

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF MASONIC GRAND LODGES

Juan Alvarez, Bega Research Seminar, 2005

Today, the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges is rapidly becoming the widely recognized expression of Masonic Universality.

The purpose of these notes is to present a brief history of the seven World Conferences that have taken place since 1995, giving some elements to facilitate some reflections about its present situation and potentiality, specially in matters referred to content, extension and expressions of our Universalism, in the framework of current processes of globalization and changes.

Firstly, we will summarize some relevant background of Conferences developed in Mexico, Portugal, United States of America, Brazil, Spain and India.

In the second part, we will try to advance some thoughts about advances and pending tasks.

First Part: From Mexico To India

1. Mexico (Mexico D.F. Y Acapulco): First Conference (1995)

As a part of the program to celebrate its 112th anniversary, the Grand Lodge "Valle of Mexico" organized the First World Conference of Grand Masters of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges. The first session was held in Mexico City on the 19th of March 1995, and the following sessions took place in Acapulco (from 21 to 23 March). It was presided by its Grand Master, MWBro Salvador Montes of Oca.

37 Grand Lodges participated in the Conference, among them:

Brazil:

Grand Lodge of State of Mato Grosso,
Grand Lodge of State of Minas Gerais,
Grand Lodge of State of Sao Paulo,

Colombia:

Grand Lodge of Colombia (Bogota)
Grand Lodge Occidental of Colombia,

Grand Lodge of Costa Rica

Grand Lodge of Ecuador

Grand Lodge Cuscatlan, El Salvador,

Grand Lodge of Spain

Grand Lodge of the State of Israel

Grand Orient of Italy

Grand Lodge of Nicaragua

Grand Lodge Regular of Portugal,

Grand Lodge of New York (USA)

Grand Lodge of Uruguay

The central subject of the Conference was "Freemasonry in the Third Millennium: Challenges and strategies".

At the end of this international meeting of Grand Masters the following document was approved, hereinafter called CHARTER OF ANAHUAC, inspired by the following considerations:

1st- We are aware that the advent of the third millennium a challenge before which mankind, and Universal Freemasonry, must immediately adopt a position to enable it to outline adequate tactics and strategies.

2nd.- The constant practice of the Masonic principles of tolerance and fraternity is the foundation for the achievement of stable peace amongst men and nations; we therefore express our hope that by this practice, existing conflicts may be solved and the sprouting of violence be prevented in all four corners of the earth.

3rd.- Consistently with our principles of affirming man's values of liberty and dignity, we must continue to fight, in the 21st century, against insecurity, ecological depredation, contamination of the environment, inequity and corruption, violation of human rights, social instability insalubrities, deficiencies and religious commitments in education, discrimination of any kind and all the adverse factors that persist at the end of this century.

4th.- As Freemasonry is a universal order of initiates based on the practice of morality, it is advisable that all jurisdictions whose representatives sign this Charter, as well as those that may in the future be added to it, dedicate a particular interest to promoting, in their respective jurisdictions, the permanent practice of the everlasting principles of Masonic Ethics from which mankind has strayed away; as well as to reaffirm their immutable adherence to Law and legality.

5th.- In view of the quantitative and qualitative changes that have taken place in this century, and of those that may occur in the immediate future, it is imperative that our August Institution act in strict adherence to our Ancient Landmarks, laws, usage's and customs, to contribute to the integral welfare of the human race.

6th.- Reflecting the diversity and progress of the means of communication that are making globalization possible, we consider that intensifying the interchange of experiences and

information which may help to identify, know, and, as the case may be, propose viable solutions to local problems by making use of the experiences and uniting the wills and efforts of all, may be a very valuable means to attain the objectives derived from the preceding considerations.

Consequently, the First International Meeting of Grand Masters of Regular Symbol Masonic Jurisdictions, without prejudice to the existence and strengthening of Mason Confederations that, at national as well as regional levels, watch over the unity and Masonic Regularity of Symbolism (Craft Masonry), and taking into consideration the proposal put forward by the M. W. Grand Lodge Valle of Mexico, passes the following RESOLUTION:

To appeal to the Regular Symbolic Jurisdictions to sign this letter, and those that may be added to it in the future, so as to actively promote the creation of an International Masonic coordinating entity, without interfering in the sovereignty of each of its members or committing them in their mutual relations and recognitions.

This body shall have as primary objective:

- a)** To gather and promote the interchange of information amongst jurisdiction regarding the problems and solutions enunciated in the Considerations.
- b)** To propose jointly developed solutions, so that the actions of Freemasonry in each jurisdiction may be integrated as much as possible within the framework of coordinated worldwide strategy, with the purpose of making them more effect as a result of working in conjunction.

The subscribing regular Symbolic (Craft) Masonic jurisdiction will send to the ad hoc committee to be formed by the Conference the suggestions, recommendations and opinions they deem necessary to make, within a term of not more that ninety days fro the date of signing.

Taking the above into consideration, said committee will draft the project for the establishment of the international Masonic coordinating organization to which the aforementioned passed resolution refers.

Said draft shall be submitted to the consideration of the Grand Lodges of each of the signing Jurisdictions, within the following six months.

The results must be in the hands of the above-mentioned committee as soon permitted by internal consultations, necessary deliberations and the final agreement, as required by the laws and regulations of each Jurisdiction.

Once the final text has been drawn up, after attending to the amendments and corrections proposed for it, the committee will submit the resulting document to the consideration of all the participating Jurisdictions for its final ratification at the next meeting of Grand Masters".

II. PORTUGAL (Estoril/Cascais): SECOND CONFERENCE (1996)

As agreed in Mexico, the meeting of the Conference took place from 25 to 27 September 1996, in Estoril and Cascais (Portugal). Initially, the Conference was organized to be held in Lisbon (June 26 to 28).

MWBro. Fernando Texeira, Grand Master of the Regular Grand Lodge of Portugal, organized and presided over the Conference, that was called World Encounter of Masonic Grand Masters.

Accordingly to the rules governing the Conference, only Grand Masters of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges, or their representatives, was to be part of the Conference. Other participants and invited Brethren were allowed to attend the working sessions as observers.

The following 31 Grand Lodges participated in the Conference:

Grand Lodge of Bolivia

Brazil:

Grand Lodge of State of Acre

Grand Lodge of State of Brasilia

Grand Lodge of State of Espiritu Santo

Grand Lodge of State of Goias

Grand Orient of Goias, Brazil

Grand Lodge of State of Mato Grosso do Sul

Grand Lodge of State of Minas Gerais

Grand Lodge of State of Paraiba

Grand Lodge of Parana

Grand Lodge of State of Rio Grande do Sul

Grand Lodge of Santa Catarina

Grand Lodge of Sao Paulo

Grand Lodge of Colombia (Cartagena)

Grand Lodge of Cuba

The United Grand Lodge of Germany

Grand Lodge of Greece

Grand Orient D'Haiti

Grand Lodge of Hungary

Grand Lodge of Iran (in exile)

Grand Lodge of Lebanon-Syria

Grand Lodge of Valle of Mexico,

Grand Lodge of Panama

Grand Lodge Regular of Portugal
Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico
Grand Lodge National of Romania
Grand Lodge of Russia
Grand Lodge of Venezuela

United States of America:

Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia (Washington D.C.)
Grand Lodge of the State of New York
Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania

Participating as observers were representatives from the Inter-American Masonic Confederation (CMI), the Royal Arch Masons International, and the Center for Historical Studies of Spanish Masonry.

In four working sessions, the following subjects were analyzed:

- a) Limits of action of Freemasonry in the profane world, with the due respect of the tradition of the tradition and the Landmarks;
- b) Freemasonry and youth;
- c) Secrecy: advantages or disadvantages,
- d) Evaluation of the Masonic philosophical production during the 20th century.

One President and two moderators to direct the proceedings and provide the answers to questions raised by participants, moderated each Working Session. During the workshops the use of Masonic regalia was not allowed.

Each participant's address to the sessions could not exceed 10 minutes.

Addresses can be presented in written form, and should desirably be accompanied by an English version.

Also, any participant could put written questions to the President and Moderators, who were entitled to reply during the workshop.

Under rules governing this Conference, no written conclusions were adopted, but the following final summary was prepared:

- 1) The Delegates, Grand Masters or their representatives from 43 Grand Lodges attending the conference, congratulate the Regular Grand Lodge of Portugal and its Grand Master Fernando Teixeira, for the success of a well-organized Conference.
- 2) The Grand Masters express their deep consideration for the way Portuguese authorities does consider Masonry, which was confirmed during the receptions given by his Excellency

the President of the Republic, Mr. Jorge Sampaio, his Excellency the Prime Minister, Mr. Antonio Guterres, and also by the Mayor of Lisbon, Mr. Joao Soares, and by the Mayor of Oeriras, Mr. Isaltino de Morais. They also recognized the facilities and supports given by Secretary of State for Commerce and Tourism, Mr. Jose Andres, and by the Major of Cascais.

3) The Grand Masters considered that during the three days of the Conference it was achieved a better common knowledge on the different approaches that are taken by Masons all over the work, and the diversity of social projects that Masonry, the individual Mason, or even co-Masonic bodies, involving masons families or friends are developing in behalf of the poor and distressed in our society.

4) The Grand Masters understood that the main Masonic landmark: The belief in the Supreme Being, God, the Grand Architect of the Universe, was the basic principle that united and oriented all world wide Masonic work towards peace, harmony, fraternity, tolerance and solidarity, with absolutely no interference on politics or religion.

5) The Grand Masters considered that such a meeting, must be continued at an international level, in order to allow masonry and the masons to face the universal challenges that the third millennium will bring to mankind. With that purpose, the next World Conference should take place in New York, and all regular Masonic Grand Lodges will be invited to attend and be represented by their Grand Masters.

6) The Grand Masters convene that Masonic heritage must be transmitted to a younger generation of masons, preserving the traditional activity in the lodges, mainly the ritual work; the historic and philosophic research on Masonic values; the charity, and moreover, the concern with new challenges and demands from the society, regarding the help to the children, alcohol, drugs and sex abuse, the elderly people, and in general, those suffering from social exclusion, or discrimination.

7) During the Estoril Conference, the Grand Masters had the opportunity to be informed to great extend from different views on the Masonic experiences all over the world on the historic philosophical attitudes of the masons, on the development of co-Masonic initiatives, mainly in the area of education, programs involving youth, and also the Grand Masters had the chance to exchange some views about the limits of secrecy.

III. United States (New York): Third Conference (1998)

The Third Conference, under the name World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges, took place in New York City (USA), from May 1 to 3, 1998.

The following 63 Grand Lodges participated in the Conference:

The UGL of NSW and the ACT, Australia

The United Grand Lodge of Austria

The Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium

Grand Lodge of Bolivia

Brazil:

Grand Lodge of Acre

Grand Lodge of Brasilia

Grand Lodge of Espirito Santo

Grand Lodge of Goias

Grand Lodge of Parana

Grand Lodge of Pernambuco

Grand Lodge of Rio Grande do Sul

Grand Lodge of Bulgaria

Canada:

Grand Lodge of British Columbia

Grand Lodge of Ontario

Grand Lodge of Quebec

Grand Lodge of Saskatchewan

Colombia:

Grand Lodge of Barranquilla

Grand Lodge of Bogota

Grand Lodge of Santander

Grand Loge du Cote D'Ivoire

Grand Lodge of Cuba

Grand Lodge of Ecuador

Grande Loge National Francaise

The United Grand Lodge of Germany

Grand Lodge of Greece

Grand Lodge of Guatemala

Grand Orient D'Haiti

Grand Lodge of India

Grand Lodge of Iran (in exile)

Grand Lodge of the State of Israel

Grande Orient of Italy

Grand Lodge of Lebanon

Grand Lodge of Madagascar

Grand Lodge of Valle of Mexico

Grand Lodge of Panama

Grand Lodge Regular of Portugal
Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico
Grand Lodge of Romania
Grand Lodge of Switzerland (Alpine)

United States of America:

Grand Lodge of Arizona
Grand Lodge of California
Grand Lodge of Colorado
Grand Lodge of Connecticut
Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia
Grand Lodge of Hawaii
Grand Lodge of Illinois
Grand Lodge of Indiana
Grand Lodge of Louisiana
Grand Lodge of Maine
Grand Lodge of Massachusetts
Grand Lodge of Michigan
Grand Lodge of Nevada
Grand Lodge of New Hampshire
Grand Lodge of New Jersey
Grand Lodge of North Carolina
Grand Lodge of Ohio
Grand Lodge of Oregon
Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania
Grand Lodge of Texas
Grand Lodge of Wisconsin
Grand Lodge of Wyoming
Grand Lodge of Uruguay
Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia

The Conference was mainly devoted to study ways and means to institutionalize the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges. To this end, a special committee was established on May 2, to study this subject and to present a proposal to the Conference.

The Committee was integrated by: MWBros Valton Sergio Von Tempski-Silka (Parana, Brazil); Rainer J. Schicke (Germany); Jean K. Gousse (Haiti); H.P. Mathur (India), Woolf Kantor (Israel); Virgilio Gaito (Italy); Robert B. Heyet (Romania); and RWBros Robert Tait (New South Wales, Australia); Piere Mouselli (Benin), Joao Zimmerman Filho, and Francisco Mello (Sao Paulo, Brazil), Albert Pitte (Ivory Cote); Abraham Bromberg (Valle of Mexico), Julio Luque (Panama), Thomas W. Jackson (Pennsylvania, USA); and Cristian Dimitrescu (Romania).

As a result of its work, this special "ad hoc" committee presented the following report and recommendations:

"An Ad Hoc committee was formed at the meeting of the 1998 World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges in the New York City on Saturday, May 2, 1998. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee representing Grand Lodges from all of the continents of the World Conference has the unanimous support of all the members of the Ad Hoc Committee who signed their names to the original document of this paper.

This Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the following purpose and rules of the world Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges be adopted:

Recommendation I: Name Of Organization

The name of the organization will be the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges.

Recommendation II: Purpose And Rules Of The World Conference

1. The purpose of the Conference is to share information and to discuss issues, which promote the have a binding effect on any sovereign and independent member Grand Lodge.
2. The Grand Master or his Representative and the Grand Secretary will be the only ones to speak and be seated at the Conference Table. Only those Grand Lodges who have been acknowledged as legitimate and regular by the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges will be members. This article will serve as a temporary rule until such time as the World Conference decides otherwise.
3. The World Conference will be open to Masonic Grand Lodges only.
4. The World Conference will not discuss political matters.
5. The World Conference will not discuss religious matters.
6. All Grand Lodges attending the Conference will have an equal voice and vote.
7. No Grand Lodge should attempt to use the World Conference as a platform to seek special favors or financial assistance from any of the participating Grand Lodges.
8. Conclusions of the World Conference will be printed and distributed to all members of the Conference.
9. Every attempt will be made to rotate the World Conference to each continent.
10. The World Conference will be scheduled every 18 months, unless otherwise decided be a simple majority vote of the members present.
11. The time and place of the next meeting will be decided by a simple majority vote of the members present.

RECOMMENDATION III: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE

The Executive Secretary must be a Grand Secretary, Past Grand Secretary, Grand Master or Past Grand Master. This Officer, to be elected by a simple majority vote of the World Conference.

It shall be the proposed duties of the Executive Secretary to:

- a) Propose the date and of the next World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodge, based upon applications received in writing from those Grand Lodges desiring to host the Conference.
- b) Select and designate the agenda and speakers for the next World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges.
- c) Consider and make any recommendations previously referred to the World Conference by member Grand Lodges.

RECOMMENDATION IV: SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR THE NEXT WORLD CONFERENCE

- 1.- To study and propose means and ways to improve the quality and quantity of Masonic membership.
- 2.- To study and propose means and ways to provide assistance to emerging Grand Lodges.
- 3.- To study the potential value of the establishment of a universal charitable objective of Freemasonry (i.e., such as a Masonic Foundation for Children).
- 4.- To study the establishment of a World Commission on Information and Recognition following the successful implementation of the policy set the North American Commission.

RECOMMENDATION V: DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT WORLD CONFERENCE

The World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges 1998 should adopt and approve November 1999 as the period of the next World Conference. Applications have been voluntarily received and accepted from the Grand Lodge of India and the Grand Lodge of Sao Paulo (Brazil) to host the next World Conference.

RECOMENDATION VI: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the 1998 World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges elect Brother Thomas W. Jackson, the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, to serve as Executive Secretary until a successor is duly elected.

Notes:

Following motions were made and seconded by the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges after the reading of the above report of the Ad Hoc Committee:

1.- The document as presented (report of the Ad Hoc Committee) be accepted and in affect until the World Conference elects to change it at some future date.

Results: Carried unanimously.

2.- The Grand Lodge of Sao Paulo (Brazil) to host the next World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges in November 1999.

Results: 53 votes in favor. Carried

IV. BRAZIL (Sao Paulo): FOURTH CONFERENCE (1999)

The fourth Conference, under the name of World Conference of Grand Lodges, was held in Sao Paulo (Brazil) from November 12 to 15, 1999. It was organized by the Grand Lodge of Sao Paulo and its Grand Master, MWBro Salim Zugaib presided over the Conference.

The following 73 Grand Lodges participated in the Conference:

Grand Lodge of Andorra

Grand Lodge of Argentina

Grand Lodge of Austria

Grand Lodge of Belgium

Grand Lodge of Benin

Grand Lodge of Bolivia

Brazil:

Grand Lodge of Acre

Grand Lodge of Alagoas

Grand Lodge of Amapa

Grand Lodge of Amazonas

Grand Lodge of Bahia

Grand Lodge of Brasilia

Grand Lodge of Ceara

Grand Lodge of Espirito Santo

Grand Lodge of Goias

Grand Lodge of Maranhao

Grand Lodge of Matto Grosso

Grand Lodge of Mato Grosso do Sul

Grand Lodge of Minas Gerais

Grand Lodge of Paraiba

Grand Lodge of Parana

Grand Lodge of Pernambuco

Grand Lodge of Piaui

Grand Lodge of Rio of Janeiro

Grand Lodge of Rio Grande Do Norte

Grand Lodge of Rio Grande Do Sul

Grand Lodge of Rondonia

Grand Lodge of Roraima

Grand Lodge of Santa Catarina

Grand Lodge of Sao Paulo

Grand Lodge of Sergipe

Grand Orient of Brazil

Grand Orient of Minas Gerais

Grand Lodge of Bulgaria

Grand Lodge of Burkina Faso Canada:

Grand Lodge of Ontario

Grand Lodge of Quebec

Grand Lodge of Victoria

Grand Lodge of Chile

Colombia

Grand Lodge of Barranquilla

Grand Lodge of Bogota

Grand Lodge of Cali

Grand Lodge of Cartagena

Grand Lodge of Costa Rica

Grande Loge of Cote D'Ivoire

Grand Lodge of Croatia

Grand Lodge of Cuba

Grand Lodge of the Czech Republic

Grand Lodge of Cuscatlan, El Salvador

The UGL of England

Grand Lodge of Spain

Grande Loge National Francaise

The UGLs of Germany

Grand Lodge of Greece

Grand Lodge of Guatemala

Grand Orient D'Haiti

Grand Lodge of Honduras

Grand Lodge of India

Grand Lodge of Iran (in exile)

Grand Lodge of Ireland

Grand Lodge of the State of Israel

Grand Orient of Italy

Grand Lodge of Luxemburg

Grand Lodge of Mali

Mexico:

Grand Lodge of Baja California

Grand Lodge of Nuevo Leon

Grand Lodge of Quintana Roo

Grand Lodge Valle of Mexico

Grand Lodge of Moldavia

Grand Lodge of The Netherlands

Grand Lodge of Panama

Grand Lodge of Paraguay

Grand Lodge of Peru

Grand Lodge of Philippines

Grand Lodge Regular of Portugal

Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico

Grand Lodge of Romania

Grand Lodge of Russia

Grand Lodge of Scotland

Grand Lodge of Senegal

Grand Lodge of Switzerland (Alpine)

Grand Lodge of Taiwan

Grand Lodge of Turkey

United States of America:

Grand Lodge of Arizona

Grand Lodge of Colorado

Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia

Grand Lodge of Connecticut

Grand Lodge of Illinois

Grand Lodge of Indiana

Grand Lodge of Massachusetts
Grand Lodge of Michigan
Grand Lodge of Minnesota
Grand Lodge of New Hampshire
Grand Lodge of New Jersey
Grand Lodge of New York
Grand Lodge of North Carolina
Grand Lodge of Oregon
Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania
Grand Lodge of Washington
Grand Lodge of Wisconsin
Grand Lodge of Uruguay
Grand Lodge of Venezuela

After the inaugural lecture given by RWBro Thomas W. Jackson (Executive Secretary of the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges), the following papers were presented and analyzed in the Conference:

1. Grand Lodge of Brasilia: Cultural and Educational Exchange Project, by RWBro Jesus Narvaez de Silva, Grand Secretary of Foreign Relations.
2. Grand Lodge of Mato Grosso: FUNLEC, educational project, by MWBro Heito Rodriguez Freire, Grand Master.
3. Grand Lodge of Chile: The Education as a Way of Extension of Masonic Values. The Chilean Experience, by MWBro Jorge Carvajal Munoz, Grand Master.
4. Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia (USA): Which Grand Lodges are qualified to participate in future World Conferences?, by MWBro Dan L. Frederick, Grand Master.
5. Grand Lodge of Connecticut (USA): "The Web We Weave", by MWBro Roger W. Read, Grand Master, and RWBro. Russel W. McLelland, Grand Secretary.
6. Grand Lodge of Greece: If Freedom Failed, by RWBro Ioannis A. Souvaliotis, Grand Secretary.
7. Grand Orient of Haiti; Freemasonry of Quality and its Role in the Society for the Next Century, by MWBro Jean K. Gousse, Grand Master.
8. Grand Lodge of India: The Principles and Standards of Recognition among Grand Lodges, by MWBro H. P. Mathur, Grand Master.
9. Grand Orient of Italy: Human Rights in a Multi-cultural Society, by MWBro Gustavo Raffi, Grand Master.

10. Grand Lodge of Uruguay: "The World Conference", by MWBro Ricardo Colanery, Grand Master.

All the papers were analyzed in six working sessions, presided over by Grand Masters Steward C. McCloud (New York), Jorge Carvajal (Chile), Cdefie Clotaire (Cote D'Ivoire), George Comanescu (Rumania), Franklin Demonteverde (Philippines), and RWBro John E. Leider (Canada).

There was an Opening Session presided by the Grand Master of the host Grand Lodge. In this opportunity, RWBro Thomas W. Jackson presented a report of his activities and delivered an introductory lecture. There also was a closing session to adopt conclusions and to select the Lodge to host the next Conference.

At the end of the Conference, the following CHARTER OF SAO PAULO was adopted:

The 4th World Conference of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges, held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with the aim of exchanging ideas and debating Masonic social issues which are of concern and interest, ended on Monday November 15th, 1999, after having submitted to consideration and acknowledging the importance of the Masonic precept in modern society, states:

- That the brotherhood of Universal Masonry, since immemorial time, bases itself on usage and custom set forth by its tradition of initiation order, without dogmas or fundamentalism which affect its situation as a lay, progressive and permanent institution.
- That there is a place for all men in the Brotherhood, without distinction of any type, be it race, beliefs, social or economic situation.
- That it works towards the fulfillment of the future, without forgetting that past is a point of reference for the society it hopes to build, and that it works as well towards teaching and training coming generations.
- That our lodges should emphasize that the new man, based on our principles, should become an ethical and moral leader of society.
- That Masonry should be an integral part of the present society in which we live
- That the eradication of poverty, illiteracy, the exclusion of minorities and corruption will become topics of priority in our Masonic goals. So that through activity, we can eliminate this human problem.
- That Modern society, in spite of the advances in individual freedom, of our great postulates, suffers the impact of globalization, which is misunderstood and applied maliciously, deeping evermore and dramatically, the inequality among human beings seriously threatening our basic postulate of Brotherhood, which the Order should protect and preserve.

Based on the discussions the Fourth Conference states as follow:

- It will support the prevalence of new humanistic concept, geared to the fulfillment of individuals in society.
- It will defend human rights, the dignity to happiness and foster the development of the highest aspirations in absolute freedom, with its symbols and operational tools.

The Fourth Conference points to the need to:

- Implement communication technologies to allow for faster exchange between the Regular Masonic Grand Lodges of the World.
- Develop the fields of education and training of young people in the postulates of tolerance, enabling their intellectual growth to advance harmoniously and alongside their moral growth.

To consolidate the Order's principles and postulates. Sao Paulo, November 15th of 1999, A.D (5999 A.L)

V. SPAIN {Madrid}: FIFTH CONFERENCE (2001)

The Fifth Conference was called "V World Conference of Grand Lodges". It took place in Madrid, on May 24 to 27, 2001. It was organized by the Grand Lodge of Spain, and presided over by its Grand Master Tomas Sarobe.

The following 72 Grand Lodges participated in the Conference:

Grand Lodge of Andorra

Grand Lodge of Argentina

Grand Lodge of Austria

Grand Lodge of Belgium

Grand Lodge of Bolivia

Brazil:

Grand Lodge of Amazonas

Grand Lodge of Espirito Santo

Grand Lodge of Goias

Grand Lodge of Minas Gerais

Grand Lodge of Parana

Grand Lodge of Rio Grande do Sul

Grand Lodge of Rondonia

Grand Lodge of Santa Catarina

Grand Lodge of Sao Paulo

Grand Oriente of Brazil
Grand Orient of Minas Gerais

Canada:

Grand Lodge of Ontario
Grand Lodge of Victoria
Grand Lodge of Chile

Colombia:

Grand Lodge of Barranquilla
Grand Lodge of Bogota
Grand Lodge of Cartagena
Grand Lodge of Costa Rica
Grand Lodge of Croatia
Grande Loge D'Cote D'Ivoire
Grand Lodge of Cuscatlan, El Salvador
Grand Lodge of the Czech Republic
United Grand Lodge of England
Grand Lodge of Spain
Grande Loge National Francaise
United Grand Lodges of Germany
Grand Lodge of Guatemala
Grand Orient D'Haiti
Grand Lodge of Honduras
Grand Lodge of India
Grand Lodge of Iran (in exile)
Grand Lodge of Ireland
Grand Lodge of the State of Israel
Grand Orient of Italy
Grand Lodge of Luxemburg
Grand Lodge of Mali

Mexico:

Grand Lodge of Baja California
Grand Lodge of Nuevo Leon
Grand Lodge Valle of Mexico
Grand Lodge of Moldova

Grand Lodge of The Netherlands
Grand Lodge of Peru
Grand Lodge Regular of Portugal
Grand Lodge of Russia
Grand Lodge of Scotland
Grande Lodge of Senegal
Grand Lodge of Switzerland (Alpina)
Grand Lodge of Taiwan
Grand Lodge of Turkey

United States of America:

Grand Lodge of Arizona
Grand Lodge of Connecticut
Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia
Grand Lodge of Massachusetts
Grand Lodge of Michigan
Grand Lodge of New Hampshire
Grand Lodge of New Jersey
Grand Lodge of New York
Grand Lodge of North Carolina
Grand Lodge of Oregon
Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania
Grand Lodge of Washington
Grand Lodge of Wisconsin
Grand Lodge of Uruguay

Also, as observers participated representatives of the Grand Lodge of Cuba, the Confederation of Regular Mexican Grand Lodges, the United Grand Lodge of Mexico, the Grand Lodge of Hidalgo (Mexico), the Grand Lodge of Quintana Roo (Mexico), and the Grand Lodge of Romania.

Its central subject was "Freemasonry. Necessary in the 21st. Century?" Specific items were:

- (a) Have we been victims of our own success?,
- (b) Shall we be able to develop a procedure for Universal Recognitions between Regular Grand Lodges?,
- (c) How can we intensify dialogue between Grand Lodges?,
- (d) Does it help to open the doors of the Grand Lodges of the World to integrate them into present society?

Thirteen official papers were presented for the analysis of these matters,

a. Basic Principles for Grand Lodge Recognition: RWBro James W. Daniel, Grand Secretary General of the United Grand Lodge of England.

b. Does it help to open the doors of the Grand Lodges to integrate themselves into present society?. An historical analysis from socio-politics: the Chilean experience:

MWBro Jorge Carvajal-Munoz, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Chile.

c. The role of Freemasonry in the XXI Century. Tradition Ethics and New Values:

M.:W.:B.: Gustavo Raffi, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy.

d. The Beacon Project Volunteerism: MWBro Paul N. Cross, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Michigan.

e. Masonic Jurisdiction; MWBro Ismael Cornejo Alvarado, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Peru.

VI. (New Delhi): SIXTH CONFERENCE (2002)

The Conference meet in New Delhi on May 7 and 8, 2002. Grand Masters, or their representatives, the following 32 Grand Lodges participated in the Conference:

UGL of NSW and ACT (Australia)

Grand Lodge of Bulgaria

Grand Lodge of Ontario (Canada)

Grand Lodge of Chile

Grand Lodge of Colombia (Bogotá)

The United Grand Lodge of England

Grand Lodge National of France

United Grand Lodge of Germany

Grand Lodge of Guatemala

Grand Lodge of Honduras

Grand Lodge of India

Grand Lodge of Iran (in exile)

Grand Lodge of Israel

Grande Orient of Italy

Grand Lodge de Cote D'Ivoire

Grand Lodge of Luxemburg

Mexico:

Grand Lodge of State of Hidalgo

Grand Lodge of Valle of Mexico

Grand Lodge of Morocco

Grand Lodge of Panama

Grand Lodge of Philippines

Grand Lodge of Peru

Grand Lodge Regular of Portugal

Grand Lodge of Romania

Grand Lodge of Russia

Grand Lodge of Spain

Grand Lodge of Switzerland

Grand Lodge of Taiwan

United States:

Grand Lodge of Indiana

Grand Lodge of North Carolina

Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania

Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia

A Representative of the United Grand Lodge of England, and Representatives from the Grand Lodge of Cuba, the Confederation of Regular Mexican Grand Lodges, the United Grand Lodge of Mexico, the Grand Loge of Hidalgo (Mexico), and the Grand Lodge of Romania participated as Observers.

In the Opening Session there was the inaugural address by MWBro Dilip Dwardas Udeshi, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of India, followed by a welcoming address by RWBro Thomas W. Jackson, and a lecture by the Chief Guest Dr. L.M. Singhvi (diplomat and Member of the Parliament).

In successive working sessions, following papers were presented:

- a. ***Freemasonry in the XXI Century: its validity and superior ethical value***, by MWBro Jorge Carvajal-Munoz, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Chile;
- b. ***Atheism***, by MWBro Nicolas Selume, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge Cuscatlan, El Salvador;
- c. ***Masonic regularity. Its application between Grand Lodges***, by MWBro Jean Charles Foellner, Grand Master of the Grand Loge National of France

- d. *Masonry in the profane world***, by Bro Roberto Sampe-Cuevas, Grand Lodge of Guatemala;
- e. *The Grand Hospital Fund***, by MWBro Jose Edgardo Valerio-Dimas, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Honduras;
- f. *What is the core of Freemasonry?***, by MWBro Dilip Dwardas Udeshi, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of India;
- g. *The internet and its effect on the issue of recognition and appendant organizations***, by MWBro Roger S. Van Gorden, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Indiana (USA);
- h. *Masonic sites in Holy Land, Cradle of Freemasonry***, by RWBro Joseph Samuel Daniel, representing MWBro Chaim Henry Gehl, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel;
- i. *Some reflections about the Grand Architect of the Universe***, by MWBro Gustavo Raffi, Grand Master of the Grande Orient of Italy
- j. *The Grand Lodge Valle of Mexico***, by MWBro Carlos Quintanilla-Yerena, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge Valle of Mexico;
- k. *Freemasonry in the Arab-Muslim World. The mediator of peace and respect***. By MWBro E. Mele Ouknine, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Morocco;
- l. *Laying our way for readjustment***, by MWBro Carlos Delgado-Rojas, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Peru;
- m. *Alchemy and Freemasonry (philosophers' stone and logos)***, by MWBro Victor Higuera Castellanos, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Venezuela, and
- n. *Regularity and Fraternal Relations***, by Thomas W. Jackson, Executive Secretary World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges.

Also, following two motions were approved:

- (I) each Grand Lodge participating in the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges will pay US\$300 every 18 months, to support administrative expenses of the Executive Secretary in the fulfillment of his duties, and
- (II) at the VII Conference special reports will be presented, referred to the establishment of a web site, and regularity.

In its final session, unanimously, the Conference approved that the Grand Lodge of Chile will host the next Conference.

After the Conference, a large number of Grand Masters and Members of their Delegations had the special opportunity to participate in the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of India, in its 40th Anniversary.

SECOND PART: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The analysis of primary and related subjects on the Papers presented in previous Conferences, as well as the conclusions and summaries elaborated during the workshops, allowed to identify about forty matters that were discussed on those Conferences and presents special interest.

Without aiming to elaborate and present a complete inventory of those papers, it would be more convenient to group them into some conceptual, institutional and operational themes, all of them with the basic aim to provide a common objective: to foment and consolidate Masonic Universalism.

Among conceptual ones we point out those referred to Masonic regularity and its content, especially regarding The Great Architect of Universe, Ancient Landmarks, Jurisdictional Territory and exclusion of Politics and Religion.

On the other side, with institutional matters, it should be stressed those related to the structure and functions of the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges and means to consolidate and strengthen it, for instance, advising on Masonic regularity.

On operational matters, it is important to remember those related to Masonry and the profane world, and the extra activities referred to objective groups like youth, third age and people less fortunate than ourselves; promotional ends as dissemination and the image of Masonic ethic and values; social improvement and attainable goals, as those regarding the overcome of social exclusion and marginality related to poverty and discrimination, as well as those directed to combat social problems like alcoholism and drug consumption and traffic. On the other hand, it has been considered operative aspects like the use of new technological means of communication, like Internet.

All these matters reveal that in previous six World Conferences, subjects considered have given some general, but strong indications to achieve the aim of having higher levels of an extended and strengthened Masonic Universalism. As a result, what is now needed to identify some institutional ways and means appropriated to obtain these goals. In that identification we must reconcile urgencies, challenges and opportunities of current processes of globalization and changes, with the proper adherence to Masonic Landmarks, traditions and norms.

Current times and circumstances made it necessary to consolidate our efforts to assure the general acceptance and practice of Masonic values and principles like tolerance, liberty and human dignity, equal opportunities and non discrimination, respect to diversity, laicism, and peace between men, institutions and countries. These values and principles to flourish and provide nourishment in democratic systems of government, where human rights are respected and promoted.

At the same time, these values and principles are basic components and prerequisites of dialogue between human beings, institutions and countries. Then, dialogue is an expression of these values as well as a necessary factor to achieve them.

To make dialogue possible to all regular Masonic Grand Lodges is one of the principal purposes of the World Conference. So, dialogue is the language of, and for Masonic Universalism. Through dialogue, Universalism flourishes and gets more presence and strength, facilitating coordination and agreements.

In its current expression, the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges has proved to be an efficient answer for the establishment of a fraternal and tolerant space for Masonic interchanges of impressions, visions and experiences. As a result of this capacity, in many occasions it has been suggested that dialogue have to be continued between a World Conference and the following one. Moreover, in the New York Conference (1998) it was proposed to study and propose means and ways to provide assistance to emerging Grand Lodges, and to study the potential value of the establishment of a universal charitable objective of Freemasonry, for instance, such as a Masonic Foundation for Children. On turn, in the New Delhi Conference (2002) it was proposed the establishment of a Grand Hospital Fund, to collaborate in the financing of educational activities, cultural interchanges, and humanitarian and communitarian activities.

These proposals, as well as others raised in the Conferences, identify a strategy: the establishment of projects of general interest to be materialized by Grand Lodges. Then, through the development of international concerted activities, with or without financial involvement, contacts, relationships, interchanges and fraternal dialogue among Grand Lodges will be increased and maintained.

Other strategy proposed is to constitute a kind of supranational organization or mechanism, preserving the autonomy of Grand Lodges.

The first strategy is preferred by many. To make it possible to strengthen the Executive Secretary Office, so efficiently served by its current titular. To this end, we think that constitutes a plausible good starting measure the proposal approved in New Delhi, consisting that each Grand Lodge has to pay a fixed contribution every 18 months, for supporting the financing of activities developed in the accomplishment of his duties, especially if they are to be widened.

Special attention to subjects discussed in previous Conferences was duly taken into account when the Grand Lodge of Chile and the Executive Secretary of the Conference agreed on the agenda of the VII World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges. For this reason the central subject (Freemason Universalism and World Society at the Beginning of the XXI Century), and the five sub-topics have the purpose to orient the work of the Conference over main aspects pointed out by our traditional and permanent search for an strengthened Masonic Universalism: Masonic regularity; the World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges

Grand Lodges and its ruling; the possibility for reaching an universal Masonic world; current processes of changes and the opportunities available for the Regular Masonry to meet the needs of contemporary society, in a way consistent to Masonic essence and identity, and Regular Freemasonry and modern technological communication: internet.

We do not pretend to be the pioneers of efforts to make Universalism one of our major strengths. We will try to play the role developed by Masonic traditions, to preserve and improve existing achievements.

VII World Conference, Santiago, Chile 5th to 9th May 2004

The VII World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges was held at Santiago, the capital of Chile in South America from 5th - 9th May 2004. This conference, which is held once every eighteen months, serves as a useful forum for all the Regular Grand Lodges of the world to exchange views and information of mutual interest. The previous such conference was held in November 2002 at New Delhi. This event coincided with the 40th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of India.

The Grand Masters or their Representatives from more than 70 Grand Lodges from all over the world, representing all the continents, attended this conference. The Grand Master of the host Grand Lodge (Chile), MWBro Jorge Carvajal Muñoz and his team spared no efforts to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the conference.

The entire proceedings began on a rather chilly morning of 5th May 2004, with the offering of a tribute to Bro. Bernardo O'Higgins, the Founding Father of Chile and an ardent Freemason of his time.

This solemn function was arranged in front of the presidential palace, La Moneda, near an equestrian statue of the Founding Father. This was followed by the formal inauguration of the conference at the Diego Portales Convention Centre by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Chile, Don Ricardo Lagos Escobar. Besides all the foreign delegates and their Chilean hosts, a large number of non- Masons, including college and school students were also present. We were pleasantly surprised to note that the Boy & Girl Scouts Movement in Chile is attached to the Grand Lodge - because Lord Baden Powell, the founder of the World Scout Movement.

After the above formalities were over, all the subsequent working sessions of the conference were held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel for four days.

The main topic for the presentation of papers was "Freemason Universalism and World Society at the beginning of the XXI Century". Additionally, there were five sub-topics, viz. Masonic Regularity, The World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges and its ruling, The Possibility for reaching an universal Masonic world, Current processes of changes and the opportunities available for Regular Freemasonry to meet the needs of contemporary society in a way consistent with the Masonic essence and identity, and, Regular Freemasonry and modern technological communication: Internet.

A great number of papers were presented on all these topics, many of which elicited a good interactive response.

An important resolution that was duly passed by all the delegates was to hereafter observe June 24th every year - the day of the summer solstice - as the "Universal Brotherhood Day" in all the jurisdictions of the attending Grand Lodges.

All the delegates were invited to attend a Regular Meeting of the Grand Lodge of Chile, which was held at the imposing Grand Lodge Building, comprising seven floors and accommodating 9 temples, numerous offices, banquet areas, lecture halls, and, a very well-equipped library.

In general, the Chilean Masons follow the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. All the delegates were thus able to witness this ritual, which was conducted in Spanish but with simultaneous translation in English. It was an extremely interesting and educative experience to see this different ceremony.

The Grand Master of Chile also presented a concise history of Freemasonry in Chile, and, more specifically, that of the Grand Lodge of Chile, which was founded on 24th May 1862. This exposition of the contributions of Masons and Masonry was truly astounding.

Every evening some kind of entertainment was arranged for all the delegates and their spouses. An elaborate tableau of traditional Chilean dances was presented one evening at a dinner theatre. On another night, a soiree was organised at a military club.

On the last day of the Conference, the Delegates were taken on a bus tour of the countryside, to visit a Chilean vineyard and later to witness an equestrian show put on by the Chilean security forces.

The Next Conference will be held at the Sydney Masonic Centre from the 1 to 4 November 2005 hosted by the UGL of NSW and the ACT.

Juan Carlos Alvarez, PAGM