

IFUW Membership Committee Brief on the Application of the Turkish Cypriot Association Of University Women

Issue

According to the IFUW Constitution, it is the prerogative of the Membership Committee to bring applications for membership in IFUW before Council for discussion and vote. The Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women have formally requested a change in their status from Associate Member to an Association with full voting rights.

Council is now being asked to consider and vote on this issue. Council members will be asked to either:

- a) choose to postpone the vote until the 88th Council Meeting in Manchester in 2007; or
- b) cast a vote on the change in status for the Turkish Cypriot Association.

Background

The Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women (KTUKD/TCAUW) was founded in 1991. It first applied for IFUW affiliation in 1992. The application was not approved because TCAUW was present only in the northern part of the island and, therefore, could not meet IFUW's requirement that national federations and associations be open to women graduates throughout their respective countries. The political situation and *de facto* division at the time made it almost impossible for people from the northern and southern sides of the island to meet or even to communicate. The Membership Committee decided to wait and to watch the evolution of the situation.

In the following years, IFUW maintained contacts with TCAUW and had limited contact with an organized group of women graduates on the Greek Cypriot side of the island. The hope was that IFUW could encourage the two associations to work together to create an umbrella federation similar to the Irish Federation, which links women graduates in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In 1996, representatives from the two groups met and held discussions thanks to the intervention of the Ambassador of the European Union to Cyprus. The outcome looked promising and IFUW thought that efforts to start an umbrella organization were moving ahead. We were disappointed a few months later when we received a letter from the Greek Cypriot Association saying that there had been a misunderstanding and that they had no intention of participating in an umbrella group. They said that their organization represented the entire island and that the Turkish Cypriots would need to join them. This was not acceptable to TCAUW. Despite the setback, TCAUW continued to maintain close links with IFUW. IFUW had no further communications from the Greek Cypriot group.

In 2000, IFUW Conference adopted the new associate member category of membership. This status is meant to be temporary; Associate Members are expected and encouraged to move toward full membership within three to six years. TCAUW applied and was accepted as an associate member. Since IFUW has the possibility of admitting more than one associate member per country, the Greek Cypriot group was informed of the TCAUW application and encouraged to apply also for affiliation. They never responded.

TCAUW's status as an Associate Member was renewed at the end of 2003 for three years. It is now nearing the end of the period and a decision on the future status of the group must be taken. TCAUW has formally applied for transition to an association with voting rights.

Article II.2 (2) of the IFUW Constitution states that “only one federation or association is admitted in each country unless a special situation is recognized by the Council”.

The Membership Committee's original hope was that there would be one affiliate representing women graduates in both the northern and southern parts of the island. This now appears impossible in the foreseeable future because of the political situation. The referendum to accept the United Nations plan for reunification of the Greek sector of the island was rejected by the Greek side. Only the Greek sector of the island has been admitted to the European Union

The Membership Committee is of the opinion that, given the circumstances, this case qualifies as a special situation and therefore recommends that the members of Council admit the Turkish Cypriot Association as an association with voting rights under Article II.2(2). As the group's current period of affiliation is up at the end of 2006, we feel this decision should not wait until the 88th Council.

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