

Toward the birth of WFUCA
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———What happened before 1981———

By Eiji Hattori
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“There never was a good war or a bad peace.” (Benjamin Franklin)

The first UNESCO Club (Association for cooperation with UNESCO) was born in Sendai, Japan, on July 19, 1947, and followed soon after by the Kyoto club. This means that the first club was formed less than one year after the establishment of UNESCO itself in Paris.

The people who took the initiative in this movement were university professors, administrators, and journalists, who were convinced that the reconstruction of their country after World War II could only be possible if the nation adopted the spirit of UNESCO. On May 1, 1948, some 50 Associations for cooperation with UNESCO created the National Federation in Tokyo. Koichi Ueda is one of the important names of this period.

However, Japan was not the only example of this civic movement. On December 3, 1947 in Colorado, U.S.A., the First American UNESCO Club was born at the Steele Center, with Genevieve Fiore as animator.

On November 4, 1949, the exact anniversary of UNESCO, Jaime Torres Bodet, the second Director General of UNESCO after Julian Huxley, launched an appeal to educators to create the “Club d’amis de l’UNESCO” for international understanding on the occasion of a large assembly for secondary education organized in France. Louis François was the first to take a firm step forward this direction. In 1950, on the occasion of the General Conference of the Organization in Florence, many Italian clubs of friends of UNESCO were created. The same year also marked the appearance of UNESCO clubs in Germany.

We can also count the UNESCO Centrum of Nederland founded in Amsterdam in 1949 as part of the UNESCO Club movement in these first years.

Following the resolution (IV.1.5.15) of the General Conference at its 8th session, in 1970, by which UNESCO encourages the Member States in the creation of UNESCO Clubs under the auspice of their national commissions, the National Federation of UNESCO Associations of Japan, in cooperation with the Japanese National Commission for

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UNESCO and UNESCO Secretariat (OPI/PLD), organized a regional meeting for the promotion of UNESCO Clubs in Asia in October 1971. 10 countries participated in this meeting, and it was on this occasion that I was nominated Secretary General of the National Federation. This meeting was a step toward the creation of the Asian Federation of UNESCO Clubs.

In July 1974, at the International Convention Hall in Kyoto, we witnessed the birth of the first regional federation of UNESCO Clubs, with AFUCA gathering together the national federations or the coordination bodies of UNESCO clubs from 16 countries in Asia (Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Cambodia, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh). Kiyoshi Kazuno from Japan was unanimously elected as the first President of this regional federation. UNESCO showed great interest in this event by sending the ADG concerned, Alberto Obligado, Chief the Public Liaison Division, Jean-Baptist de Weck, and myself. Special mention must also be given to Anne Grinda (later Willings), responsible for the UNESCO Club unit in this division, who assembled UNESCO club leaders from 10 European countries (Austria, Germany, Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary) and 6 African countries (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal), thus forming a large observer team attending the constitutive assembly of AFUCA. After witnessing the birth of AFUCA, this team, which was called 'itinerant training course for UNESCO Club leaders,' visited Korea, the Philippines, and India for direct contact and exchange of information with UNESCO club leaders in the field. It is clear that a great event occurred in 1974; the creation of the Asian Federation and the participation of Europeans and African young leaders as observers sprouted in the mind of all participants a hope to create a worldwide federation of these clubs for the promotion of UNESCO ideals through concrete action. And it was these participants to this training course who were closely associated with the preparatory work done by the UNESCO Secretariat toward creation of the World Federation.

I must also mention the most friendly and cordial atmosphere of these meetings from 1971 to 1974.. All participants were friends who were trying to create something positive. For example, when the newly-born AFUCA had to elect two vice-presidents, after the election of Rep. of Korea, it was the observer from Pakistan who supported the Iranian motion to appoint India for the other post of Vice-President. This then brought Indian clubs to create their National Federation in the same year.

While the newly-born AFUCA enlarged the program of training for Club leaders, the torch of hope lit in 1974 in Kyoto passed to Wien and Paris(1977), aiming for the creation of the World Federation in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat (OPI/PLD),

where the constitution of the future body had been discussed.

The great event was the first World Congress of UNESCO Clubs convened by UNESCO under its own shelter in 1978. This was made possible thanks to the 300,000 dollar contribution from the Nippon Foundation (then the Japan Shipbuilding Industry Foundation). From July 17-22, 1978, the leaders of this civic movement from more than 60 countries gathered in the rooms of the UNESCO H.Q. in Paris. Enthusiasm of the participants was great. They decided to set up a preparatory committee for the redaction of the constitution of the Future World Federation. The committee was composed of the representatives of Ivory Coast, Kenya, Morocco, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Japan, the Philippines, Austria, France, Poland, Equador, and Panama.

The committee met in Tokyo in 1979 and in Innsbruck in 1980. These meetings, in which UNESCO (POI/PLD) actively participated, prepared the great event of 1981.

We must not forget the decision of the General Conference of UNESCO, the supreme organ of the Organization, toward this movement of UNESCO Clubs. In fact, the General Conference adopted in 1978, at its 20th session, a resolution (20C/6/32) which invited the Director General and Member States to support the creation of the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs under preparation, and authorized the Director General to utilize all accumulated benefits of the Public Liaison Funds (which are not necessary to the good management of the Funds) to favor the creation of the World Federation.

It was this resolution, which was re-conducted in 1980 by the General Conference at its 21st session (21C/6/04), that made it possible for the UNESCO Secretariat to convene the Constitutive Congress of WFUCA in 1981, in Room I of UNESCO House in Paris.

A resolution of the same nature presented by 53 countries reconfirmed UNESCO's position in 1983 (22C/15/9).

The Congress of 1981 was hosted by the French Federation in cooperation with UNESCO itself, and opened June 19, 1981 in an atmosphere of exaltation. Federico Mayor, then Deputy Director General, gave the opening speech and André Zwegacker, then President of the French Federation, was elected President of the Congress.

Kiyoshi Kazuno, President of the Japanese Federation and former President of AFUCA, authentic leader of the civic movement for UNESCO, was elected unanimously by acclamation President of WFUCA. Thus WFUCA was born.