

John R Stirling, whose last edition this is. I have known John for more years than I care to remember, first because of our common interest in REHIS but more recently (from 1998 until now) because of his work as Editor of “EH&I”. John has brought to the post of Editor an enthusiasm and a dedication that have ensured that the quality of the magazine or of its contents has never been compromised.

Being the Editor of such a journal can be quite difficult, particularly when one is approaching the publication deadline and one doesn't have enough to fill the requisite space. It is a testament to John's performance as Editor that on very few occasions during his tenure did he fail to fill the magazine with topical and interesting articles and news. I think that one of the great strengths of “EH&I”, apart from its content, is John's use of photographs, particularly those that have adorned the front page – sometimes awe-inspiring, sometimes intensely personal but never dull.

During all his time as Editor, John has used me as a sounding-board and as a proof-reader and I am proud to have been involved with him in achieving for the magazine the position it now holds. John has always given unwaveringly of his support to me during my many years working for IFEH and my gratitude is due to him for all the assistance he has rendered.

Now, as I complete this article, I note that the view I referred to at the start is somewhat obscured by drizzle and low cloud but I know that it is still there and I still count myself as blessed in so many ways. So, I think again, how lucky I have been to serve the World environmental health community and, although I will now be out of the mainstream, I will watch from afar the progress of IFEH. I wish earnestly that the Federation continues to grow and to make a difference to the health & environment of the global village.

To all the many friends that I have made over the last 22 years, I say “thanks for the memories”!

*Michael Halls
September 2008*

Deadline for submission of articles for the next issue is 1st January 2009

**The Hon. Editor, Hadrian Bonello,
can be contacted at:**

**16 Lampara Street
Bahar ic-Caghaq
MALTA**

Email: hadrian.bonello@gov.mt

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT: A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

By Fred O'Brien



Honorary Vice President IFEH

Fred O'Brien, Chairman, IFEH, delivers paper: *Networking, Technology Centres and Environmental Health: Towards a Science of the Heart* at the European Conference on Cooperation in Environmental Technology, Cologne, Germany 1991

Introduction

Displacement, in the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, is “arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face”. In 2007, the total number of conflict-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide increased by 3.7 million from the previous year to a staggering total of 26 million, the highest number ever recorded. These people were seeking shelter after being forced from their homes. Some 9.3 million live in 10 countries whose governments are indifferent or hostile to their protection needs. The fact that a great many of them have been denied physical security and integrity, the basic necessities of life, economic, social and cultural needs and live under environmental conditions inimical to human health, cries out for redress.

The findings outlined above are to be found in the report: *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2007*, released in April 2008 by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council. The full report (98 pages) can be accessed at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

A brief overview of the global findings in the report and of the IDP numbers in the European Region has been compiled for this article in the following two tables. Note that numbers for Georgia, the Russian Republic and Turkey have been interpolated. Figures for the other constituent regions of the IFEH body

can readily be compiled from the iDMC document.

Denial of Environmental Health Conditions Supportive of Life is a Crime against Humanity

Recent developments in the UN family of organisations has opened the door for NGOs to become committed champions and willing collaborators with UN agencies and national Governments in redressing wrongs that imperil peoples' safety. The International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) is strategically placed to marshal its resources and exert an important responsibility-to-protect influence in areas of the world where environmental health rights are trampled upon. It is important to note that a 'responsibility to protect' approach has been enshrined in the objectives and policies of the International Federation of Environmental Health from its earliest days (cf. Policy 1/ Alma-Ata IV; and Policy 8, bullet 2). IFEH Policy Statements can be accessed at www.ifeh.org - go to Activities & Projects.

In September 2005, Heads of State and Governments from 170 countries at the UN World Summit gave unanimous approval for the adoption of "A Responsibility to Protect" doctrine which required UN intervention for crimes against humanity. Environmental health matters figured prominently in the discussions. At the world summit all states acknowledged not only their obligation to protect their own people, but more crucially, that the international community has a duty to step in on behalf of civilians at risk of crimes against humanity, whenever a government is either directly responsible for these crimes or incapable of stopping them.

In March, 2006, the UN General Assembly (GA) established the new Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the GA to replace the Commission on Human Rights. A procedure to lodge complaints has been agreed and the submission of reports on environmental health circumstances affecting displacement victims, and falling within the complaints procedure criteria may be submitted to:
*Human Rights Council and Treaties Division
Complaint Procedure
OHCHR-UNOG
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland*

The holding of persons accountable for environmental health crimes against humanity under international law is governed by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Role of the IFEH

The International Federation of Environmental Health is a non-governmental organization of national organizations representing some 50,000

environmental health professionals in 37 member countries world-wide. Since its incorporation in 1986 it has actively promoted care for the environment in the interest of human health through a variety of means, including, among other things, the holding of ten world congresses and publication of the proceedings; the adoption, publication and dissemination of global position papers, the establishment of a comprehensive webpage - <http://www.ifeh.org> , and the wide circulation of its publication *Environment and Health International*.

The Federation, in addition, is active in the field through its members, and benefits from the accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise of Environmental Health Professionals working around the world, including in areas of great deprivation and in disaster struck communities. Through *Environmental Health in Disasters & Emergencies* (EHIDE) it is working to make available environmental health personnel to international aid agencies and to enhance environmental health disaster preparedness worldwide.

The Federation promotes a holistic approach to environmental sustainability and encourages inter-sectoral collaboration, multidisciplinary and community-participative activities, and the utilization of meaningful sustainability indicators to inform good environmental health management practices at local, regional and international levels.

IFEH has an important responsibility and significant opportunity to promote improved environmental health services to internally displaced persons worldwide. Through its regional groups (Africa, The Americas, Europe (EFEH), Asia & Pacific, and the Middle East) it can more effectively address this most significant humanitarian challenge on both a regional and global front.

Reach for the Skies

In conclusion I would like to quote Louise Arbour, recently replaced UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and a champion of social justice:

Far from being a leap into wishful thinking, the responsibility to protect norm is a practical response to today's human security challenges. Instead of ritually claiming the status of impotent bystanders in the face of sovereign power's abuse or force majeure, all States should clearly assess and act upon the scope of the responsibility that they willingly accepted as their own. Louise Arbour (23 November 2007)

**Internal Displacement
Global Overview of Trends and
Developments in 2007**

Conflict-related IDPs Dec 2007	26 million
Countries affected	At least 52
Most affected continent	Africa - 12.7 million in 19 countries
Countries where most IDPs were exposed to serious threats to security and integrity	10 countries
Countries where most IDPs faced obstacles to access the basic necessities of life	10 countries
Countries with govts or occupation forces involved in deliberately displacing people	21 countries
IDPs without any significant humanitarian assistance from their governments	11.3 in at least 13 countries
IDPs faced with governments indifferent or hostile to their protection needs	9.3 million in at least 10 countries

Source: Norwegian Refugee Council Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

Internal Displacement in Europe in 2007

Conflict Related IDPs in Europe	Total: 2,691,390
Armenia	11,000
Azerbaijan	690,000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	132,000
Croatia	3,200
Cyprus	210,000
Georgia ¹	233,000
Macedonia	790
Russian Federation ²	89,000
Serbia	247,000
Turkey ³	1,075,000

¹ 222,000-247,000 page 91 From Norwegian Refugee Council IDMC 2008 Report:

² 19,000-159,000 page 93 Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends & Development 2007

³ 950,000-1,200,000 page 94

10TH WORLD CONGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

Jim Smith, DrPH, LFEHA National President, Environmental Health, Australia

The Federation’s 10th World Congress on Environmental Health was conducted in Brisbane, Australia, from 11th-16th May this year. The Congress also marked the Australian Institute of Environmental Health’s 34th National Conference and the 68th Queensland Branch Conference.

The Congress was particularly significant for Australia in that 20 years ago the Inaugural World Congress was held in Sydney and it was fitting that Mr. Ron Spratt, Mr. Vic Andrich and Dr Peter Tyler, three veterans who were instrumental in the development of both the Australian Institute of Environmental Health and the Federation was present at the Opening Ceremony.

The Congress was six years in the making and the broad theme of “*Environmental Health, a Sustainable Future - 20 years on...*” was adopted for the Congress

and this was supported by the following key sub-themes:

- Climate Change and Environmental Health;
- Urbanisation and Governance for Sustainable Development;
- Environmental Health Crisis Management and Risk Communication; and
- Capacity Building: Smart technology and tools.

The diligent planning undertaken by the Organising Committee, chaired by Dr Peter Davey, was reflected in the lead up to and as part of Day 1 of the Congress, when the Queensland Government and the City of Brisbane hosted a State and Civic Reception, respectively. Both receptions were full house affairs. The results of the planning for the Congress were further reflected in the opening activities commencing with the flag bearing ceremony and serenading by the MacGregor Primary School Senior Choir. On seeing the pivotal participation of the school children, Aunty Velda Coolwell, who was representing the Brisbane Council of Aboriginal Elders, remarked that this is what environmental health is all about, the children and the future generations.