

INTERCONNECTIONS 21 Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2003

UNESCO's Associated Schools Project (ASPnet) Celebrates its 50th Anniversary



In celebration of 50 years of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project (ASPnet), 213 delegates representing 91 countries convened at an International Congress held in Auckland, New Zealand from August 3-8. The New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, in cooperation with UNESCO's Field Office in Apia, Samoa and UNESCO Headquarters, organized the event, titled "Navigators for Peace: Quality Education for the 21st Century." Jean-Baptiste Bassène, a French teacher at the United Nations International School in New York, represented the US chapter of ASPnet, which is coordinated by InterConnections 21 from its headquarters in Wilson, Wyoming.

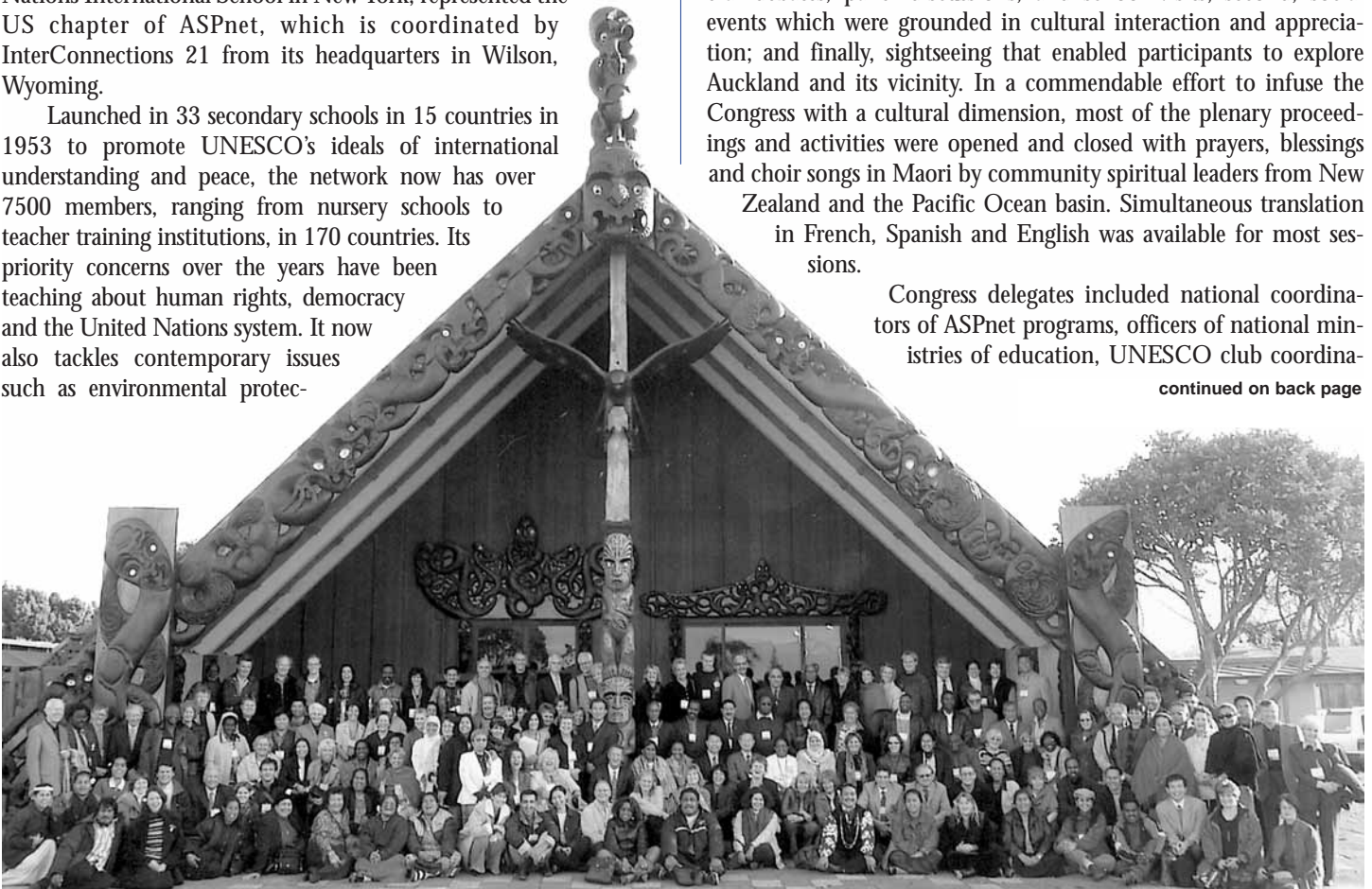
Launched in 33 secondary schools in 15 countries in 1953 to promote UNESCO's ideals of international understanding and peace, the network now has over 7500 members, ranging from nursery schools to teacher training institutions, in 170 countries. Its priority concerns over the years have been teaching about human rights, democracy and the United Nations system. It now also tackles contemporary issues such as environmental protec-

tion, World Heritage Education and intercultural learning. Not only is ASPnet the world's oldest and largest international network of educational institutions, but it is unique in emphasizing the humanistic, ethical, cultural and international dimensions of education, while striving to promote the exchange of good educational practices nationally and internationally.

The New Zealand Congress was organized around three main spheres of activities: first, the formal conference program with general debates, panel discussions, and school visits; second, social events which were grounded in cultural interaction and appreciation; and finally, sightseeing that enabled participants to explore Auckland and its vicinity. In a commendable effort to infuse the Congress with a cultural dimension, most of the plenary proceedings and activities were opened and closed with prayers, blessings and choir songs in Maori by community spiritual leaders from New Zealand and the Pacific Ocean basin. Simultaneous translation in French, Spanish and English was available for most sessions.

Congress delegates included national coordinators of ASPnet programs, officers of national ministries of education, UNESCO club coordina-

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Delegates to the 50th anniversary Congress of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project outside the Maori House in Auckland, New Zealand. Photo courtesy of UNESCO.

InterConnections 21, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization (EIN: 84-1379499), coordinates the American chapter of the Associated Schools Project (ASPnet/USA). Contributions are gratefully received and tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Checks should be made out to InterConnections 21 and sent to P.O. Box 960, Wilson, WY 83014. Information about our organization is found on our website at www.ic21.org.

First Lady Laura Bush Praises US Return to UNESCO



On Monday, September 29, 2003, First Lady Laura Bush addressed UNESCO delegates from around the world, and the American flag was raised to join the flags of 189 member states outside the Organization's headquarters in Paris, France.

In celebration of US re-entry to UNESCO 19 years after its withdrawal, Mrs. Bush commended the work being done worldwide by UNESCO and declared, "We believe in working with the nations of the world to promote the values shared by people throughout the world. Working in communities to help friends and neighbors is part of the fabric of American society. As of October 1st, the United States government will once again be a full, active and enthusiastic participant in UNESCO's important mission to promote peace and freedom. And the people of my country will work with our UNESCO colleagues throughout the world to advance education, science, culture and understanding."

Mrs. Bush also spoke about the importance of education, saying: "Education is our most urgent priority and should have the first and highest call on our time and resources. Education is vital to developing nations and generations.

From the moment they are born, our children's lives are shaped by the education we provide them." She also highlighted the role that global education plays in developing tolerance and hope in future generations, stating that, "The more children learn about other countries, faiths and cultures, the more likely they are to respect other people. Education can help children see beyond a world of hate and hopelessness."



First Lady Laura Bush addresses UNESCO delegates. Photo courtesy of UNESCO/Niamh Burke.

Literacy is one of the four key areas identified by Mrs. Bush, who is the Honorary Ambassador for the UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012), for priority attention from UNESCO. The other areas include Quality Education—defined as "education based on truth and tolerance"—Post-Conflict Education and HIV/AIDS Education.

Mrs. Bush's speech and US re-entry into UNESCO only re-affirms IC 21's work and commitment to help schools around the US provide their students with a global perspective in education. We hope that these developments will lead to a strong relationship between the US and the nations of UNESCO, facilitating work towards a future of peace, communication and international understanding.

IC 21 Students Participate in "Children Against Landmines Program"

In September, Wyoming students were the first in the nation to participate in CHAMPS (Children Against Landmines Program), an educational and fundraising program designed to engage schoolchildren in the global effort to remove landmines. During the week of September 21st, a delegation from the Marshall Legacy Institute traveled to Wyoming schools with landmine dog "Rosa" to create awareness about this blight that affects so many countries.

Visiting delegates included Marshall Legacy Institute Board Chairman Anthony Lake who was President Clinton's National Security Advisor, Board member Diana Enzi who is Wyoming Senator Mike Enzi's wife, Executive Director Perry Baltimore, and Brigadier Rohan Jayasingh who is Defense Attaché at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Washington DC. The Marshall Legacy Institute is a non-profit organization focused on establishing indigenous de-mining programs that alleviate suffering, restore hope, nurture stability and promote economic growth throughout the world. Landmines cripple or kill tens of thousands of people and hundreds of thousands of animals each year in approximately one third of the world's nations. In these countries, even those not physically injured by landmines suffer



Rosa, a trained landmine dog that worked for six years in Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo and Nambia, alerts her handler at the Jackson Hole Middle School demonstration

economic hardship and the loss of productive land.

Landmines are small, often buried and difficult to find. Specially trained dogs are one of the best landmine detectors available in the field today. With probes and metal detectors, humans can respectively cover 40 and 100 square meters per day, whereas dogs can cover 1,000 square meters per day, making them much more effective. Carefully selected dogs sniff the odor of explosives and alert their handlers as to the precise location of landmines for removal. Some 700 MLI dogs are working in 23 countries around the world, but many more are needed. It costs \$20,000 to train and maintain a dog so that it can work for 6-8 years. With the funds raised by students and community members involved in CHAMPS, a dog called "Wyoming" will go to Sri Lanka along with an elite team of five other mine detection dogs to help Sri Lankans free their country of mines, restore land to productive use and allow the safe return of hundreds of

thousands of refugees to their homes.

The Marshall Legacy Institute plans to launch similar programs around the nation.

For more information, visit www.marshall-legacy.org.

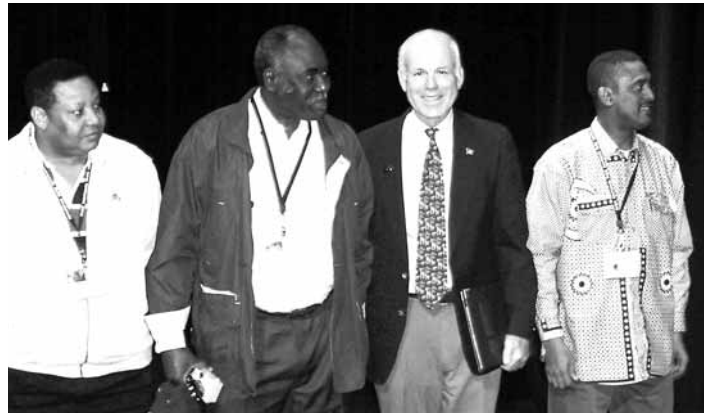
Congo Basin Forest Partnership and Gabon Initiative Internationally Recognized



On September 26th, IC 21 hosted a forum at Jackson Hole High School about the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. Members of the panel were His Excellency Emile Doumba, Minister of Forest Economy, Water and Fishing, in charge of Environment and Nature Conservancy; His Excellency Ogoebandga, Ambassador of Gabon to the United States; Rene Adiaheno, Permanent Secretary of the National Park Council of Gabon; and John Turner, US Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. This group of dignitaries was in Jackson for the Jackson Hole International Film Festival, which presented Gabon's President Omar Bongo with a Conservation Action Award.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, President Bongo pledged to set aside 11,294 square miles of virgin forest in Gabon for 13 separate national parks. His decision represents one of the most momentous conservation actions since President Ulysses S. Grant approved a bill establishing Yellowstone as the world's first National Park. In the same week as President Bongo's announcement, US Secretary of State Colin Powell announced to the Summit that the United States would contribute 53 million dollars over the next four years to an effort called the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). The partnership provides support for a network of national parks and protected areas in 6 countries known for their biological diversity—Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo. Specific objectives of CBFP include:

- ▶ Providing people sustainable means of livelihood through well-managed forestry concessions, sustainable agriculture, and integrated ecotourism programs;
- ▶ Improving forest and natural resource governance through community-based management to combat illegal logging and enforce anti-poaching laws;



His Excellency Ogoebandga, Ambassador of Gabon to the US, His Excellency Emile Doumba; Minister of Forest Economy, Water and Fishing; in charge of Environment and Nature Conservancy; John Turner, US Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs; and Mr. Rene Adiaheno, Permanent Secretary of the National Park Council of Gabon

- ▶ Helping the six countries develop a network of effectively managed national parks, protected areas, and corridors.

In the last year, this landmark initiative and partnership has been catapulted to the forefront of international environmental concern. Spurred by the tremendous efforts of Michael Fay and Nick Nichols' 1,200-mile trekking expedition to bring attention to the rich and rare bio-diversity of Gabon, the Congo Basin Initiative and related issues have been featured in several publications including *National Geographic* (Sept. 2003), *The Smithsonian* (Oct. 2003), and *National Geographic Adventure* (Sept. 2003). Not-for-profits particularly engaged in supporting the CBFP include Conservation International, Jane Goodall Institute and the Wildlife Conservation Society. IC 21 hopes to work with the various organizations involved in this exciting initiative to develop awareness and support for it in schools and communities across the US.

Switzerland Hosting 50th ASPnet Anniversary Meeting

In special celebration of the 50th anniversary of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project (ASPnet), the Committee of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO has invited international delegations from selected countries participating in ASPnet to a meeting on November 19-21 in Biel/Bienne, Switzerland. The theme for this conference is entitled "Do you speak UNESCO? Many Languages—A Common Understanding" and will focus specifically on how different languages and cultures impact each other, ways in which linguistic and cultural minorities live together, and cul-

tural exchanges and understanding among people. Attending the conference as US representatives are teacher Lisa Henry and student Martina Mustroph from the Atlanta International School, teacher Carolyn Wyrsh and student Fallon Higgins from the Wakefield School, and student Harrison Tomé from Jackson Hole High School and Kelly Ramirez, Program Assistant for Inter-Connections 21. Following the three-day meeting, the students and educators will spend 5 days as guests at various Swiss ASPnet schools.

FLASH!

IC 21 is co-sponsoring the 6th annual UN Student Rights Conference on December 4-5, 2003, in New York City and videoconferencing at sites across the US and internationally. The theme of this year's conference is Education for All, which aims to ensure that all children have access to attend and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality by 2015. For more information, visit our website at www.ic21.org.

We have a new email address! Please email us at info@ic21.org

ASPnet Celebrates 50th Anniversary in New Zealand



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tors, ASPnet principals and teachers, and UNESCO staff. They came to Auckland ready to share their ASPnet experiences and put forward ideas and thoughts for strengthening the network in the future.

In preparation for the Congress, UNESCO commissioned the Center for International Education and Research at the University of Birmingham in the UK to undertake a Global Review of ASPnet. Views were solicited from national ASPnet chapters to create a review that identified strengths and shortcomings of the program and made recommendations for future development of ASPnet. The ensuing report and a document titled, "Draft Elements for ASPnet Strategy and Plan of Action 2004-2009: Putting Quality Education into Practice," comprised the Congress' working documents.

During the week-long meeting, the Congress discussed both of the working documents and a number of ongoing and new ASPnet flagship projects, including the World Heritage Education Project, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project, the Education for Sustainable Development Project and the HIV/AIDS Prevention Project.

Before adjourning, the Congress drafted and adopted the Auckland Declaration that enunciated the following main points:

- ▶ ASPnet schools as Navigators for Peace are also agents of change;
- ▶ ASPnet schools are laboratories for developing and testing innovative approaches for quality education for all;
- ▶ All ASPnet educational institutions should adopt common programs that would include, among others, education for peace, human rights, mutual understanding, democratic citi-

zenship and cultural diversity;

- ▶ Governments, municipalities, policy makers, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders are invited to cooperate with ASPnet educational institutions and national commissions for UNESCO.

For more information about UNESCO's ASPnet project and the Congress, please visit www.unesco.org/education/asp.



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