AIIC Staff Interpreters' Committee celebrates its 25th birthday

The AIIC Staff Interpreters' Committee covers the full range of issues affecting conference interpreters employed by international and national organisations.

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At its annual meeting on 28-29 October 2000 in ICAO headquarters, Montreal, the members of the Staff Interpreters' Committee (Commission des Permanents : CdP) paid tribute to Ludovic Ravet who, as a then staff interpreter with NATO, took the initiative which led to the AIIC Assembly's decision in Paris in January 1975 to set up the CdP, and who was its first president until 1979.

It would take too long to list all the CdP's many activities over the last 25 years, under its successive presidents (Raul Galer, Jean Zinck, Claude Echard, Philippe Quaine, David Fox and since October 1999 Claude Durand), in the service of the staff interpreters it represents and of the profession as a whole. The CdP is a horizontal committee of AIIC, covering the whole range of issues affecting conference interpreters employed by international and national organisations (ministeries, parliaments, etc). It has three main roles:

- **It is a unique observatory of the evolving status of staff interpreters** in the organisations covered by the CdP. Meeting annually in autumn, by turns in Europe and North America (the two regions which are home to almost all staff AIIC members), the CdP traditionally begins its work by making a general survey of the latest developments in organisations, focussing on: their structures, recruitment, pay, working conditions and workload, missions, training, terminology and documentation, equipment and new technologies. Such discussions have proven all the more important given that many organisations have undergone dramatic restructuring in all these fields in the 1990s. In many cases, it has proven possible to limit the adverse effects thanks to the free flow of information among CdP members and to the actions of the staff interpreters with the organisations concerned. Following each CdP annual meeting, a summary of this general survey is forwarded to the AIIC Council and is widely circulated to staff interpreters with the organisations concerned, whether AIIC members or not. In many cases, this summary is the only substantial source of information available to staff interpreters about the situations of their colleagues in other organisations.

- **It is a link between staff interpreters and their freelance colleagues.** The chairman (or in his absence, another member of the CdP's Bureau) attends PriMS (formerly: NAS) meetings at least once a year. Equally, a PriMS representative is invited to the CdP's annual meeting. If a particular issue needs to be tackled, an informal structure may be set up comprising the
President of AIIC, the Chairman of CdP and a staff interpreter with the organisation concerned, which will look into the issue. The CdP attaches the greatest importance to promoting good relations between staff and freelance interpreters, in view of the many shared interests which unite them and which particularly come to the fore at decisive moments, such as when AIIC and organisations negotiate conventions. Recent developments have once again shown that solidarity between staff and freelance interpreters can achieve results which are very much in their mutual interest.

- **It contributes to AIIC projects**, by giving its opinion, collecting documentation and providing a wide range of information to various AIIC groups and networks. It is currently involved in 3 such projects:
  
  - **New multilingualism**: With members from the European institutions (Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice), the CdP is well-placed when it comes to discussing the implications of the European Union's enlargement;
  
  - **New technologies**: Many organisations are considering or already using videoconferencing, internet chats, etc. The CdP is actively following up this rapidly developing field and has promoted the Code on the use of new technologies;
  
  - **Objective criteria for admission to AIIC**: Following the decisions adopted by the Dakar Assembly in January 2000, the CdP is currently surveying the procedures for recruiting staff interpreters and for approving freelancers in the organisations represented in the CdP. This does not prejudice the CdP's position on this complex issue. The matter was the subject of an initial discussion in Montreal, but the debate will continue once the survey has been completed.

In the interval between annual meetings, members of the 24 organisations represented in the CdP* continue to exchange information, mainly by e-mail**. The CdP whishes to reflect as completely as possible the interests of staff interpreters worldwide, and would be pleased to receive new members wishing to exchange information, in particular in the fields covered in the general survey and on the 3 above-mentioned projects. The next CdP annual meeting will be held on the 27-28th October 2001 at the NATO Defence College in Rome.

* Member organisations:

  ARTE (Strasbourg),
  BAD (Abidjan),
  Camera dei Diputati (Rome),
  Federal Government of Canada (Ottawa),
  Government of Cameroun (Yaoundé),
  European Commission (Brussels),
  European Court of Justice (Luxembourg),
  European Parliament (Luxembourg),
  FAO (Rome),
  ICAO (Montreal),
  IDEP (Dakar),
  ILO (Geneva),
  ILO International Training Center (Turin),
  IMF (Washington),
  ITLOS (Hamburg),
  MAE (Paris),
  NAMSA (Luxemburg),
NATO (Brussels),
NDC (Rome),
OECD (Paris),
TPIR (Arusha),
UNO (New York),
UNO (Vienna),
WEU Parliamentary Assembly (Paris).

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