



GALWAY, 23 August 2010

Dear members of IAGS,

I am writing to you with news of some recent developments in the Association. There is significant progress in several areas. Our website has been totally redesigned, and looks much more professional now. We are well advanced with arrangements for the next conference, which will take place in Buenos Aires in July, and which should be a very fine event. Our finances are in good health after the recovery of a substantial sum of money that was owed to the Association. Earlier this year, the Association was awarded the Republic of Armenia Prize.

The main reason for this letter, however, is to inform you of some informal discussions that have taken place with the leadership of the International Network of Genocide Scholars (INOGS), with a view to seeing if past difficulties can be resolved and this awkward schism in the community of genocide scholars brought to an end. None of us on the Executive really understands why today there are two associations rather than one, and we can only see the desirability of trying to reunite under one roof.

The idea would be to merge the two associations, with such a merger to be effected at the next conference, in Buenos Aires. Assuming our memberships agree, there would then be a joint executive composed of the leaderships of both associations for the 2011-2013 period. The election of a new, merged leadership structure would take place prior to the 2013 meeting, after which we would just have a single President, etc. If the memberships of the two associations greet this development positively in the coming months, we will organize a face-to-face meeting of the two executive bodies before the end of the year in order to finalize the details.

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The IAGS bylaws would be the basis of the bylaws of the merged association. The colleagues in INOGS have only one significant concern that we should address. They would like the adoption of resolutions to be subject to stricter terms and conditions. Should the negotiations proceed, we would ask for greater specifics on what they seek here.

Any merger involves give and take on both sides. One possible way to make it clear that this is indeed a merger, based upon mutual respect, is to adopt a new name. It has been said that we are better to focus on the discipline, 'genocide studies', than the individual participants, 'genocide scholars', like most other professional academic bodies. The proposal is to create the International Genocide Studies Association (IGSA). Organisations frequently make adjustments to their names, and there would be no doubt that a new name would imply the continuation of the former. In that way, we would ensure that the new name reflects the achievements of IAGS.

At present, each association has its own journal. For the foreseeable future, the two journals should continue to operate. The future leadership of the merged association may choose to address the matter, should this be viewed as a situation where changes are required. But there is no urgency here at all, and there is general agreement that the status quo should be maintained.

Your Executive believes that the community of genocide scholars has everything to gain from such a process. We have had very positive contacts with the colleagues in the INOGS, with whom we share a common professional commitment. That there may be slight differences in outlook as to the role and functions of a professional association seems normal enough. Surely, even within our own membership there must be diverse views on various matters too. We should be able to resolve any issues to the extent that our overriding concern and commitment is to a single organization that brings us all together for regular meetings and other activities.

We therefore seek your reactions to these developments. The Executive Committee has already consulted the Advisory Board. I would say that the general reaction was very positive to the idea of the merger, although there was one rather negative response. Concerns have been expressed about the status of the journal, but as I have explained above, I think that agreement on the maintenance of the status quo should reassure everyone. It has also been pointed out that the Association has taken some important policy positions in the past, and concern was expressed about the integrity of these. In my view, things we have done in the past cannot be undone.

What we do in the future will be the decision of the membership. So I do not think there can be serious cause for unease here.

I am therefore asking for members of the Association to respond with their comments and suggestions. Once this consultation has taken place, I will prepare a report for the membership, and make recommendations on how we should proceed. Would you be kind enough to provide me with your feedback by 30 September?

With all best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.A. Schabas', written in a cursive style.

William A. Schabas OC MRIA  
President, International Association of Genocide Scholars