



## The WFSW Newsletter 2(2010-1)

### The WFSW in the process of the « Sciences and Democracy » world forum

A new acronym has appeared on the « alter-globalist » scene : SDWF ( *The Science and Democracy World Forum* ). Behind these four letters we can witness the creation of a worldwide network of organizations concerned by the question of the social role of science. To be sure, this network is at a fledgling stage. But it is a promising idea which would not have appeared unless the World Social forums, as well as the continental, national, and local forums, had become so important. When these great events took place, science and scientists were called upon, but on the basis of fragmented approaches (through Higher Education or technical and military applications), drowned in a multitude of seminars and workshops of all sorts. There was one exception : with our affiliated French trade unions (SNESUP, SNCS and UGICT-CGT), with the INES network, our Federation organized a plenary meeting devoted to science and research, attended by nearly 200 people, at the European Social Forum in Paris in 2003. From this forum an ambition clearly arose : a thoroughgoing dialogue between scientists and citizens, a desire to have an impact by working together on the research policy of the European Union. The situation, however, was not ripe enough to last and develop. At the following European forums, science remained practically confidential. It was in August 2007, at the initiative of activists of French NGOs (Fondation Sciences citoyennes, Vecam, Petits débrouillards), that the idea of a world science forum in association with the World Social Forum (WSF) was launched : a draft appeal for an SDWF in Belém (Brazil) in January 2009 was submitted for discussion for several months and was adopted by consensus at the end of 2007<sup>(1)</sup>. A discussion list and an organization group were set up, and two major factors helped this project to succeed : on the one hand, its truly international dimension due to the active participation of NGOs from Brazil, Canada and India in particular (encouraged by linkage with the WSF), and on the other hand permanent human investment in the coordination and organization. The meeting in Belem was indeed a quantitative and qualitative success due to the number of participants and the quality of the presentations, attentiveness, and dialogue. For this initial stage it had been agreed not to issuing a final statement - we would have opposed it. The idea was for NGOs, associations and trade unions to listen to one another and to pursue an open and inclusive process. Jean-Paul Lainé and André Jaeglé represented the WFSW, and André Jaeglé's<sup>(2)</sup> presentation focused on

the need to define the categories, concepts, and words that we use, without which we could not make progress in our analyses and proposals. The process is moving forward : in October in Montréal, on the occasion of the Quebec Social Forum, the International Initiative Council (IIC) of the SDWF was created to prepare the second stage : a world forum of sciences and democracy associated with the World Social Forum in Dakar in January 2011. Concretely, a worldwide network bringing together scientists who seek to be citizens and citizens who question the social role of science, a sort of network of networks, is perhaps gradually being built. The challenge is an important one for scientists : to refuse to adapt to the authoritarian and utilitarian neo-liberal trend, to refuse to withdraw into one's own scientific community, and to dialogue truly with activists who raise questions about knowledge, sciences and technologies, their management and applications, their impact on human societies, on humankind and its environment. The WFSW, with its member structures (mainly trade unions), is in a position to play a decisive, pivotal role in this dialogue. In return, the WFSW can provide to its trade unions and research personnel organizations the societal and international dimension that complements and supports the struggle for their professional interests at the national level.

**Jean-Paul Lainé**  
President

<sup>(1)</sup> <http://fm-sciences.org/appeal/index.php?a=appel>

<sup>(2)</sup> [http://fms-wfsw.org/article.php3?id\\_article=89](http://fms-wfsw.org/article.php3?id_article=89)

#### THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

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## Ethics and climate change

Twice a year, the executive council of UNESCO (58 countries out of 191 member states) meets to study the Organisation agenda, examine budget estimates and ensure the efficient and rational execution of the program by the general director.

A special committee of the Executive Council is in charge of the issue concerning the role of NGO and their relationship with UNESCO.

Within this framework, a Forum was held on 10 september on the theme : “ *the action of UNESCO regarding the climate change: participation of NGOs and civic involvement* ”.

André Jaeglé, emeritus president of the WFSW, was invited to participate in a Round Table of the Forum entitled “ *Ethics and climate change* ”.<sup>(1)</sup>

*“ I think I am voicing a general feeling in the world of NGO, he said, concerning a right to pollute, a right in the juridical sense if the word ; a right that can be bought and sold is, in itself, the very opposite of ethics. What is ethical is the recognition of the duty (at the individual level as well as at society level) to reduce pollution, and particularly the emission of greenhouse gases. Concerning governments, what is ethical is the translation of this moral duty into a law by means of compelling international agreements. Unless this is done, everything else being seen as idle talk allowing to evade significant decisions. We are at a point of exacerbation when any enterprise is threatened to be absorbed and disappear -and jobs with it- if it is not the enterprise which swallows others. It is no longer mere competitiveness. If one does not want to be eaten, one must eat the other. Therefore, of course, every enterprise demands sacrifices from its employees. Where is morality, where are ethics in a world where predators make the law ? And, within this context, how can we imagine that it is not the rule of everyman for himself, the short term view which risks winning. How can we imagine that growth can be mastered if a stop is not put to a situation where salvation can only come out of a wild race for growth ? ”*

<sup>(1)</sup> André Jaeglé was invited at this Round table as the representative of the mixed commission “ *Sciences and ethics* ” (45 NGO) which he presides.

## Our UNESCO activity Main contributions 2009-11

### 4 July 2009

Preparation for the World Conference on Higher Education by the Liaison Committee of NGOs in official relation : participation in the drafting of a declaration.

### 6-8 July

Higher Education World Conference in UNESCO headquarters, Paris.

### 5-23 October

General Conference of UNESCO.

### 30 November-2 December

International Conference of NGOs in official relation with UNESCO. Theme : “ *What ethics for a world in crisis ? Answers of NGOs* ”.

The WFSW was in charge of the workshop on the theme : “ *Are decisions makers definitively deaf to scientists' warnings* ”.

### 30 March- 15 April 2010

184<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Council of UNESCO (EC).

### 1-2 April

Meeting of the NGO committee of the EC. It is a common meeting of representatives of some governments and NGOs.

## Agenda of the Joint Commission NGO-UNESCO “ *Sciences and Ethics* ”

(moderated by the WFSW) for the period 2010-2011

- ▶ Problems of terminology in debates in Sciences and Ethics.
- ▶ The knowledge of researchers in the field of Health, its expression on Internet and its interpretation by the public (i.e. the problem of self-medication).
- ▶ The use of words and their misuse.
- ▶ Economic obstacles to a world agreement on greenhouse gases.
- ▶ Consequences of human activity on climate change (global warming).
- ▶ Questioning of various human and social sciences to improve the understanding of their contribution to bioethics debates.

## New field of social investigation : the human dimension of management of complex high technology

After the “ *crash* ” of the A330 of Air France, Jean Gay, an engineer in industrial processes and member of the UGICT-CGT<sup>(1)</sup> as senior executive, shares with us his experience, his insight regarding research on “ *men-machines* ” interfaces in industrial processes where the safety of workers and populations is involved (transport, industrial processes, high tech, nuclear...)<sup>(2)</sup>. This field of social investigation highlights the quality of social relations at work, which constitute the central factor to ensure the efficiency and safety of technical systems as well as industrial premises. Comparisons can be made with recurrent suicides in large enterprises (for instance, France-Telecom in France). These companies, under the pretext of competitiveness, individualize activities at the expense of collective work and “ *collective intelligence* ” which is where critical evaluation would make sense. Experience and skills are no longer duly recognized ; in certain cases the competence is denied since it contradicts the human resource management (HRM). Managers of human resources have often been trained in private and politically biased agencies which have instilled the views and practices used in the restructuring, reengineering operations. The decision making process in HRM also turns against its white-colour staff who is barred from challenging the choices made at the next level ; they become both accomplices and victims of the disastrous policy of the company in respect of its workers and this further results in skill wastage.

[http://www.fmts-wfsw.org/article.php?id\\_article=112](http://www.fmts-wfsw.org/article.php?id_article=112)

<sup>(1)</sup> UGICT-CGT : General Union of Engineers and Senior Technicians of the CGT, France.

<sup>(2)</sup> John GAY : Interface “ *Man Machine* ”, reliability and management, in June 2009.

### To contact the Federation

▶ President Jean-Paul LAINÉ ▶ Vice-President of Executive Council Frederico CARVALHO ▶ Secretary General Pascal JANOTS  
FMTS - WFSW - Case 408 - MONTREUIL Cedex France - tél. : (33) 1 48 18 81 25 - Fax : (33) 1 48 51 64 57  
E-Mail : [fmts@fmts-wfsw.org](mailto:fmts@fmts-wfsw.org) - Internet : [www.fmts-wfsw.org](http://www.fmts-wfsw.org)