

# THE CIAP BULLETIN

# INTERPRETASIA

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## EDITORIAL

**Y**et again Asia-Pacific has proved that it can host important large meetings and provide its legendary hospitality combined with professionalism.

CIAP has done its share in contributing to Asia's image. First, it was selected to coordinate all the language services for the XIII Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement which was held in Malaysia from 20-25 February. The summit was followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum, in three cities in Japan. For this meeting, CIAP coordinated the foreign language interpreters' services.

2003 was the year of the SARS scare which led to a number of meetings being cancelled or postponed. We are confident that the conference industry in Asia-Pacific will bounce back with its usual resilience. Interpretation at international meetings enhances communication between participants, as highlighted in the testimonial from a habitual user of interpretation.

This issue also discusses AIC's contribution to Asia-Pacific. The International Association of Conference Interpreters is celebrating 50 years of existence and its main goal has always been to further quality interpretation at international meetings. All CIAP associates are members of AIC.

*The Editors*

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## ORGANISING INTERPRETATION FOR LARGE CONFERENCES

Consultant interpreters face a particular challenge when called upon to provide several teams of interpreters for a large conference. CIAP was selected twice this year for such large events, first for the XIII Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and then for the Third World Water Forum.

Putting together a team of interpreters for any meeting can be tricky; it involves finding the right interpreters with the requisite language combination for the particular meeting while ensuring that older and more experienced interpreters share a booth with younger ones. Finding the interpreters who fit these criteria as well as the additional requirements of the NAM summit and the World Water Forum involved many weeks of work, communicating by email and phone with numerous interpreters, responding to many questions, searching for flight connections, negotiating airfares and fees for work. On average, three interpreters were contacted for each interpreter recruited. And even then, one always needs to provide for back-up arrangements in case a recruited interpreter drops out because of a last-minute emergency.

### XIII NAM Summit

For the XIII NAM Summit, which was held from February 20 to 25 in Kuala Lumpur, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia chose



CIAP to provide all language services. This meant providing a total of 46 translators and interpreters for English, French, Spanish and Arabic. They were recruited from Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and USA. All the interpreters were members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIC) and all of them were



CIAP associates meet with Mr. Makoto Jingu, Coordinator for Language Services, at the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto

required to have at least ten years' experience in large international conferences and, particularly, at previous NAM conferences.

A summit is a gathering of heads of state or government and requires extra careful preparation, particularly in view of the protocol that must be adhered to.

Summits are usually preceded by meetings of ministers and senior government officials who, in a sense, do the footwork for the heads of state or government. NAM conferences traditionally cover a very wide agenda and meetings often go on late into the night, since the senior officials and ministers must reach agreement on all the points of the agenda before the heads of state or government arrive for their two-day summit. The timetable of meetings is therefore unpredictable.

The chief interpreter and the assistant coordinator must have the ability to provide teams of interpreters for a variety of breakout sessions at very short notice. Often, a request will come in: "We need English, Spanish and Arabic in Room A in 30 minutes" and immediately interpreters must be selected from the pool of interpreters on standby or from other meeting rooms. It is also essential to ensure a balanced workload for the interpreters to avoid ending up with some having worked many hours while others have worked far less.

CIAP handled all the contacts with the Malaysian Government, the host, as well as with the interpreters and translators, arranging their travel to and from Malaysia, their hotel accommodation, their contracts, their payments. In addition, there were post-conference translations of many pages of statements and declarations to organise, review and deliver on time.

*"A summit is a gathering of heads of state or government and requires extra careful preparation, particularly in view of the protocol that must be adhered to."*

### *The Third World Water Forum*

The 24,000 participants who gathered in Kyoto, Osaka and Shiga, Japan, made the Third World Water Forum an even larger event than the NAM Summit, although not all the meetings had simultaneous interpretation.

A team of 50 interpreters was recruited from all over the world, to cover simultaneous interpretation into English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian. In addition, there were about 150 Japanese interpreters hired by the Secretariat to provide simultaneous interpretation in Japanese and English at most of the meetings.



Lake Takaragaike at the Kyoto International Conference Hall (KIC), the venue for the Third World Water Forum

Here, the biggest challenge was coordination, since most of the meetings were organised by different agencies or organisations. The Secretariat of the conference had a hard time ascertaining in a timely manner which meetings needed interpretation and into which languages. To know what languages were needed meant finding out who the participants would be.

The CIAP coordinator needed to provide bilingual booths for meetings using only French and English,

Spanish and English or only Japanese and English at very short notice.

In large conferences where many organisations hold their own sessions, it is not easy for the Secretariat to have a clear overview of all that's going on and know well in advance what interpretation services will be needed where and at what time. Meeting schedules often change at the last moment to accommodate speakers or chairpersons who may be busy at other gatherings at the same conference. It is best to have clear, agreed guidelines known to all involved, well before the conference starts, on how the simultaneous interpreter pool operates and which meetings can qualify to receive simultaneous interpretation.

The many late requests for interpreters or last-minute changes kept the coordinator and assistant coordinator busy updating interpretation schedules

and making sure that the interpreters assigned knew when and where they were required. The interpreters' lounge was of crucial importance, being the place where interpreters could always find the latest update of assignments, as well as the coordinator and assistant coordinator, when they were not running around to meeting rooms to check or in meeting with the Secretariat.

This time too, CIAP did all the searching, followed by negotiating with the interpreters, hiring their services,

arranging airfares and hotel accommodation, paying out daily subsistence allowances and fees as well as reimbursing airfares after the conference. This, of course, involves having the necessary secretarial and accounting facilities.

CIAP is incorporated in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Australia and can provide all these services, in addition to written translation of conference documents. □

*Jean-Pierre Allain*

## INTERPRETERS

I love interpreters. If I could, I would carry one in my suitcase whenever I set out for destinations unknown. Effective communication between cultures is difficult enough when everyone is speaking the same language; it is impossible, at a professional level at least, when there is a language barrier. Interpreters are like a portable life-raft that enables the linguistically challenged to survive the perilous waters of international relations.

But not all interpreters are alike. I have attended many conferences where the quality of interpretation was such that it increased rather than reduced the confusion between delegates. When an interpreter doesn't understand the subject matter, or has insufficient training, experience or skill, the effect is to marginalise those people who do not speak the dominant language.

Recently I was involved in the organisation of a workshop in Thailand that brought together people from 25 countries, including from French-speaking Africa and Spanish-speaking Latin America. We knew that many of the participants from those countries spoke some English, and we debated whether or not we needed interpretation. In the end we decided that while many attendees may understand English and may even be able to speak it, they would be much more confident and comfortable speaking their own languages. On that basis we decided to engage the services of Conference Interpreters Asia-Pacific (CIAP), who provided simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish throughout the four days of the conference.

We were glad they did. The service was exceptional. Not only did they arrange the equipment (and assist in negotiating the price), they performed their interpretation services over long hours, winning universal praise from delegates. Most importantly, I believe that their presence, and



Alastair Sarre



Will they fit into a suitcase?

the quality of their service, increased the participation of the French and Spanish-speaking delegates and gave them a much greater influence on and ownership of the workshop outcomes.

It's true that the best interpreters cost more. Are they worth it? In the short term it is perhaps hard to quantify the benefits of high-quality interpretation over a mediocre service, but I believe they are many. Even discussions conducted by people sharing the same

mother tongue are prone to misunderstanding and confusion. The risk of error in interpretation between languages amplifies such problems and the ability of the interpreter may well influence outcomes. □

*Alastair Sarre*  
Editor and Communications Manager  
Intl. Tropical Timber Organization

## AIIC IN ASIA-PACIFIC ASIA-PACIFIC IN AIIC

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) has been expanding its reach in recent years, and Asia-Pacific has been an integral part of that growth. Though still only mid-sized with 80 members in total, Asia-Pacific has been playing a very active role in AIIC and now boasts 11 of the 87 countries in which AIIC has members. Moreover, the number of members with Asian languages is on the increase, with an upsurge of members in China, the recent admission of our first member with Malay and Indonesian, and the

imminent entry of the first AIIC members with Thai. More than ever before, AIIC reflects the reality of Asia-Pacific.

This evolution is not mere coincidence. AIIC was born exactly 50 years ago in Paris with the purpose of representing conference interpreters worldwide and promoting the highest levels of professionalism in what was then a nascent field.

From those initial moments until now, AIIC has stressed a code of ethics built on the pillars of professional secrecy, collegiality and strict standards. Though these principles would be applied

*"AIIC has stressed a code of ethics built on the pillars of professional secrecy, collegiality and strict standards."*



to the profession of conference interpretation as it came of age in post-war Europe, they were universal values that would endure and travel well. Today's vibrant conference industry from China to Australia and from India to Japan recognizes the importance of the quality and integrity that is inherent in this approach. AIIC is a stamp of reliability and professionalism that interpreters esteem and clients appreciate.

*"AIIC has set up a world-wide network of contact points to provide would-be and novice interpreters with information on training and professional opportunities."*

AIIC itself has branched out from its European origins (its headquarters are in Geneva) as many of its current activities show. The association has set up a world-wide network of contact points (known as VEGA) to provide would-be and novice interpreters with information on training and professional opportunities.

A "multi-lingualism" project is underway to promote better understanding of and greater contact with parts of the world that have been under-represented in AIIC in the past. And like so many other groups, AIIC maintains a website (*www.aiic.net*) with information on all aspects of conference interpreting.

### *Asia-Pacific contributes*

From 2000 to the beginning of the current year, AIIC had its first President from the Asia-Pacific Region, **Jean-Pierre Allain**. His election was just recognition of the contribution he had already made to the association through his work on various groups and on the governing Council. His three-year term as President culminated with the January 2003 Assembly, which approved a high-profile project on the Definition and Recognition of the Profession of Conference Interpretation to be carried out with UNESCO.

Other major activities approved include the formulation of a code of business ethics for consultant interpreters and a major expansion and re-design of the website and related IT services offered to members. This period was also

noteworthy for the large number of new members – more than 450 – that joined the association.

**Jean-Pierre Allain** (Bangkok) continues to contribute to AIIC through his work with the Technical Network and the Consultant Interpreters Working Group.

Other members from Asia-Pacific countries are also active in AIIC. **Luigi**

**Luccarelli** (Bangkok) was Council member for the 2000-2002 period and continues to serve as Editor-in-Chief of the association's on-line magazine *Communicate!* He also participates in the VEGA network and is AIIC's representative to the regional UN body, ESCAP.

In January 2003, CIAP associate **Manuel Pastor** (Sydney) took over as Asia-Pacific's Council Member. Although this means that the official representative now lives all the way "down under," it also means that participation in AIIC reaches into every corner of our sprawling, diverse region.

He will also be working with the multi-lingualism project.

AIIC Regional Secretary **Jungwha Choi** (Seoul) is currently participating in the VEGA network. **Andrew Dawrant** (Beijing) is a corresponding member of the Training Committee and part of the editorial team of *Communicate!*, while **Masaomi Kondo** (Tokyo) sits on the webzine's Advisory Board.

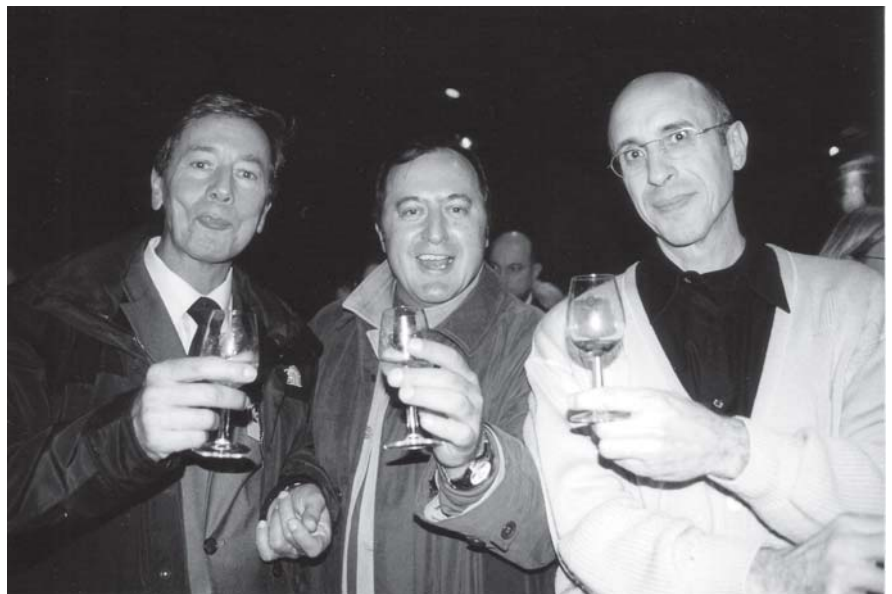
Asia-Pacific's presence in AIIC has meant much more than greater input for the region in association business. Through volunteer efforts, Asian languages are being introduced into AIIC affairs with a number of articles and documents being translated into Korean and Chinese. In fact, members throughout the region

contribute to the promotion of good training practices, an awareness of ethics and sound business practices, and the formation of a wide-ranging network of professionals to serve the cause of good communication among people. In such a large region,

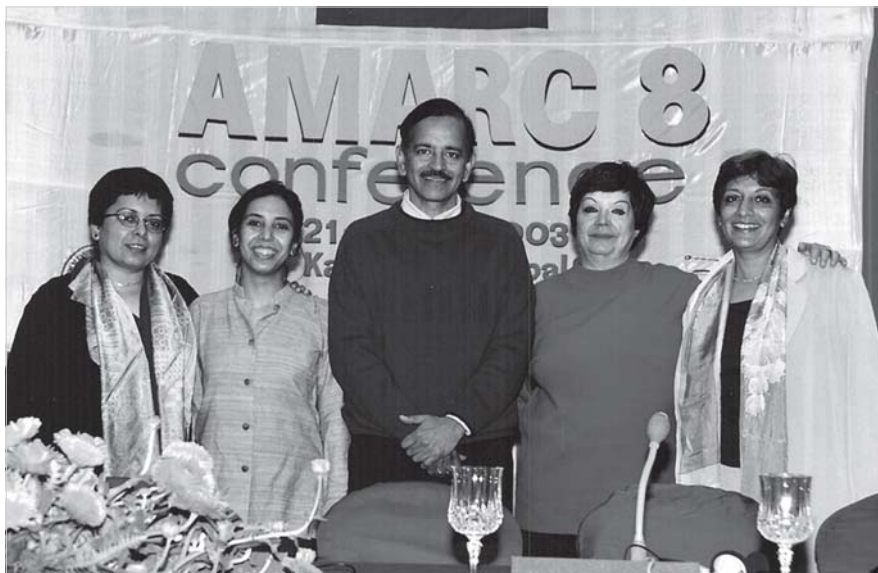
*"In such a large region as the Asia-Pacific, we recognize the importance of working together across borders."*

we recognize the importance of working together across borders. Some members set up CIAP in 1990 to provide consultancy services to clients. All CIAP associates are members of AIIC. □

**Luigi Luccarelli**



*From left to right: Jean Pierre Allain (outgoing President), Manuel Pastor (incoming Council member) and Luigi Luccarelli (outgoing Council member) at the AIIC Assembly in Porto, Portugal, in Jan 2003*



Interpreters at an international conference in Kathmandu, Nepal

## INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

### 2003

|                |     |   |
|----------------|-----|---|
| Chiangmai      | Jun | Intl. Conference on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – ESCR-Net           |
| Dhaka          | May | LDC Trade Ministers Meeting   |
| Phnom Penh     | Mar | NOVIB Conference on The Right to be Heard                                     |
| Wellington     | Mar | Intl. Meeting on the Role of Planted Forests in Sustainable Forest Management |
| Kyoto          | Mar | Third World Water Forum   |
| K. Lumpur      | Feb | XIII Non-Aligned Movement Summit  |
| Kathmandu      | Feb | AMARC 8 – Association Mondiale des Radios Communautaires                      |
| U. Ratchathani | Feb | ITTO-IUCN Intl. Seminar on Transboundary Natl. Parks                          |

### 2002

|           |     |   |
|-----------|-----|---|
| Hong Kong | Nov | World Congress of Accountants   |
| Shanghai  | Nov | UITP Public Transport Technical Conference                                  |
| Bangkok   | Oct | 15th World LPG Forum  |
| K. Lumpur | Oct | AIT/FIA Assembly (Association Internationale du Tourisme)                   |
| Bangkok   | Sep | ECPAT Intl. Assembly (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking)               |
| Yokohama  | Aug | XII World Psychiatry Congress (WPA)   |
| Bangkok   | Jul | Herbalife - Asian Extravaganza 2002   |
| Seoul     | Jun | OECD Wideband Conference  |
| Seoul     | May | Metropolis 2002: 7th World Congress   |
| Shanghai  | May | ADB - Asian Development Bank Institute seminar                              |
| Beijing   | May | WSBI - World Savings Bank Institute: 9th G. Assembly & Postal Savings Forum |
| Hong Kong | May | IPBA - Inter-Pacific Bar Association: 12th Annual Meeting and Conference    |

**Visit our website! [www.ciap.net](http://www.ciap.net)**

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## WHAT IS AIIC?

**F**ounded in 1953, AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters) is the only worldwide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has over 2,600 members in 80 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, the European Union and many business organisations as the only representative of professional interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpretation.

AIIC sets professional standards and working conditions accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical and Health Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpreting and ISO 4043 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.

ASSOCIATION  
INTERNATIONALE DES  
INTERPRETES DE CONFERENCE

**aiic**

INTERNATIONAL  
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CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

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## WHAT IS CIAP?

**C**onference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1990, CIAP provides teams of conference interpreters for simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at meetings of all sizes.

Its members advise conference organisers on language requirements, choice of conference venues, technical equipment, seating arrangements and so on, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference.

CIAP associates can provide simultaneous interpretation teams for English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and other languages.



**CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC**

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*There are CIAP Associates in several cities in Asia-Pacific.  
For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please see the  
list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.  
Website: [www.ciap.net](http://www.ciap.net)*