

SIGNIS India National General Assembly 2017

Don Bosco Institute of Communication Arts, Citadel – Chennai

22 February 2017

The day opened with a Prayer invoking God's blessings on the procedures of the day. Roll Call was taken with 56 Voting members present and followed by the Presidential Address. In his address, SIGNIS India President Mr. Sunil Lucas commended on the meticulous planning of SINA 2017 by the Tamilnadu Region and congratulated the Office bearers who spared no effort in making the event a success. He declared to the assembly that SIGNIS India was registered as a Trust; a result of the long discussions and study of the previous National Assembly held in Mangalore in 2016. He was proud to share with the members that SIGNIS India is now a Legal entity and it has already achieved its PAN Card. The President saluted his Predecessors for the hardwork put in, in bringing the organization as it stands today. With anxiety he also brought to the notice of all present of the three regions that are not functioning well namely, Western Region, Odisha and Northeast Region but with great faith he believed that something could be done and from his part he would not spare any effort in order to revive the said regions. Mr. Sunil then conveyed to the assembly the observation made by the SIGNIS World President, Mr. Andujar Gustavo of his appreciation towards the meticulous work done by the screening committee in the screening procedures of the projects. In his address, Mr. Sunil noted the fact that the President was not given a chance to speak at the Inaugural Function.

Recognizing the effort made by Fr. Norbert Herman SVD for the huge success of the Mother Teresa International Film Festival (MTIFF 4th Edition), SIGNIS India presented him an outstanding award at the assembly. He has been able to take the film festival to six different cities covering an audience of one lakh and fifty thousand. At this juncture, Mr. Gustavo the SIGNIS World President was presented a memento in appreciation for his presence and support.

Following the assembly agenda, the new members were welcomed to the association.

After which the **minutes of SINA 2016** was presented to the gathering. Some clarifications were made: Fr. C M Paul inquired about the National Membership of JESCOM and BOSCOM to which Fr. Vijay Lobo, SIGNIS India Secretary said that nothing has been done about their membership. Fr. Wilson B. Vincent, from NaTFoM suggested that the report should have some consistency in addressing names of persons involved. He also pointed out that the reports of the study days were not mention to which it was clarified that it was not necessary to have it in the minutes. Further the assembly discussed on the amendment on Membership. Secretary informed that this matter will be taken later for discussion.

Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai, National Secretary for the CBCI Office for Laity, gave a clarification to all present about CCBI and CBCI. He said that CCBI is a body canonically approved by the Vatican Conference and is the fourth largest conference in the world whereas CBCI is not an approved body. Fr. Jose Murickan Director of NISCORT clarified that the CBCI constitutes all the three rites in India namely Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Rites. Mr. Nirmal Raj asked if the minutes could be sent one month after the Meet as a draft report to which it was said that the

practice is not official. After these few clarification, information and suggestion the minutes was unanimously passed wherein Fr. CM Paul SDB proposed the same and seconded by Fr. David Arockiam. The house then dispersed for a coffee break.

Resuming the Assembly Dr. A. Magimai Pragasam suggested few means as in how to revive the dying regions through timely visits and other mechanisms. He also suggested to the screening committee to organize a training program on project writing as to enable many project writers get their project through. He also made a mention that the projects of the laity were not approved. Further, Dr. Magimai suggested that the expenses on travel should be cut down.

Fr. Chinnadurai clarified that the priest and religious are not against the laity but they are there to help the individuals. Fr. Richard D' Souza, Mangalore emphasized on the fact that in order to help project applicants, Fr. Vijay Lobo, SIGNIS India Secretary has even sent a tutorial for the purpose. At that point of time, Mr. Sunil Lucas, President SIGNIS India assured the assembly that a one-day training program on project writing would be conducted at National level.

Mr. Nirmal Raj also raised up the issue that it is quite difficult for the individual member to get the signature of both Diocesan Director for Communication and the Bishop of the place. However, Fr. Norbert Herman SVD encouraged everyone to write projects.

Speaking on the issue of the dying regions, Mr. Sunil, President assured support and help to the respective regions and expressed his willingness to travel to the regions for reviving the same.

While speaking about the Asian Assembly, Dr. Magimai suggested that it is enough that only the President attends the Meet and he could also present the report on behalf of the Secretary. He also requested the representative at Asian Assembly to meet World Executives and present their concern with regard to funds for projects.

While speaking on the type of projects that could be sanctioned, Sr. Joeyanna DSP proposed that the funding agency could now think of online and social media too namely funding the production of a mobile application or website. Mr. President assured that he could present this request to the World Officials.

Fr. Cyprian Kullu inquired if the projects of individual members should be merged into one. After a long discussion on projects, the Secretary Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo clarified that membership should not be linked with Projects. He clearly stated that SIGNIS is a Fraternity and that it is not a funding agency but only a facilitator of Propaganda FIDEI. Also Mr. Nirmal Raj seconded to this thought shared.

Furthermore, speaking in this line Mr. Gustavo the SIGNIS World President said that SIGNIS is not in the organigram of the Church. It is a different entity and is an association of the laity. It's motive being, sharing of experiences according to one's expertise. He also reiterated that OPPF as funding agency gives the confidence to SIGNIS to screen the projects, which is an asset to the association. He also took note on venturing into the new field of social and online media and assured that he would take forward the request to Brussels particularly in the training and use of new technologies.

At this point of time Dr. Fr. S. Innocent, President SIGNIS Tamilnadu clarified on the absence of the address of the SIGNIS India President during the Inaugural Function. The issue was taken up for some time but after few interventions the issue was closed with the understanding that it was just an oversight and not intended.

This was followed by the **presentation of the Financial Report**. After few clarifications the report was passed wherein Fr. Stephen Francis proposed it and was seconded by Fr. Jose Murickan.

The Budget was then presented to the assembly and was unanimously voted for. Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai proposed it and Fr. C. M Paul SDB seconded.

The Amendment of National Membership was then discussed and was put to vote with the criterion that it should bear the signature of the Bishop Chairman for OSC. This resolution was passed with 55 votes, one abstained and one against it.

6.2.1 The application for National membership shall be addressed to the National President of SIGNIS INDIA at least three months prior to the National Assembly, supported by the recommendation of two Active National Members and the Chairman Bishop of CBCI Office for Social Communication.

The afternoon session which commenced at 2.00 pm saw the **report presentation of the various regions** namely UPUKRAJ, Andhra Pradesh, Bijhan, Northern Region, Madhya Pradesh, Western Region, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. The National Centres too consisting of the Secretary OSC, NISCORT and NATFom presented their reports. It was noted that some regions have followed the guidelines given for reporting whereas some regions just presented according to the availability of the matter. Therefore, the Secretary exhorted the regions to follow the guidelines given in order that the reports are presented systematically and to avoid wastage of time.

The screening Committee Reports was then taken up with the screening committee members namely Fr. Norbert Herman SVD and Fr. Stephen Francis coming up to the dias. Out of 63 projects 53 were approved and 10 were rejected as they did not fulfil the requirements or follow the important procedures.

A visual message of Fr Faustine Lobo, National Director, PMI was also displayed for the benefit of all present in terms of knowledge and information with regard to writing projects. The assembly applauded the commendable work done by the screening committee in the screening processes.

The next agenda taken upon was **the venue for the next assembly SINA 2018**. There were many takers for the venue therefore it was suggested that the region who would like to host the assembly for the following year should submit a Proposal for the venue by May 2017. So accordingly the venue would be assigned. **It was also announced that the following year would be the election year; therefore, all the regions should have the new office bearers by December 2017.**

It was also made known to the assembly about the forth coming **SIGNIS World Congress (SWC 2017) to be held in Quebec City**, Canada from 19 to 22 June 2017. To this end, Mr. Nirmal Raj proposed for a subsidy to members from SIGNIS India to encourage participation in SWC 2017. Fr. Vijay Lobo assured of the same and thus after a short discussion it was agreed that rupees five lakhs

only would be allocated for the purpose in which the money will be shared equally among the participants of SWC 2017. Mr. Sunil, President also proposed to take the advantage of the occasion and extend the days for some sightseeing including Quebec, Toronto, US and Montreal and those interested could refer to him for further details.

As part of the **evaluation**, each participant was given an Evaluation sheet and have their ratings expressed for the logistics arranged during the Study Days and Business Day of SINA 2017.

Dr. Magimai Pragasam expressed a spontaneous word of thanks to everyone present especially to the Office bearers of SIGNIS India and SIGNIS Tamilnadu Region for the successful conclusion of the Assembly. With gratitude to God and one another, the President of SIGNIS India, Mr. Sunil Lucas declared SINA 2017 closed.

Thus the assembly 2017 came to a fitting conclusion reminding us to be communicators of hope and trust in our Times.

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo

Secretary and Treasurer, Signis India