safety and Corporate Social Responsibility Asia, Middle East, Africa, Turkey and Japan, Diversey).

B2B

The Business to **Business Workshop (B2B)** took place from 10.45 am to 1.00 pm at the Grand Hyatt Seoul Ballroom with 30 reserved tables, which was a great success. In the afternoon participants enjoyed the optional tour of Seoul Namsam Tower.

GALA DINNER

On Friday evening the President's Gala Dinner was held at the Grand Ballroom of the Grand Hyatt Seoul, nicely decorated for the purpose. President Enrique presented a **Skål Order of Merit** to Antonio García del Valle, Gino Luzi, Maria Fernanda Intriago de Price, Alfonso Castellanos, Augusto Minei and Bent Hadler. He also presented a **Certificate of Appreciation** to Fu Gao, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development and Tony Boyle in recognition of their commitment and efforts on the establishment of Skål International Beijing in the People's Republic of China.

President Enrique Quesada presented the winners of the 2012 **Membership Increase Campaign** with a certificate. Skål International Mar del Plata (Argentina) was presented with the Platinum Award for the highest net increase in membership in 2012; Skål International Durban (South Africa) was presented with the Gold Award for the second highest net increase; and Skål



International Helsinki (Finland) was presented with the Silver Award for the third highest. Certificates were presented to 72 Clubs that had increased their membership by a **net 10% or 10 members**. The performance during the President's Gala Dinner was by Yammo Yammo, a classic vocal Korean singers group.

The winner of the **Direct Marketing Campaign** is Thomas Mathai of Skål International Cochin, who received a prize of €500 towards the cost of registration for the 74th Skål World Congress.

On Saturday 6 October all participants went on the full day tour to the Korean Folk Village, a living museum displaying elements of traditional Korean life and culture.

FAREWELL PARTY

The Farewell Party was held on Saturday evening at the Grand Hilton Seoul. The finale – at the end of the Farewell Party – featured NANTA, the world famous non-verbal performance integrating Korea's traditional rhythm, Samulnori, with comedy.

ELECTIONS



The new President of Skål International is **Mok Singh** (Los Angeles, U.S.A.) – Kenya Airways.

Marianne Krohn (Hannover, Germany) – Tourismus & Stadtmarketing Celle – is the new Vice President and she retains the portfolio of Finance; while **Karine Coulanges** (Paris, France) – Rose Meetings & Events – continues as Vice President with the portfolio of Communications & PR.

The new Director of Skål International is **Nigel Pilkington** (Auckland, New Zealand) – De La Mer Communications – who has been assigned the portfolios of Business Affairs (primary responsibility) and Membership Development (secondary responsibility). The other Directors are **Ann Lootens** (Belgische Kust & Vlaanderen, Belgium) – Hotel Portinari – who will work on Young Skål & Florimond Volckaert Fund; **Salih Cene** (Antalya, Turkey) – Tourism Consultant – who will have the primary responsibility of

Membership Development and the secondary responsibility of Business Affairs; and **Graham Blakey** (Macau) – Macau with Imagination – who will deal with Statutes and Special Projects in Asia. **Peter Neilson** (Launceston, Australia) – Cable Hang Gliding – was elected Auditor for a two-year term; and **Yaacov Hartman** (Galilee, Israel) – Hartman/Ritz Hotel – was elected Deputy Auditor. The Senior Auditor for the coming year is **John J. Ruzich** (New York, U.S.A.) – Timm Group.

FUTURE CONGRESSES

In 2013 the Skål World Congress will be held for the first time **on board the Carnival Glory Cruise** organised by Skål International New York. The dates are 28 September to 5 October 2013. The website for the 2013 Skål World Congress in New York City is live! Register at www.skal2013worldcongress.com.

The delegates at the Seoul General Assembly voted **Mexico City** as the site of the 2014 Skål World Congress, which will be held from 25 to 30 October 2014.

INTERNATIONAL SKÅL COUNCIL

The International Skål Council held its annual meeting at the Sheraton Incheon Grand Ballroom on Tuesday 2 October. **Keith Murcott** (Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa) – Feather Market Convention Centre – was elected President of the Council for a two-year term. **Paul Follows** (London, United Kingdom) – Red Carpet Concepts – is the new Vice President of the Council; while **David Fisher** (Nairobi, Kenya) – Maniago Travel & Cruises – continues for a second year. **Susanna Saari** (Turku, Finland) – Turku University Applied Sciences – has been appointed as Secretary of the Council. The International Councillors selected Bali (Indonesia) as the venue for the 2013 International Skål Council Mid-Year meeting.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Mr. Bernhard Wegscheider from Austria was introduced to the General Assembly in Seoul as the new Secretary General. His main duties are: Membership Development, Sponsorship Growth, Corporate Affiliate Development, Revenue Growth, Cost Control and Skål Representation on World Bodies.



“SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT in Tourism” AWARDS



3rd October 2012

For eleven consecutive years, the Skål International “Sustainable Development in Tourism” Awards were presented during the Opening Ceremony of the 73rd Skål World Congress, which this year took place in the South Korean city of Incheon, on 3rd October 2012 and was conducted by Mr. Andrew Wood, President of Skål International Thailand.

The trophies and certificates were presented by the President of Skål International, Enrique Quesada, in conjunction with Vice-President Karine Coulanges.

Since the launch of the awards in 2002, they have received strong ongoing support and attracted a high level of participation, with a total of 456 entrants. This year, we have received a total of 39 projects entering the eight different categories. Further information on the projects received:

As usual, Skål International selected the panel of three independent judges from important institutions/organisations dealing with Eco and Sustainable tourism, to make the evaluation of all the projects. The primary criteria for the evaluation is based on such points like, contribution to the conservation of nature and cultural heritage, community involvement, educational features, business viability and innovation.

Skål International wishes to express its gratitude to the three independent judges for accepting to carry on the evaluation and for the meticulous and laborious work conducted by them:



Mr. Luigi Cabrini
UNWTO
Director Sustainable
Development of Tourism for Europe



Mr. Ed Roberts
SEALED AIR
Regional Sustainability Director for
Europe



Mr. Mandip Singh Soin
IBEX EXPEDITIONS INDIA
Founder & Managing Director

As part of the valuable partnership established with Skål, the company Diversey has generously produced the trophies and certificates presented to the winners. Diversey is a leading global provider of commercial cleaning, sanitation and hygiene solutions. Its products, systems and expertise make food, drink and facilities safer and more hygienic for consumers and for building occupants. The company serves customers in the travel and lodging, building management, food service, retail, health care and food and beverage industries.



For second consecutive year, Diversey has presented a Special Recognition Award to one of the projects among the 39 competing in the Skål “Sustainable Development in Tourism” Awards. According to Diversey, the project selected has gone beyond protecting and preserving while decisively transforming its business into a sustainable enterprise. Some representatives of Diversey attended the Opening Ceremony of the 73rd Skål World Congress: Mr. Nikhil Sawant, Regional Sector Marketing Director Hospitality and Healthcare Asia, Middle East, Africa & Turkey, Mr. Stefan Phang, Director Environment, Health, Safety & Sustainability, and Mr. KilMyung Maeng, Managing Director, Korea, who presented the Diversey Special Recognition Award and was a Guest Speaker at the ceremony.

The Diversey Special Recognition Award, handed out by Mr. KilMyung Maeng went to:

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM AT LISU LODGE AND LANJIA LODGE

Submitted by Asian Oasis (THAILAND)



Award collected by Chananaya Pataraprasit, Executive Director of Asian Oasis | www.asian-oasis.com



WINNERS OF THE SKÅL “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TOURISM” AWARDS



In the category of Tour Operators & Travel Agents:

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Submitted by Borneo Eco Tours (MALAYSIA)
Award collected by Albert Teo, Managing Director of Borneo Eco Tours | www.borneoecotours.com



In the category of Rural Accommodation:

THE CHELI & PEACOCK COMMUNITY TRUST

Submitted by Cheli & Peacock (KENYA)
Award collected by David Fisher, Councillor, Skål International Kenya, on behalf of The Cheli & Peacock | www.chelipeacockcommunitytrust.com



In the category of Urban Accommodation:

SUSTAINABILITY AT HAIKKO MANOR

Submitted by Hotel Haikko Manor & Spa (FINLAND)
Award collected by Kari Halonen, President of Skål International Finland, on behalf of Hotel Haikko Manor & Spa | www.haikko.fi



In the category of General Countryside:

HERITANCE TEA FACTORY

Submitted by Heritance Tea Factory, Kandapola (SRI LANKA)
Award collected by Keethi Jayaweera, President of Skål International Colombo, on behalf of Heritance Tea Factory (Aitken Spence Hotel) | www.heritancehotels.com



EU SWITCH-Asia
Greening Sri Lanka Hotels

In the category of Educational Programmes & Media:
EU-SWITCH ASIA GREENING SRI LANKA HOTELS PROJECT
 Submitted by CCC Solutions (SRI LANKA)

Award collected by Mr. Srilal Miththapala, Project Director/Consultant, EU-SWITCH Asia | www.greeningsrilankahotels.org



UTHANDO
South Africa

In the category of Cities & Villages:
UTHANDO (LOVE) SOUTH AFRICA
 Submitted by Uthando (Love) South Africa (SOUTH AFRICA)

Award collected by Vernon Kirsten & Anne Lamb, Skål International Cape Town, on behalf of Uthando (Love) South Africa | www.uthandosa.org



thegreencab
STREETS AHEAD

In the category of Transportation:
THE GREEN CAB
 Submitted by The Green Cab (SOUTH AFRICA)

Award collected by Vernon Kirsten & Anne Lamb, Skål International Cape Town, on behalf of The Green Cab | www.thegreencab.co.za



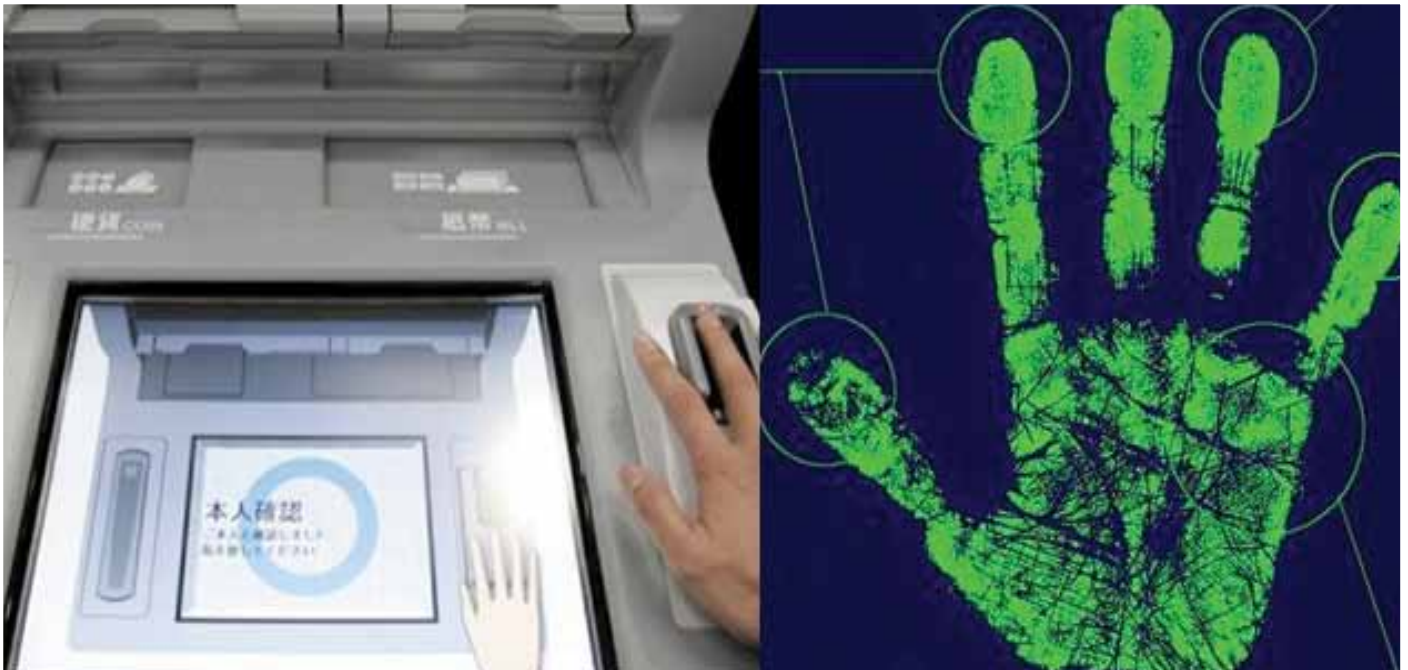
calgary tower

In the category of Major Tourist Attractions:
CALGARY TOWER
 Submitted by Calgary Tower Facilities Ltd & Sky 360 Restaurant (CANADA)

Award collected by Gregory Moon, President, Skål International Calgary, on behalf of Calgary Tower Facilities & Sky 360 Restaurant | www.calgarytower.com

CASH REVOLUTION

SAFE HANDS FOR WITHDRAWALS



Business travellers, it's time to throw away your credit cards and take your hands out of your pockets. Well, maybe not quite yet, but a revolutionary initiative for cash withdrawals has certainly added a light note to the serious issue of money – almost like something out of Star Trek.

A Japanese bank, Ogaki Kyoritsu Bank, plans to install cash dispensers that are capable of detecting the veins of a hand, unique for each of us. Initially, the service will only be available for cash withdrawals but, if it becomes a success, the idea is that in 10 years time we will be able to pay all our expenses this way.

SO, IS THIS LITTLE MORE THAN A GADGET, A GIMMICK?

Certainly not, especially when considering the costs of credit card fraud. The system restricts misappropriation of funds and guarantees the holder (of the hand), total security with withdrawals and payments. Moreover, if the amount exceeds €500, it will be necessary to present both hands.

The real revolution – beyond the eventual demise of the plastic card – involves the machine's capacity, in real time, to “discuss” the transaction with the company that has supplied authorisation for payment or withdrawal. And all of this – even on a public holiday – with an intelligent SMS system for smartphones.

Obviously, it will be necessary to solve the problem of time differences and to manage the levels of authorisation. At first, it will be used only for domestic

payments but once these issues are resolved, on a global level, the system set up in Japan is expected to lead to many other uses.

And the icing on the cake? Each expense incurred will be automatically followed up by an email or computerised software data for expense accounts or management of expenses.

Airline companies are also interested in the system and are keen to join the databases which, inevitably, will be built up over the years. It is not hard to appreciate the level of interest in this form of recognition, which is considered more reliable than fingerprints.



In the United States, they will soon be ready to associate the iris with the hand, and in this case the risk of error will be less than 0.0001 per cent. Irrefutable. It is now just a matter of moving from science fiction to reality. The Japanese bank plans to display the system by the end of 2012. Science travels very fast indeed.

Source: DéplacementsPros.com

BEIJING MILESTONE

First Skål Club established in mainland China

By Megan Boyle



Skål International has warmly welcomed the establishment of Skål International Beijing. It is the first Skål Club to be established in mainland China and has 60 founding members.

Skål International is the first tourism non-government organisation permitted to operate in mainland China with both Chinese nationals and non-Chinese nationals as individual members. Formal government approval has been received from the Chinese Foreign Affairs Office, the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Beijing Mayor's office.

The inaugural meeting of Skål International Beijing was held at the Beijing Asia Hotel, with approximately 75 people attending the function, including officials from the Chinese Foreign Affairs Office and the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Skålleagues from Australia, Guam, Hong Kong, Macau, Mexico, Turkey and the USA were also in attendance.

Skål International President Enrique Quesada said he was absolutely delighted to welcome the first Skål Club in mainland China. "There is enormous potential for Skål membership development in China, with negotiations already underway to establish Clubs in Guangzhou and Shanghai," he said.

Tony Boyle, Immediate Past President of Skål International, from Townsville (Australia), and Bernhard Clever, Past President of Skål International Los Angeles,

attended a series of meetings with Chinese authorities to facilitate the establishment of the new Skål Club during the past year. These meetings and discussions resulted in formal approval by the Chinese authorities to form a Skål chapter in Beijing.

"It was very pleasing to obtain official government approval to establish Skål International in the People's Republic of China and I expect there will be significant growth in membership and the number of Skål Clubs in China in the not too distant future," Mr. Boyle said.

He added that Skål International was very appreciative of the assistance and cooperation provided by Skål International Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung to facilitate the Chinese Government's formal approval to form Skål International Beijing.

He also said the formation of Skål Beijing would not have been possible without the outstanding contribution made by Mr. Fu Gao, who is a senior officer at the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development. "Fu was a tireless worker who liaised with the various government departments to enable the official approval to be granted," Mr. Boyle said.

The story about how the official approval came about is quite remarkable. Bernhard Clever was attending a PATA Conference in Beijing last April and he inadvertently left his camera in a taxi on his way to the conference hotel. After dropping Bernhard at the hotel, the taxi driver took



From left: Mr. Zou Weinan, Tony Boyle, Mr. Lu Yong, Bernhard Clever, Mr. Fu Gao

another fare to the airport and on the way saw the camera on the rear seat of the taxi and realised it belonged to Mr. Clever. So, after dropping off his passenger at the airport, the taxi driver, Li Guo Fei, drove from Beijing International Airport to China World Hotel to look for Mr. Clever.

The honest taxi driver went to great lengths to search for Mr. Clever, making the task a priority for the day. After an extensive search and the help of the China World Hotel staff using the hotel's security footage, Mr. Fei was finally able to return the camera safely to Mr. Clever.

"I had so many valuable photos on my camera, so I was extremely grateful to Mr. Fei and touched by his efforts," Mr. Clever said. "The Beijing people are so warm and hospitable." Bernhard made a point of speaking to Mr. Lu Yong, Chairman of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism

Development, who was a keynote speaker at the conference, and explained the outstanding efforts of the taxi driver. This led to an opportunity for Bernhard to set up a series of meetings with Tony Boyle, President of Skål International at that time, and Mr. Lu Yong, culminating in the formation of Skål International Beijing.

Mr. Sun Weijia, founding President of Skål International Beijing and Vice Chairman of the Beijing Commission of Tourism Development, said he was honoured to be elected President of the new Skål Club. "I envisage there will be significant potential for the members of Skål in China and throughout the world to develop business and cultural links," he said.

Mr. Weijia said Skål International Beijing would be bidding for the Skål World Congress in 2015 and looked forward to welcoming many Skål members throughout the world to Beijing.

PEOPLE



Lars-Gunnar Egby

Sweden's devoted Mr. Skål International

TRIBUTE BY GÖRAN BLOMQUIST • PRESIDENT, SKÅL INTERNATIONAL GÖTEBORG

We regret to inform our international Skålleagues that Lars-Gunnar Egby (Göteborg, Sweden) has died at the age of 73. Lars-Gunnar was indeed Mr. Skål International in Sweden, and very well known globally as well.

He was President of Skål International Göteborg from 1978 to 1988, a remarkably long period that demonstrated his never-ending devotion to the Skål International movement.

Lars-Gunnar also held the position of International Councillor for a number of years and I have learned that he played an important role in the development of Skål International in Sweden.

His broad international network within Skål showed us he was a fantastic person, always engaged in Skål.

This he particularly demonstrated during the years after his active time on the board, as an enthusiastic member of the Göteborg Club. He hardly ever missed a Skål activity and he participated with keen interest and enthusiasm as recently as our Skål event/dinner at Arken Hotel & Spa in May this year.

Lars-Gunnar was also active in many other organisations, including Rotary and MIG, the marketing association in Göteborg.

Furthermore, his profession over many years until recently was that of a highly professional tour leader for exclusive tourist group-programs around the world: Australia, South America, the Far East and elsewhere.

Proof that Lars-Gunnar meant a lot to many people was underlined at his funeral in Örgryte Old Church in Göteborg, attended by more than 150 people. The church was filled with those who came to say farewell to Lars-Gunnar.

The members and board of Skål International Göteborg miss our loyal friend and Skålleague.

ITB BERLIN: Ongoing Commitment to Sustainable Tourism

As the world's leading travel trade show ITB Berlin believes in its social responsibility and is committed to the UNTWO Global Code of Ethics and its principles of sustainability. The ecological, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development must be balanced in ways that guarantee long-term sustainability.

This broader awareness is also mirrored by the event itself: Sustainable Tourism at ITB Berlin has reported consistent growth. One of the most successful events is the ITB CSR Day. Currently in its fifth year, it has become a must for international decision-makers to attend.

However, there are many more opportunities to exchange views on socially responsible tourism practices everywhere at ITB Berlin.

Following on from this year's success, in 2013 ITB Berlin will again be organising a platform for accessible tourism as well as a panel discussion on human rights.

By supporting the ECPAT Child Protection Code ITB Berlin has actively committed itself to combating child abuse in tourism.

The ITB team also takes care to minimise its own carbon footprint, offsets all its business flights with Atmosfair and if possible uses alternative forms of transport.

Being aware of one's own responsibility where sustainability is concerned has top priority for ITB Berlin. As a result, ITB Berlin has achieved the first milestone en route to

creating a wider social and ecological awareness within the entire international tourism industry. More information is available online at www.itb-berlin.com/csr.

ITB Asia in Singapore also subscribes to sustainability principles. At this year's Responsible Tourism Forum, together with the official RT Partner The Blue Yonder Associates and in cooperation with Wild Asia, ITB Asia will present inspiring stories and initiatives from around Asia highlighting people from the travel industry who have committed to sustainable change.

Case studies and examples of best practices given by leading speakers such as Professor Geoffrey Lipman, Greenearth Travel, The International Council of Tourism Partners (ICTP), on the subject of "Greening the supply chain to increase profit in business", and by Erika Harms, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, on "Certification and beyond: The GSTC Case", will show ways to promote an awareness for responsible travel with a focus on Asia.

At the Responsible Tourism Clinics those attending ITB Asia will have an opportunity to personally meet experts such as Raj Gyawali of Social Tours and Raj Basu of HELP Tourism.

Once again, Wild Asia's Responsible Tourism Awards 2012, which honour the best sustainability projects, will be presented at ITB Asia.

More information is available online at www.itb-asia.com/events or at tourism.wildasia.org.

WORLD TRAVEL MARKET: Talking Business with EasyJet CEO

EasyJet Chief Executive Carolyn McCall OBE will headline World Travel Market's new Talk Business Series on Thursday 8 November. McCall will be the first of three senior business leaders to speak for 45 minutes on the issues and challenges of business in the current uncertain economic climate.

The WTM Talk Business Series will be one of a number of events on the Thursday of WTM taking place on the exhibition floor, with the series being hosted in the WTM Meridian Club lounge in the North Halls.

McCall was appointed easyJet CEO in October 2010, moving from her role as CEO of Guardian Newspapers. She improved the airline's operations, with the number of passengers rising by more than 10 per cent

in 2011 to 54.5 million (making it the third largest no-frills airline in the world), while pre-tax profits for the year increased by 31 per cent to £248 million. McCall will speak at 12pm on Thursday 8 November and will be followed by Birds Eye Iglo Group CEO Martin Glenn.

Glenn has introduced more innovation to the company's food ranges, while cutting costs and dropping under-performing products, since becoming CEO in 2006. The strategy led to the company making profits of €320 million in 2011, up from €305 million the previous year. His impressive CV includes turning the Walkers Crisps brand around when marketing director by recruiting former England footballer Gary Lineker to front its advertising campaign. Glenn worked his way up to Walkers Snacks Foods CEO before becoming Chief Executive of parent company PepsiCo UK & Ireland.

A third speaker to follow Glenn was yet to be confirmed at the time of going to press.

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Reed Travel Exhibitions Director World Travel Market Simon Press said, "I am delighted to have Carolyn McCall and Martin Glenn speaking at WTM 2012. They both have a wealth of business experience which can help WTM exhibitors, Meridian Club members and visitors in their businesses.

"The Talk Business Series gives WTM delegates three industry-leading must-attend 45-minute sessions, which still gives them plenty of time to continue negotiations and conduct business deals."

WTM 2012 will mark the 21st anniversary of WTM Meridian Club, the club for the world's leading buyers. Before WTM 2012, WTM Meridian Club members will have concluded a record £1,653 million in deals with exhibitors from negotiations that started at WTM 2011.

WTM 2012 will include a full events programme consisting of sessions from the popular World Responsible Tourism Day, Social Travel Market, and Technology and Aviation programmes.

Registration for WTM 2012 is available at:

www.wtmlondon.com/register

SUSTAINABILITY AND DIVERSEY

Ongoing contribution to growing trend in tourism and hospitality

The number of outstanding entries from Skål members for this year's Diversey Special Recognition Award demonstrates the growing sustainability trend in the tourism and hospitality industry. Presented by Sealed Air's Diversey business during the festive opening ceremony of the 73rd Skål World Congress at the beginning of October, the award honoured the tourism organisation that has excelled in leading the way to a sustainable future.

More and more hotel guests value a "green" approach. Half of all guests globally claim to take sustainability into account frequently when choosing a hotel, according to the PLANET 21 Research study from Accor (*). The number of hotels and hotel chains that are applying for international and national green hotel certification programmes is also growing. Diversey's own sustainability market research shows that 51 per cent of the hotels either have or are considering an eco-accreditation.

DIVERSEY'S NEW ROOM CARE PUR-ECO RANGE

The new Room Care Pur-Eco range was designed to improve a hotel's sustainable position. When used with Diversey's innovative dosing and dilution equipment these highly sustainable super concentrate formulations combine performance, user safety and environmental responsibility. The five EU Flower certified products in the range cover all the major applications that hotels need for effective room cleaning:

- Toilet Bowl Cleaning
- Sanitary Cleaning
- Floor Cleaning
- Glass Cleaning
- Multipurpose cleaning

Sustainability also means taking into account people, planet and profit to deliver superior cleaning and business performance. These three Ps – known as the Triple Bottom Line – are central to the Diversey



approach. The Room Care Pure-Eco range supports the Triple Bottom Line to meet the challenges presented by the three key drivers in hospitality:

More information about the Room-Care PUR Eco at diversey.com

(*2010 survey carried out with IFOP questioned 7,000 hotel guests representative of the hotel clientele in six countries, for all hotel types and segments).

TOURISM INDUSTRY UPDATE

By Skål International

Medical Tourism: A Market In "Good Shape"

As a general rule, **medical tourism** refers to the search for beauty or comfort treatments or even those for serious illnesses requiring surgery, such as heart, orthopaedic, cancer, renal and neurological. It combines travel and the quest for medical and surgical expertise, and aims to bring together the useful and the enjoyable while enabling tourists to seek and benefit from a favourable balance between cost and quality.

In the scalpel paradise: breast implants, nose jobs and leg slimming... travel for beauty. Certain beauty clinics offer services for as little as half the cost of one beauty operation in Europe.

WHY SUCH A PRICE DIFFERENCE?

Simply because personnel is less costly and social charges are lower. Some tour operators offer package trips which include tourism and medical services. Facelift-safari in South Africa, liposuction-beach in Tunisia, heart operation in India, liver transplant in Thailand... most countries seem to have their own speciality.

However, some operations, such as beauty treatments and dental implants, require post-operative follow-up, and this could be difficult if the surgeon is thousands of miles away. You should also enquire about the guarantees and judicial recourse if there are complications. Another point that should be stressed is that an airplane is a means of transport that is not always ideal after surgery with, in particular, a greater risk of phlebitis and, in the worst possible case, the consequent danger of pulmonary embolism.

Health and well-being is another important sector of medical tourism. Work-related stress and hectic city lives result in more



people turning to holidays for rest and relaxation at a beach resort or thermal centre. **Health and well-being tourism** is a response to the accelerated city lifestyle with its stress and back problems, and the need to get away for some relaxation.

In addition, "well-being" holidays can help prevent illness. Thermal and health centres are therapeutic for chronic respiratory ailments, rheumatism or inflammation of joints, and skin or digestive problems – thanks to local resources and modern therapies.

Thermal, thalassotherapy and hydrotherapy and v are no longer considered to be reserved for the elderly but rather as destinations which offer a variety of alternative leisure activities.

To summarise, medical tourism has become one of the most dynamic domains of the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century. Taking into account the liberalisation and democratisation of travel, the removal of barriers between countries and continents, the immense progress in airline and maritime transport and the internet, which provides information almost instantaneously, combined with the desire to travel, the search for quality at an affordable price and the need for well-being, medical tourism appears to have a rosy future with an unlimited and extremely lucrative, albeit exacting, potential for success.



SKÅL MEMORIES | THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

IN THIS FIFTH PART OF A NOSTALGIC JOURNEY BACK THROUGH THE YEARS, PAST PRESIDENT (1985-1986) AND HONORARY PRESIDENT ANTONIO GARCÍA DEL VALLE RECALLS THE ORIGINS OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL'S ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT.

In 1995, I wrote about this subject to coincide with the celebration of our General Secretariat's 10th year in Torremolinos, and I would like to recap a little now.

The first AISC Secretary was Pierre H. Soulié, who worked for Air Unión Lignes Farman (later Air France) and had also been the first Secretary of the Paris Skål Club in 1932. One of the passengers on the inaugural promotional trips to Scandinavia and a driving force behind the foundation of AISC, he took charge of the Secretariat and Skål administrative responsibilities together with President Florimond Volckaert, after elections held on 28 April 1934.

When Pierre Soulié became AISC Vice President in December in 1934, during a meeting at the Hotel Palace in Brussels, he was succeeded by Gallet (from Voyages Sorbonne). We don't have much information about him but we do know he was also one of the pioneers. During both periods the Secretariat was located in Paris.

In September 1935 at the Lucerne Congress, Dr. Arnold Ith of Zurich was elected AISC Secretary. The General Membership Archive and AISC Membership Certificate were created at this time, and the Secretariat moved to Zurich. This all involved a great deal of work, which was handled on a personal basis by Skål members, with the General Secretariat's expenses totalling 3,000 French francs that year. Also approved was publication of a yearbook featuring the names of all Skålleagues.

The fourth Secretary General was Hans Ostelius who, on the outbreak of World War II, departed London (where he was living) to return to Sweden. He left all the AISC files in the offices of A/B Aerotransport, where he had worked, but unfortunately they were destroyed in a bombing attack. Ostelius had been entrusted by the AISC with the task of refuting Nazi arguments against Skål and, on his departure, AISC Vice President Geo Thiry took over responsibility for the Secretariat on a provisional basis. His position was officially confirmed at the end of the war and he remained Secretary General until 1954.

During his term, the General Secretariat was in the Brussels office of Sabena (where he worked) and the treasury department was in Amberes, in the home of the Treasurer, John Minnaert.

At the time there were 100 clubs in 28 countries... "from Norway to South Africa and from the Americas to Hong Kong and Indonesia", in the words of the Founder President. Thiry, who was responsible for reconstructing the AISC files, was transferred by Sabena to Cologne, and the



The first AISC Executive Committee

General Secretariat also moved there from Brussels. In 1952 a part-time assistant was hired to help Thiry.

His succession became a little complicated. Minnaert had acted as Secretary General at meetings in Thiry's absence, and the Executive Committee offered him the post but when nominations were called Bob Smyrk and Henri Tschann also put their names forward. Tschann won a majority and took over as Secretary General, setting up office in the Hotel Splendid owned by his family in Nice. He launched the AISC Newsletter, precursor in those days to the modern-day Skål News, helped put together the new Statutes and drew up the regulations for the then Charity Foundation. During his term the number of members doubled.

At this time, discussions were being held to professionalise the General Secretariat, with plans for a salaried secretary to assist Tschann under instructions from the Executive Committee, and in 1963 a permanent General Secretariat was set up in Brussels.

Volckaert, Smyrk, Minnaert and Tschann met to study the nominations – a total of 360 were received – and on April 25 Charles F. Schoeseters was elected as the first professional Secretary General. He left the post at the start of 1969 and Anne Kaisin was hired as office secretary. His successor was Spaniard Ignacio Urquiaga, who remained in the position until his resignation on 9 November 1972. He was replaced by diplomat Paul Vermeisch but he had to resign when named to a post in the Belgian embassy in Zaire.

For the time being, the vacancy was covered by Kaisin, taking over the administrative responsibilities, and AISC Vice President Minnaert in charge of the treasury department and directly answerable to the Executive Committee. Later they were to marry.

Jacques Noël was hired in 1975, the offices were mechanised and, for the first time, the membership cards were typed. Nicolle Van Overstraeten was contracted as a secretary, later joined by Marie Paule Belotte, and the offices in Place Rogier were expanded into adjacent premises bought by Noël and rented to AISC, which didn't have the necessary funds to make the purchase.

In 1979, there were discussions about moving the General Secretariat to Ibiza, Monaco or Málaga but in the end it was decided to maintain it in Brussels. Yvonne Mansell took over from Kaisin, and Noël resigned in 1979 to set up a restaurant on Ibiza.

On 1 March 1980, AISC Director for Protocol Claude Allegra was appointed Secretary General. A word processor was purchased and “Skålly” appeared in the Newsletter. Pepita González took over from Belotte in 1981, and two years later a move to Málaga was discussed once again. As Vice President for Administration, I presented a study which reported savings of \$30,000 for a move to the Palacio de Congresos in Torremolinos, thanks to the support and collaboration of Palacio manager Salvador Camino and Turespaña manager Ignacio Vasallo.

The move was approved on 23 November 1984, during Jerry Martin's term as President, and new President Julio Horowitz inaugurated the offices on 31 May 1985.

On Allegra's retirement in 1992, José María Trevijano took over and in 1995 he was replaced by Jim Power, Skål International Finance Director at the time, who became Secretary General.

We have, therefore, had six “amateur” Secretaries – Skålleagues like all of us – and eight Administrative Managers or Secretary Generals, depending on the relevant term during a particular era.

As I write this I have learned that Bernhard Wegscheider from Austria has been named as the new Secretary General. We extend him our warmest welcome.

LONDON 2012

Uplifting first-hand experience for “Games Maker”

It seems ages ago, and I guess it was. Back in August 2010 LOCOG (the Olympic committee) asked for people to register their interest in volunteering for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I decided then to commit my holidays to this once in a lifetime experience. I had been involved much earlier in 2004 with hotels, agreeing the discounts and room allocations required to build into the bid document. I was also in Trafalgar Square when London was announced as the host city. A great day.

I was selected as a driver to shuttle athletes, managers, LOCOG officials and media between the airports, hotels and Games venues and, after their events, to embassies, TV studios, clubs and restaurants. Another “Games Maker” was the son of the UK National President who was involved in the fencing competition. I am sure he also had an amazing time.

What struck me was how many retired people took up the challenge to get involved. They, like me, wanted to show London off at its best. My 10-hour shifts started at various times: 6am, 8am, 2pm and 5pm and finishing between 4pm and 3am. There were many hilarious moments that I have now in my story repertoire.

By Paul Follows | International Councillor, Skål United Kingdom



The theme “Inspire a Generation” did just that. The Olympic Park was filled with excited children, dragging their parents along to see all that was going on. The sell-out Olympics produced a surge of ticket sales for the Paralympics, with over one million visitors to the park in just five days.

Volunteer ambassadors welcoming and helping tourists will feature next year and onward. Friends will meet again in 2013 – it was so much fun.

So now the baton passes to Rio de Janeiro in 2016. I would urge all my Brazilian Skål friends, when the time comes, to volunteer. “Go for it”... you will be uplifted by the experience.



SKÅL | GOOD NEWS STORIES

WORKING TOGETHER WITH COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

I was excited to meet my new friends when I became a member of Skål International Marmara in Turkey four years ago. I have a company called FHS Turizm Organizasyon, which has been organising meetings, congresses and shows in Istanbul for 15 years, and I would like to share the Skål friendship I experienced at one event.



By Hakan Kirhan
Skål International Marmara



During our meeting in April, Vice President Karine Coulanges told me that one of her best clients, based in France, wanted to organise an event in Istanbul and she had only two days to put together an offer. She asked us for help to receive offers from hotels and other venues and we said we would be happy to work with our friends and prepare the entire offer within two days.

We worked for two days and completed all the preparations. Karine Coulanges and her client came to Istanbul after five days. We worked on the offer and decided to organise the event together. We organised a very busy but incredibly enjoyable event between 12 and 15 June for 80 people including transfer, accommodation and meeting – a Turkish night – and the premiere night.

We would like to thank Karine Coulanges and the French firm Amcor for supporting this event, and add that we will be organising other events in November.

I know that the best thing is to work within the friendship of Skål International and, thanks to my involvement in organising this event, I learned how professional our colleagues in Skål are. I believe we will work even better in the future.

In the meantime, let's not forget: we are very strong together.

AFFORDABLE RED CARPET EXPERIENCE

By Andrew Wood
President Skål International Thailand

I have been a member of Skål International for 18-plus years and in all of that time I have found the opportunities for networking and forming global friendships are second to none, to be found nowhere else... and here I include my regular attendance at trade shows, both overseas and in Thailand, PATA events, Chamber of Commerce meetings and private industry functions.



I have lived in Bangkok for 21 years working at a senior level in the industry. If I wanted a "free" drink EVERY night, unlike the movie, I didn't need to crash a party: I could legitimately be invited and attend. In the early days, when I was "hungry" to broaden my professional network, I often did.

My membership in Skål International stood head and shoulders above the rest of my professional memberships; it helped in my ability to hit higher than my peer group could ever do.

Example? Visiting Tokyo on business for the first time, I was met and welcomed by the publisher of Travel Journal magazine, Imai-san, on a Sunday, on my first ever visit to Japan. He drove me around for a personal tour of Tokyo and its sights, followed by dinner. The next day I was invited to join the Skål lunch of the Tokyo Club. I was introduced to the presidents of JAL, ANA, JTB, KNT, etc... this would never have happened if I went to visit them on a sales call!

I often refer to the affordable red carpet experience when I talk about my Skål International membership: for instance, attendance at the Skål World Congress, which takes place in autumn each year. Affordable? Five nights of five-star accommodation, including all meals, drinks, welcome party, gala dinner, events, tours, etc., for approximately US\$1,000 all included! Red carpet? We ALWAYS go all out to impress, usually with the backing of the NTO.

I heard quite recently that potential employers and placement companies advise candidates NOT to mention Skål International on their résumés. Why? Embarrassed to belong to the world's oldest tourism

association with 19,000 senior travel and tourism professionals? Sure we have older members but who doesn't? Time and tide...

We used to have 25,000 members so what's going on? Still relevant? My answer is YES! The world changes, the industry changes, we change. Just ask a travel agent or the owner of a printed travel publication. Any alternatives that you can think of? None that I am aware. And, in closing, one of my personal best *raison d'être* of my membership in Skål International? Being able to travel ANYWHERE in the world and have a friend to say hello, show you the ropes and make you feel YOU ARE WELCOME.

MEMBERS SUPPORT FLOOD AND CYCLONE VICTIMS IN AUSTRALIA

The Forest Hill State Emergency Service in Queensland (Australia) has received a new rescue boat thanks to the generous donations of Skål members throughout the world. Skål Australia purchased the specialised low-draft flood boat, which was presented at a formal ceremony near Grantham in August.

Tony Boyle, Immediate Past President of Skål International, said he was very grateful to Skål members throughout the world for their generous donations. The money was raised to help Skålleagues who had experienced loss and hardship caused by the floods which hit south-east Queensland in February 2011. Most of the Brisbane and Rockhampton central business districts were underwater for several days during the height of the floods.

"A lot of money was raised by many Skål Clubs in a very short time frame to assist Skålleagues in need. Skål International Canada really got involved with the fundraising to support Australian Skålleagues in need and raised over US\$17,000, and many other Skål Clubs and individual Skål members throughout the world donated generously, including Australians," Mr. Boyle said.

As not all of the money was used for claims by Australian Skålleagues, it was decided by the National Committee of Skål Australia to put the remaining funds to good use.

They decided to use this money to help the emergency services that were required where the greatest loss of human life occurred. This was in Grantham, located in the Lockyer Valley 100 kilometres west of Brisbane.



By Megan Boyle

Tony Boyle and National President of Skål Australia Russell Butler presented a cheque for A\$22,000 to the Mayor of the Lockyer Valley Council – an amount which covered the cost of the state-of-the-art flood boat. Representatives of Skål Australia attended the formal presentation of the boat hand-over at Lake Dyer near Grantham.

"Skål Australia very much appreciates the generosity of Skål members throughout the world who so quickly came to the aid of Australian Skålleagues who were experiencing difficulties as a consequence of these natural disasters," Mr. Butler said.

As well as assisting flood victims in south-east Queensland, the funds raised were used to assist Skålleagues who were affected by Cyclone Yasi, which hit North Queensland in February 2011.



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