CALL TO ACTION

Posted on July 9, 2010 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

11 July 2010

The International Organizing Committee (IOC), the steering committee of the proposed Western Armenian National Congress (WAN Congress), will shortly hold a meeting to prepare a draft declaration for submission to delegates at the founding convention of WAN Congress, tentatively scheduled to take place by the end of the year. IOC needs the constructive suggestions of all Armenians who are committed to the well-being of the Armenian nation. The below communiqué asks for your input, for possible inclusion in the draft declaration.

Dear Keghart.com readers and friends,

A year ago major Armenian organizations in Canada became aware of the proposed Western Armenian National Congress (WAN Congress) and its steering committee--the International Organizing Committee (IOC). As well, through word-of-mouth some non-affiliated individuals became aware of the initiative in Oct. 2009, following which an ad-hoc group was formed to explore what was being proposed and what were the merits of the undertaking. Viken L. Attarian and I were informally elected-designated as interim deputy coordinator and coordinator of the group respectively to keep in touch with the IOC and to organize meetings with individuals/groups to discuss the proposal.

Around the same time that measures were undertaken to publicize the initiative through Keghart.com and private e-mails, other proposals (Harut Sassounian, Minas Kojayan, Ardag Sargsyan, Aram Sepetjian, etc.) were made. The coincidence offered an opportunity to discuss the related objectives more extensively--at least in Montreal and in Toronto, particularly among non-affiliated individuals. In Dec. 2009 two members of the aforementioned team attended the IOC meeting in Geneva as observers. Although an invitation was extended to apply for full membership in IOC, it did not materialize primarily because of some reservations. However, the interim coordinators tried their utmost to spread the word through public meetings and individual contacts.

IOC Deputy Executive Souren Seraydarian's brief visit to Montreal, to meet interested individuals in April helped clarify some issues but was mostly limited to introducing the initiative, since many of the people who met him had only recently become aware of IOC's existence. In May I had a second opportunity to visit the Geneva office to attend IOC's quarterly meeting. The gathering was not successful because some members from CIS countries were not able to get their visas on time while some European members had not returned from their "missions" in the Middle East or elsewhere. However, the meeting was an opportunity to pass along and discuss some of the criticisms levied against the IOC, particularly in relation to statements that had appeared on the WAN Congress site. Some interested individuals considered the statements (mainly related to our recent national history) divisive. On June 24 I had the opportunity to introduce the initiative in Vancouver at an "Interactive Public Meeting".

We are all aware of the pros and cons of the proposed WAN Congress, and none of us is fully committed to the project. Some of us are also against establishing such an organization, yet all of us are concerned in Diaspora's future and would like to make a contribution towards the realization of our dreams which, so far, have not been defined in precise legal terms. We are not unanimous in what we believe in and what we are willing to sacrifice. It's not a criticism; it's just an observation of the state of affairs. I am cognizant of the aforementioned and I am writing to you because each one of you has shown interest in our community affairs and of the larger issues that concern Armenians in Armenia and in the Diaspora. In that vein, and hopefully without abusing your patience, I'd like to make some comments.

Some of us believe that the WAN Congress is a viable and doable alternative, particularly when considering that the IOC has functioned over the past three years with dedication and the clear objective of giving birth to a unique organization that would explore and implement legal means to achieve some of the objectives that we have discussed over and over again in the past fifty years. The writings of Kasbar Derderian, Vartkes Yeghiayan, John Guiragossian are still fresh on my mind. "Our Word Now is Reparation!" declared Mark Geragos at the top of his lungs at the recent commemoration of the Genocide in New York. That was neither a coincidence nor the utterances of a demagogue. Anne Lousine's "Justice for the Armenian Genocide---a New Era" was not penned in vain, and The Armenian Bar Association's interest in the WAN Congress is not idle curiosity. Within the past year in Armenia, Lebanon and the US three major conferences have been dedicated to the Genocide of the Armenians and International Law. There is an opportunity now to "work in the garden" and disengage ourselves from what some people would call "intellectual prostitution," meaning the discussing of topics at nauseam.

Dear Readers, I am not asking you to adhere to IOC or its proposal. I am requesting readers who want to see the project take-off to provide their constructive criticism. I, too, like some of you have reservations, especially about the critical issue of whether this may not turn out to be a Trojan horse, designed by the corrupt rulers in Armenia as a means to exert their will on a divided and clueless Diaspora. Certainly, the question of who is financing the mission is a matter that calls for thorough questioning. Like many of you, I understand the difficulties related to dealing with people, especially functionaries, who in the past have served in a managed-economy environment of which Armenia was part of. I have lived in Armenia for seven consecutive years, dealt with our brethren in our homeland, experienced the frustrations of not being understood by them. The authoritarian mentality persists even with the most dedicated democrat. The occasional disdain towards what an "akhbar" has to say is all there. Although I have seen the reverse attitude, the general mindset of ex-Soviet Armenian elite will not change for some time.

Yet, without our participation, without extending a hand, nothing will change and this proposal--in the absence of other practical alternatives--may well become just another footnote like many preceding endeavours.

The IOC is in its final stage of getting ready to call for the founding convention, to elect the assembly and the council. To my understanding, it will be an exercise in participatory democracy and not a rubber-stamping event. It will be a gathering where each attendee will be heard to help formulate the policies and objectives that the new organization should follow. Transparency, accountability and democratic values should be the guiding principles. Without our actual participation none of the aforementioned can take place.

In a recent message, Mr. Seraydarian wrote: "... please think about any input your group would like to have in the final draft declaration of the Convention. It has to be clear, short, not ambivalent and non-controversial with only short reference to our recent history. For the time being few colleagues are trying to draft . We will then combine the best suggestions and share them with all contributors before submitting the paper for consideration by the Convention."

Postponing some suggestions that I have, I submit to your attention the above message for your consideration. I am hopeful that many of you will forward their comments to Keghart.org or privately to Viken L. Attarian (viken.attarian@videotron.ca) or to me (dikrankeghart@gmail.com), alternately to Mr. Souren Seraydarian (souren.seraydarian@yahoo.com). or to info@cnarmeniens.org

Paregamoren,

Dikran Abrahamian

Related Material

WAN-C Gets My Vote
Veteran UN Executive Founding Member of WAN-C
The Western Armenian National Congress--Arrogance Gone Wild
Western Armenian National Congress
Keghart Opts for Western Armenian National Congress
Let's Not Falter as of Day One
WAN-Congress an Opportunity We Shouldn't Waste