

# Update: IFMSA March Meeting

Hammamet, Tunisia

*March 2 - 9, 2009*



The **Global Health Program of the CFMS** represents its membership at the international level biannually at week-long IFMSA General Assemblies (GAs), which take place in March and August. The meetings are comprised of presidents' sessions, evening plenary sessions, standing committee meetings, regional meetings, project presentations and fairs, theme events, as well as lots of social programs.



## **This Meeting's Delegation:**

Brianne Hudson, VP-GH  
Fareen Karachiwalla, NEO Sr.  
Ken Mendoza, NEO Jr.  
Sarah Fung, NORSH  
Dax Biondi

## **This Year's Theme:**

Conflict and Health

## **News and Developments:**

- August Meeting 2009 will be held in Ohrid, Macedonia, Aug 5 - 11
- March Meeting 2010 will be held in Bangkok, Thailand
- Elections (officials will take office in September):
  - Silva Rukavina (Croatia), *President*
  - Chantal Fenech (Malta), *Secretary General*
  - Yorgos Helmisc (Greece), *Student Liaison Officer*
- New members:
  - Iran
  - Kyrgyzstan
  - Grenada
- Lost membership:
  - 12 countries
- Training Support Division  
Director 2008/09 removed from office for unsatisfactory performance
- Policy Statements Adopted:
  - Conflict in Gaza
  - Strengthening Health Systems
  - Climate Change

## WHAT IS THE MEETING LIKE?

### *Presidents' Sessions and Evening Plenary Sessions*

At morning Presidents' Sessions, acting presidents meet to review and discuss reports, bylaw changes, policy statements, membership, elections, disciplinary measures, and other issues related to the general administration of the IFMSA. Time is allocated each afternoon for presidents to discuss decisions with their delegations, and motions are voted on during evening plenary sessions. Plenaries begin at 8:00pm and often continued until after midnight!



### *Standing Committee Meetings*

There are six standing committees: medical education, public health, human rights and peace, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, as well as professional (clinical) and research exchanges. Members of standing committees share ideas through presentations and small group work.

In addition, the standing committees on professional and research exchange administrate the IFMSA Exchange Program. At General Assemblies, they exchange forms for program participants, sign new contracts, and review their constitution and bylaws. This year, 102 CFMS members will participate in IFMSA Exchanges.



## PRE-DEPARTURE TRAINING

Dax Biondi presented to the Standing Committees on Medical Education, Professional Exchange and Research Exchange regarding work Canadian medical students are doing surrounding pre-departure training. He also collaborated with students from other countries in a pre-departure training small working group.

## CANADIAN BID FOR AUGUST 2010 MEETING IN MONTREAL

IFMSA-Quebec, which represents the FMEQ at IFMSA meetings, will make a bid this August to host the August 2010 IFMSA Meeting in Montreal. Prior to the March Meeting, we had been discussing the possibility of a joint bid, such that the CFMS would partner with IFMSA-Qc to organize this major event. In Tunisia, we got the opportunity to discuss this collaboration in greater detail. In the coming weeks, we will seek approval from CFMS membership before moving forward with a joint bid.





## UPDATE: PHARMA-FREE POLICY STATEMENT

The US delegation, AMSA-USA, introduced a policy statement to identify the IFMSA as an international body that does not support a material relationship (e.g. accepting gifts, cash, etc.) with the pharmaceutical industry. They also proposed a bylaw change which would prevent the IFMSA from accepting funds from pharmaceutical companies, although each national member organization (NMO) would still have the freedom to do so. The CFMS seconded the policy statement and the bylaw change along with seven other NMOs, and actively lobbied other countries on the issue.

In the end, however, both the bylaw change and the policy statement were rejected by the General Assembly. Some NMOs felt they had not been given enough time to review the documents, which were distributed during the meeting and not beforehand. Others felt the motions were too extreme. Some NMOs voiced support for partnership between medical

students and pharmaceutical companies, while others emphasized that due to limited access to other sources of funding, they need to rely on pharmaceutical companies to support their activities.

For CFMS delegates, this was a fascinating experience in lobbying, negotiation and diplomacy on the international front, and left us with a new respect for the challenges of reaching consensus on controversial global issues.

