



The Alliance of Youth CEOs - A brief history

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(by J. Moreillon, former Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement)

The Alliance of Youth CEOs originated in late 1995 from a joint initiative of Dr Jacques Moreillon, Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, and Mr Paul Arengo-Jones, Secretary General of the International Award Association.

A meeting was organized on 28 May 1996 at the World Scout Bureau in Geneva for the Chief Executive Officers of WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts), YMCA (World Alliance of YMCAs), YWCA (World Young Women's Christian Association), IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), WOSM (World Organization of the Scout Movement) and IAA (International Award Association) to meet HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Founder and Chairman of the International Award Association.

While the original purpose of the meeting was to present the International Award and its youth programme to the other organizations, a general awareness emerged from the meeting that these six movements had much in common that could and should be harnessed for shared objectives. It was decided on the spot that another meeting would take place in London in December 1996 for the purpose of "addressing collectively and with one voice" some of the subjects related to "youth development and youth education."

On 9 December, the same group of CEOs met at WAGGGS' headquarters in London and decided that it would remain an informal group, with no statutes, no chairman and no undertaking to continue beyond the first task which it had set itself- to write, publish and distribute a document on the educational challenges existing on the eve of the 21st century and on the answers which our respective movements could give to these challenges.

Each CEO had noted a considerable educational deficit throughout the world, as well as a lack of awareness that education was more than just teaching and that the practice of non-formal education was a natural complement to school-based formal education and to family-based informal education. The CEOs felt that all those interested in young people should give stronger support to citizenship-building efforts to, among other things, instil shared values into tomorrow's decision-makers.

After further similar meetings and much correspondence, a text was adopted and distributed jointly in October 1997, under the title "The Education of Young People. A statement at the dawn of the 21st Century", in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The document received a wide and warm welcome, especially from such bodies as UNESCO, from NGOs involved in youth education, and from intergovernmental entities such as the Commonwealth.

On the basis of this positive experience, the informal group re-examined its raison d'être in 1998 and decided that it could - and should - still play a role in a broader area than education, in particular in the area of national youth policies. Its members had found that many countries did not actually have any long-term, cross-sector national youth policies, and were of the opinion that their organizations' own independent, global, educational approach needed to have a state-supported vehicle to make it a stronger reality.

It was noted that many countries lacked a national vision as to the kind of youth they wanted and how such objectives could

be reached over a generation. The CEOs felt that their organizations' experience gave them something to say on the subject. In July 1999 the group published and widely distributed a new document entitled "National Youth Policies - A working document from the point of view of non-formal education youth organisations", with, as a subtitle "Towards an autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed youth" which described the kind of youth to which all countries should aspire, and which the CEOs believe their organizations help give to society. The publication indicated how governments and society could and should go about achieving such results.

A representative of the International Youth Foundation was associated with the later part of their work on national youth policies, and its CEO was co-opted to the group in Paris in February 2000. Consequently, the grouping that outsiders had come to refer to as the Alliance of Youth CEOs became seven, namely the CEOs of

- four worldwide youth movements (WOSM, WAGGGS, YMCA and YWCA),
- one worldwide humanitarian movement with a large youth component (IFRC),
- one worldwide youth programme (IAA), and
- the world's largest youth-focused foundation (IYF).

During that period, some of the CEOs had changed, but the departing officers had always passed the baton on to their successors and the group had remained the informal network that it had started out as five years earlier.