

CLOSING OF THE COLLOQUY

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Mr. President, Ladies and gentlemen,

As this Colloquy is being held to mark the anniversary of a birth, I would like to take this opportunity to reveal the civil status of the International Commission on Civil Status (ICCS). By "reveal" I mean to lift the veil on its legal personality, to discover the natural persons who breathe life into it.

The ICCS's civil status is unusual in that it has more fathers than mothers; but this is an area where nothing gives cause for surprise.

The ICCS has two founding fathers: Doctor Stampa and Mr Van Praag. It has also had twenty-six spiritual parents in the person of its Presidents, some of whom are with us today: Mr Jean Mazars, Mr Teixeira de Sousa, Mrs Verschraegen, Mr Frank, Mr Massip and Mrs Demoustier.

At the same time, the ICCS has had six nursing fathers, namely its Secretaries General, two of whom - Mr. Massip and Mr. Lagarde - are present. In this family, I must also mention the surrogate father: our Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Jonathan Sharpe.

As the current Secretary General representing the ICCS, I would like to thank very warmly all the parents attending this Colloquy for their scientific and intellectual contribution to the life of the Commission.

In addition, for twenty-seven years, the ICCS has also had a nursemaid in the person of Mrs Nast. Every day, from dawn till dusk, she carries the ICCS in her arms, breast-feeds it, sings a lullaby and even gives spending money; in short, she keeps the ICCS alive. For all these reasons, she deserves special thanks.

Mrs. Nast is assisted by someone who works discreetly and in the shadows, but whose efficiency is precious: Mrs Zehnacker, to whom we also owe very many thanks.

Having lifted the veil on the ICCS's legal personality, I hasten to lower it again, so that those who work in the interests of the ICCS can continue to do so with serenity.

The ICCS is sixty years old: a tender age? The age of reason? The age of maturity? A venerable age? A legal person has no age, since its life expectancy remains unlimited. Its age is relative and is to be assessed according to its past achievements and its future projects.

The past achievements of the ICCS are important:

- 26 international Conventions in force;
- 9 Recommendations;
- A practical guide on civil status;
- Studies, colloquies, consultations ...

The ICCS now has on its agenda an ambitious project concerning an electronic platform for international exchanges of civil-status documents. It is a project for the future, but it is not the future of the ICCS.

And what will be that future?

This Colloquy has demonstrated the multiple aspects of civil status and has revealed unsuspected directions in its evolution. We believe we are catching a glimpse of the trends of that evolution in the XXIst century, but that may be only an illusion. Men and women who lived in past centuries certainly did not imagine what civil status would be nowadays. Likewise, we can no more imagine what civil status might be in future centuries.

But as long as mankind exists, civil status will continue to exist too and we shall need the International Commission on Civil Status.

So, happy birthday and long life to the International Commission on Civil Status!

Thank you.