



FICAC NEWS



April 2012

US Congressman Dan Burton praises the international work of the World Federation of Consuls



US Congressman Dan Burton - seen delivering the keynote address at the FICAC European Regional Conference held recently at the Château Sainte-Anne in Brussels, Belgium.

US Congressman Dan Burton, in his address, said:

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for the invitation to speak to you today. It is an honor to have this opportunity to share my experience as a Senior Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the United States House of Representatives with this distinguished gathering of consuls—the men and women who stand on the frontlines of international relations. In my thirty years in the United States Congress, I have been privileged to see the affects of the work that you do firsthand.



Congressman Dan Burton with FICAC members and Directors. From left: Hon. Marko Smole, Hon. Aykut Eken, Hon. Dr. Mirza Ihktiar Baig, Hon. Thomas Amaral, Hon. Robert Blum, Hon. Amarkai Amarteifio, Congressman Dan Burton, Hon. K. L. Ganju, The Honourable Arnold Foote, Hon. Costas Lefkaritis and Hon. Nikos Margaropoulos.

I have served on all five of the Foreign Affairs Committee's regional subcommittees and as a result have traveled widely. I would like to speak to you today about the importance of the relationship between the United States and Europe. The historical significance of this relationship is beyond question. The major conflicts of the twentieth century ended the way they did because the United States and Europe found ways to come together, to stand shoulder to shoulder to solve the challenge at hand. A century that began with conflict within Europe ended with the United States and the nations of Western Europe

working hand in hand, joined by allies from around the globe, to defeat a threat that had already swallowed up the Eastern half of the continent. A decade into the next century and two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the nations of Eastern Europe are now, for the most part, free and have made great strides to join the transatlantic community. However, the transatlantic community faces major new challenges from inside and out. Decades of excessive spending on both sides of the Atlantic have led to large deficits, high unemployment, and a negative business climate. These forces

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threaten to stall the powerful economy which serves as the heart of the transatlantic community. At the same time our common security is threatened by a rising tide of extremist violence at a time when NATO, the institution founded to defend the transatlantic community, faces questions about its future. These are the issues that have brought me to Brussels and are the issues that I would like to speak with you about today.

Economic Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the current economic problems in the U.S. and Europe, the transatlantic economy remains the largest, wealthiest and most integrated market on earth. Restarting this economic engine will drive economic growth and create jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. This is the message that I constantly hear from businesses, think tanks and diplomats in Washington. I could not agree more.

That said, we must start by putting our respective houses in order. Governments on both sides of the Atlantic have spent beyond their means. Despite its proponents' predictions, this deficit spending has not produced a vibrant

economy but has instead led to high unemployment and economic stagnation. As I speak, many in Europe are experiencing the painful consequences of these flawed economic policies. We see this in Greece as the Greek people are forced to accept painful cuts in wages and pensions while investors are forced to accept "voluntary" write-downs on the value of their investments. The United States cannot bailout Europe; instead, the United States must see the Greek experience as a clear warning and follow the lead of our European allies by cutting our own spending to sustainable levels.

At the same time we must look for ways to drive growth across the transatlantic economy. In the coming weeks my Subcommittee will hold a hearing that will seek to identify economic opportunities for U.S. companies in Europe and Eurasia. I hope that my colleagues in European parliaments are looking for similar opportunities in the United States.

One topic that I am eager to discuss is how economic opportunities inside the E.U. and the U.S. can be enhanced by

transatlantic trade agreements. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has suggested that the U.S. and the E.U. work to sign several "parallel" agreements in different areas such as the elimination of tariffs, regulatory cooperation, and visa liberalization.

Such agreements have real value. A study conducted by the European Centre for International Political Economy and funded by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that a transatlantic free trade agreement restricted to goods could increase U.S. exports to the EU by eight to seventeen percent and EU exports to the US by seven to eighteen percent. In fact, the most valuable aspect of such an agreement may be to get the ball rolling and open a route to further agreements that avoids the delays and loss of momentum that plagued the United States' recent trade agreements and continues to plague the Doha Round.

Beginning to talk about an agreement between the US and the European Union that initially takes place outside of Doha does not mean that the transatlantic community should look inward.



Congressman Burton and his wife, Dr. Samia Burton (third left), are seen here with (from left) Hon. Arnold Foote, FICAC President, Hon. Gonul Eken, Mrs Patricia Foote and Hon. Aykut Eken, FICAC Secretary General.

The opposite is true. The transatlantic community must also look to emerging markets on its periphery. Russia's entry into the World Trade Organisation and Turkey's rise as a regional power are prime examples; and the economic potential of the continued development of Central Asia and the gradual accession of the Western Balkans to the European Union must not be overlooked.

My colleague on the Europe Subcommittee, Congressman Gregory Meeks, and I created the Congressional Caucus on US-Russia Trade and Economic Relations after visiting Russia last year, where we heard from American companies about the importance of the emerging Russian market. These companies made it clear that Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization will create great opportunities for US and European companies by lowering tariffs on goods and services.

In Russia, once all WTO-mandated tariff reductions are phased in, the average tariff rate will drop by almost a quarter from 10 percent to 7.8 percent, a reduction that represents a significant drop in the barrier to entry into the Russian market faced by US and European countries. In addition, barriers will drop to zero for information technology products under the WTO's Information Technology Agreement. Such ease of access should allow exports to Russia to outpace their current growth.

According to the US Department of Commerce, exports to Russia from my own home state of Indiana grew by 167 percent in the first half of 2011, compared to 12 percent growth for Indiana's exports to the rest of the world. Lower tariffs are not the only benefit of Russia's WTO accession for U.S. and European companies as accession to the organisation will require Russia to respect intellectual property rights and provide a venue to solve trade disputes. As Congressman Meeks



From left - Hon. Robert Blum, President, Cercle Diplomatique Genève, Hon. Mirza Ihktiar Baig, Congressman Dan Burton, Hon. Kartar Bhalla, Hon. Count Niccolo Caissotti di Chiusano.

and I saw on our visit, American and European companies are in Russia, want to be in Russia, and want to expand their operations in Russia. Russian membership in the WTO will give these companies the tools they need to succeed.

Turkey, itself an important member of the transatlantic community and member of the EU Customs Union, is another large emerging economy that holds great potential for US and European companies. Unfortunately for those of us on the far side of the Atlantic, European companies have taken the lead. Nearly half of Turkey's foreign trade is with Europe, while only five percent of Turkey's imports in 2010 came from the United States. These numbers show that American companies are simply not taking advantage of a market containing 79 million people and a \$960 billion economy. This must change. US companies must follow their European partners—and rivals—into Turkey.

While the region's economy is not the size of that of Russia or Turkey, Central Asia offers increasing opportunities for trade and investment. As the region's economy continues to develop and diversify, the potential opportunities for US and European companies will increase. This point was illustrated

recently by the decision by Air Astana, Kazakhstan's national airline, to purchase seven Boeing aircraft worth a \$1.3 billion, including three 787 Dreamliners.

In November, I travelled to the Western Balkans where I met with leaders and U.S. diplomats in Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite the ongoing Euro crisis, the leaders of this historically divided region were united in the desire for their country to join the European Union. I realize that it is tempting for European leaders to focus solely on the matter at hand, the crisis, when they meet next month; however, I respectfully urge the European Council to continue to emphasize the importance of eventual EU membership for all the nations of the Western Balkans.

In particular, I urge the council to consider granting Serbia candidate status. We must remember that EU candidacy is not simply a reward for past reforms but a tool for continued engagement. Such an action should send a message to the region as a whole that EU expansion in the region will not end with Croatia or even Montenegro, but will eventually include all of the Balkan nations. By pursuing such a course of action with respect to the region as a whole, the EU will be doing more

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than simply opening up markets. EU integration for the Western Balkans will help ensure the profitability of the significant investment that the transatlantic community continues to make in the region and will be a tangible step toward the longstanding transatlantic goal of a Europe, whole and free.

The Future and NATO and Transatlantic Security

On that note, I believe that it is appropriate to shift gears in order to discuss transatlantic security. As I am sure all of you know, back in June, then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates lamented that many of NATO's European member-states are not meeting their commitments to the organisation. As the Secretary pointed out, only five of NATO's 28 members - the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Greece, and Albania - exceeded the agreed two percent of GDP threshold with regard to defense spending. This statement grabbed the headlines and I certainly agree with the Secretary's concern.

However, it is important to note that the Secretary's concerns ran deeper than how much members of the alliance spend to how members of the alliance spend. The Secretary characterized the \$300 billion spent on defense annually by members of NATO other than the United States as "significantly less than the sum of the parts." As we approach this year's NATO summit, it is my hope that all members of the alliance can work together to allocate resources wisely, while keeping defense spending as close to appropriate levels as possible. Given the current economic climate, it is especially irresponsible for any member of the alliance to assume that its allies will provide for its security without that country contributing its share. NATO's Libyan operations represent the alliance's second "overseas" deployment after the ongoing operations in Afghanistan.



US Congressman Dan Burton being presented with the FICAC Award of Excellence by Hon. Arnold Foote, President, as Dr. Samia Burton looks on.

Libya required substantial support from the United States even while our European allies were leading the operation. The US will continue to make significant contributions to the alliance; however, for future operations to be successful, their burden must be more equally spread.

I would like to highlight the fact that the fifth country that the Secretary listed as meeting the two percent threshold was not a traditional military power located in Western Europe, but Albania, located in the Western Balkans. The fact that Albania, which joined the alliance in 2009, meets the two percent threshold and contributes over 400 soldiers to NATO operations in Afghanistan stands as a powerful argument for enlarging the alliance even in tough economic times.

Just as the European Union should not forget about aspiring members during tough economic times, neither should NATO. It is true that the acceptance of members, especially those on the periphery of the transatlantic community, creates potentially

expensive security commitments. However, members of the alliance must remember that new members can also enhance NATO's capabilities. Accepting new members can allow nations to continue to provide resources that the alliance already relies on. This is the case with Georgia, which will soon increase the number of troops it contributes to NATO operations in Afghanistan from over 900 to almost 1,700. The majority of Georgian troops in Afghanistan serve in the violent Helmand Province. The willingness to make such contributions and sacrifices are essential for the future of NATO and the transatlantic community.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I hope that I have shown that the transatlantic community can have a prosperous and secure future. However, in order for this to happen governments on both sides of the Atlantic must do what families on both sides of the Atlantic are constantly challenged to do: get their finances in order.

Congressman Dan Burton's track record reveals his unreserved commitment to the United States of America

- Arnold Foote



US Congressman Dan Burton arriving at the Château Sainte-Anne, is greeted by The Honourable Arnold Foote President, World Federation of Consuls and Hon. Aykut Eken Secretary General.

President of the World Federation of Consuls, the Honourable Arnold Foote, OJ, in his address to introduce US Congressman Dan Burton, keynote speaker at the FICAC European Regional Conference in Brussels in February, said:

- Visiting Congressmen and other members of the US Delegation,
- Your Excellencies, members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Dean and members of the Belgian Consular Union,
- Directors and members of the World Federation of Consuls,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my distinct honour and pleasure to introduce our very special guest today. When a politician is able to comfortably win his seat for fifteen consecutive elections, there is no

doubt that he has earned the trust and confidence of the constituents whose interests he is pledged to defend. Congressman Dan Burton, Republican representative of the 5th District of Indiana in the US Congress, has proven at each Congressional election since 1982, the level of strong support which he enjoys. With us today is a politician whose track record reveals unreserved commitment to his country, the United States of America. Congressman Burton is reported to have an average of 93 percent vote-support of Republican Party positions. He has co-sponsored several pieces of landmark US legislation which have helped to shape America's domestic and foreign policies. His interests are wide ranging as can be seen from the House Committees and Sub Committees on which he serves.

Currently, the Congressman is a member of the House Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Oversight and Government Reform, having chaired the latter for six years, ending in 2003. He is a member of eight Sub-Committees, including the Sub-Committee on Domestic Policy and that on Europe and Eurasia on which he serves as Chairman.

As if this were not already a difficult agenda, Congressman Burton belongs to fifty-nine Caucuses.

That Congressman Burton is now serving his 15th term as Republican Representative for the 5th Congressional District of the State of Indiana, says volumes about his ability to understand the needs, priorities and values of the American people, in relation to both domestic and foreign policy, and his

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skill in effectively representing those interests in his country's highest legislative body.

Congressman Dan Burton's long experience, especially as Chairman of the Europe and Eurasia Sub-Committee, has given him a clear understanding of the linkages between Europe and the USA. The Congressman recognises the significance of the EU's place as the largest trading partner of the USA. He is painfully alert to the ongoing crisis of the euro and the impact which this could have, not only in Europe, but on the US and other economies of the developed and the developing worlds.

Representing an electoral district where one out of every five jobs is dependent on foreign trade, Congressman Burton is a strong supporter of trade as a means to economic growth.

He has received special recognition from a large number of organisations for his leadership in Congress, including a Congressional 'Spirit of Enterprise' Award from the United States Chamber of Commerce in 2010; several awards for National Security Leadership, conferred jointly by the American Security Council, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Reserve Officer Association. The Small Business Advocate Award was conferred twice by the Small Business Survival Committee for his efforts to support and encourage small businesses through innovation and improved investments.

Congressman Dan Burton is a man with the courage of his convictions and an abiding commitment to service. These are strengths which are so necessary in today's world.

When dialogue and interaction at national and international levels reflect these strengths, and are founded on mutual respect and understanding, we will be well on the way to the durable solutions which we seek for peace,

security and sustainable development.

It is indeed an honour and privilege to have Congressman Dan Burton with us at our FICAC Europe Regional Conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Congressman Dan Burton to the podium.



His Excellency Erik Derycke, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium, receiving the Medal of Appreciation from The Hon. Arnold Foote, FICAC President, for his interesting and informative presentation at the FICAC European Regional Conference.



Hon. Willy Deswaef, Dean of the Belgian Consular Union, receiving the FICAC Medal of Appreciation from President Arnold Foote, for his excellent contribution to the Consular movement in Europe.

FICAC: Birth, growth, aims and achievements



Hon. Kartar Bhalla, Chairman, FICAC South Asia Regional Committee, noted that FICAC has become globally known and recognised.

By Kartar S. Bhalla

Chairman, FICAC South Asia Regional Committee, and Vice-President Emeritus of the Honorary Consular Corps Diplomatieque-India

FICAC, also called World Federation of Consuls, was founded in Copenhagen on 2nd October 1982 by a small group of visionaries led by Consul General Vagn Jespersen of Denmark. The countries present at the meeting and first signatories were Finland, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This body gave consuls of the world a much-needed forum to share experiences and coordinate efforts to enhance their status and effectiveness and to bring together consular associations and corps from all around the globe.

The World Federation of Consuls has United Nations recognition as an NGO with ECOSOC status. It is recognised as an NGO by the Organisation of

American States. It is also recognised as an NGO at the European Union. On 17th September 2010, the World Federation of Consuls signed a partnership agreement with the Prince Albert II Foundation of Monaco, a foundation created by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II to work in the fields of environment and climate change.

FICAC has spread wide and fast. Today, it has over 87 member-associations and affiliated members. It has been holding periodic conferences to strengthen bonding among consuls and to channel their experience in professional fields. After the first meeting of founding fathers in Copenhagen in 1982, the Federation held two more meetings in Copenhagen on 26th October 1984 and 9-10 October 1986 to draw up a working Constitution, called Copenhagen Statutes, and give shape to the world body.

Since then, World Congresses and General Meetings have been held every three years. The First General Meeting, later also called World Congress of Consuls, was held in Vienna, 22-24 April 1988. It was attended by 132 honorary consuls from 21 countries.

The 2nd Conference was scheduled to be held in Athens in April 1991 but it was cancelled in autumn of 1990 due to the impending Gulf War. The 3rd Conference took place in Monaco, 16-18 November 1992. It was opened by His Serene Highness Prince Albert of Monaco. The 4th International Congress was held in Cyprus (Limassol) from 25-28 May 1995. About 90 honorary consuls and their spouses were present. Consul General Vagn Jespersen, who had been President of FICAC for 13 years since its foundation in 1982, was

elected Honorary President for Life. Eilat (Israel) was the venue of the 5th Congress, 11-14 May 1998, at which a new Constitution was agreed upon. An Agreement between FICAC and FUCHE (Federation of European Consular Associations) in the form of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was ratified unanimously admitting all members of FUCHE into FICAC. But, unfortunately, the MOU did not work in practice.

The 6th Congress was held in Curaçao, Dutch Caribbean, 15-17 May 2000. Among the keynote speakers was the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, His Excellency M A Pourier. The next Congress was supposed to take place 18-21 May 2003 in Seville (Spain) but due to some internal problems amongst members of the Spanish Consular Corps, it did not materialise. The 7th World Congress of Consuls was then held in Athens (Greece), 24-25 November 2003. The FICAC Constitution was amended at this Congress. Through two resolutions passed at this Conference, FICAC appealed to all the States to issue distinctive number plates for the cars of honorary consuls and introduced the honorific title of "Hon." before the names of all honorary consuls.

In the 8th World Congress of Consuls held in Montego Bay (Jamaica), 4-9 November 2006, the new President, Arnold Foote, made a pledge to change the centres of influence of the Federation to be more inclusive towards Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. The 9th World Congress was held in Izmir (Turkey), 14-18 November 2009. The next triennial General Assembly/Congress will be held in Monaco in November 2012.

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US Congressman Dan Burton (centre) and his wife Dr. Samia Burton (left) with FICAC members (from second left) Hon. Dr. Mirza Inhtiar Baig, Hon. Robert Blum, Hon. K.L. Ganju, Hon. Count Niccolo Caissotti di Chiusano, Hon. Marko Smole and Hon. Kartar Bhalla.

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FICAC has been led by the following distinguished persons since its inception:

- Consul General Vagn Jespersen of Denmark, 1982-1995
- Consul General Andreas Mavrommatis of Cyprus, 1995-2000
- Consul General Peter Gad Naschitz of Israel, 2000-2003
- Consul General Roland Dahlman of Sweden, 2003-2006
- Consul General Arnold Foote of Jamaica, since 2006

The year 2006, under President Arnold Foote's leadership, marked a watershed in the history of FICAC opening out new vistas and new horizons and expanding FICAC's reach, aims and activities. A new logo for FICAC, FICAC News, FICACWORLD website were designed, created and produced. FICAC International Trade Expos and FICAC International Cultural Galas were started for the development of

trade and culture between Sending and Receiving States. The FICAC decorations of honour, including the FICAC Gold Star, were envisioned, designed and produced.

The historic occasion of the 25th Anniversary of FICAC, which fell on 2nd October 2007, was celebrated by holding regional conferences in Thailand, Brazil, Finland, Turkey, Czech Republic, Africa, Monaco, Dubai, Dominican Republic, Philippines and India. These conferences were inaugurated and addressed by heads of governments and foreign ministers. At these conferences, Medals of Honour and Special Medals of Honour were awarded to honorary consuls who had rendered distinctive service to their consular corps and FICAC.

The FICAC Gold Star was created as a mark of highest honour in recognition of the excellent work of world leaders and was awarded to heads of states/governments, namely, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the President of the Republic of Turkey, Prince Albert II of Monaco, the President of Ghana, the President of the European Council,

the President of the Philippines and His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

The new administration of FICAC opened two new windows opportunity for honorary consuls to work: to promote direct trade between the sending States and the receiving States by holding trade fairs and to inspire consuls to turn into 'Caring Consuls'. To promote trade, the first trade fair was held in Jamaica in 2002 and it became an annual event to 2007. The Consular Corps of Jamaica's Trade Expo re-started in 2011 and would continue annually. It was followed by similar fairs in Bangkok (2007) and Manila (2010). The fairs were supported by the respective Governments and were highly successful.

To promote charity as part of consular activities, a FICAC/UNICEF programme was formulated to raise funds for the benefit of underprivileged children afflicted with HIV/AIDS. Funds were organised by Thailand consular corps and Indian consular corps for donation to UNICEF. A meaningful slogan for FICAC's outreach programme was coined:

“Consuls turning caring into action”. Another equally meaningful slogan chosen for FICAC is:

“FICAC ... WORKING HARD TO SERVE YOU BETTER”.

While FICAC became globally known and recognised, there was one thing found wanting. Individual consuls of one State were not so well known in other States. To fill this void, a decision was taken in 2008 to produce a Who's Who of members of FICAC. Pursuant to this decision, material was collected from Consuls all over and in 2009, for the first time in the history of FICAC, FICAC Who's Who was published and released at the triennial Congress in Izmir. It contained the CVs of 430 consuls from 42 countries. Copies were distributed to all participating consuls and Governments of all countries.

Disparity between career consuls and honorary consuls had been under discussion since the Accra Conference in 2008. In the Monaco regional conference 2009, the matter was considered in plenary session in detail and depth. Pursuant to the plenary body's decision, a resolution for review of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963, with a view to removing disparities between career consuls and honorary consuls, was adopted and the UN Secretary General and foreign ministers of all countries were approached to take initiative in this direction. The matter is being pursued with the aforesaid authorities and with the International Law Commission of the UN and the President of ECOSOC.

In 2009, at a conference in Dubai, President, Arnold Foote, presented “The Way Forward” programme, which was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors and launched at that conference. “The Way Forward” programme created new structures and detailed guidelines for each structure were designed. The FICAC world

was divided into 14 regions with a separate regional committee in each region: East Asia, South Asia, South America, Central America, North America, Caribbean, East Europe, South Europe, West Europe, North Europe, Middle East, Western Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa. The FICAC regions are based on the United Nations categorisation. In addition, the Administration set up 18 subject committees to attend to numerous subjects of political, social and cultural importance.

The committees have done good work in the assigned fields. The Membership Committee has travelled far and wide to establish personal contact with consular associations of various countries and inspire them to affiliate with FICAC. The Consular Privileges Protection Committee has collected useful data on privileges extended to honorary consuls in various countries and has circulated the data to all member-associations. The Climate Change Committee has produced and circulated CDs and other material to drive the point home. At Izmir Congress 2009, an Izmir Declaration envisioning the future of FICAC was finalised and adopted.

In this Declaration, FICAC resolved to:

- take FICAC to all countries to strengthen the consular movement
- bring all consuls of the world under the banner of FICAC
- work towards the establishment of new member-associations and their affiliation with FICAC
- bring estranged States and consuls back to FICAC
- work for removal of disparities between career consuls and honorary consuls
- intensify efforts to improve the status of honorary consuls and create an

ambience in which they can discharge their functions with dignity

- expand the role of the honorary consuls to encompass full range of economic, trade, cultural, political and diplomatic relations
- call upon Directors and Chairmen of regional and subject committees to enhance status and standing of World Federation of Consuls in all regions and countries.

Noting that many Governments had laid down Codes of Conduct/Ethics for their diplomatic service officers including career consuls, in 2010, the FICAC Board of Directors laid down “Guidelines for the Honorary Consuls” who are affiliated to FICAC.

A Horse Race in the name of FICAC was instituted in Istanbul (Turkey) in 2010. The second FICAC Horse Race was held at the Istanbul Hippodrome on 21st September 2011.

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI received President of the World Federation of Consuls, the Honourable Arnold Foote OJ, along with Secretary General of FICAC, Hon. Aykut Eken and seven other Directors of FICAC on 11th May 2011 at the Vatican. A framed FICAC Gold Star and citation was presented to His Holiness on behalf of all the members of the World Federation of Consuls by President Arnold Foote. The President, Secretary General and Directors of World Federation of Consuls also had the honour of audience with His All-Holiness Bartholomeos I, Ecumenical Patriarch, Archbishop of Constantinople, on 23rd September 2011 in Istanbul.

While FICAC had spread in all continents, it had not made much of a mark in the USA. On 18 January 2012, President, Arnold Foote, accompanied by senior directors of FICAC, met Congressman Dan

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Burton, Chairman of the US House of Representatives and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Congress, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, Congresswoman Virginia Foxx and Congressman Alcee Hastings in Washington DC and apprised them of the aims and objects of World Federation of Consul, its role towards the consular associations worldwide and the relations it has established with the international organisations.

Congressman Dan Burton was gracious enough to agree to be the guest speaker at February's European Regional Conference.

Excellencies, before concluding, let me share with you what heads of states and governments think of Honorary Consuls:

Sri Lanka: Addressing honorary consuls of Sri Lanka on 19th January 2009, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said: "Your role as honorary consuls is as important as ambassadors representing our country. Indeed, I consider all of you as de facto ambassadors."

Malaysia: Addressing Honorary Consuls of Malaysia on 28th March 2007, Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs, said: Your contribution is more profound because you do this job without any compensation from the Government of Malaysia.

Turkey: On 13th November 2008, while receiving the FICAC Gold Star on behalf of President Abdullah Gul of Turkey, Governor Cahit Kiraç said: "The service that honorary consuls and consulates give to the countries that they represent is indispensable."

Malta: Speaking to honorary consuls

on 23rd November 2006, Prime Minister of Malta, Lawrence Gonzi, said: "We are not only aware of but also profoundly grateful for your commitment to this role. We also acknowledge that your dedication is driven by a personal sense of service and not by the pursuit of profit."

Netherlands: Admiring his honorary consuls, Prime Minister of Netherlands Jan Peter Balkenende said on 29th May 2006: "You are committed to serving the interests of the Netherlands, and its people. You are with us in good times and bad. You give us your time, your energy, your friendship, and your devotion. No price can be put on that."

Belgium: Speaking at the Conference of the Belgian network in the United States, Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht of Belgium said: "Honorary consuls are our ambassadors in the city or state where you live. You represent a piece of Belgium over there."

Czech Republic: Speaking to honorary Consuls and ambassadors of the Czech Republic on 2nd June 2008, Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek said: "...a good honorary consul is a dream of every prime minister, every minister of finance and every minister of foreign affairs. He carries out his mission as a career diplomat, but free of charge without the right for immunity."

FICAC has succeeded in its prime aim of establishing professional bonding among consuls of the world. Interpersonal relationships and consular brotherhood have deepened. Get-togethers are frequent. Wide-ranging discussions on topics of mutual interest are common. Thanks to *FICAC Who's Who*, honorary consuls are now known all over and their biographies

have a place of honour in the libraries of Foreign Offices. Honorary Consuls are now Honourable Consuls and in many countries they enjoy the privilege of displaying distinctive number plates on their cars. FICAC has arrived.



Hon. Aykut Eken, FICAC Secretary General and Chairman of the FICAC European Region, as he thanked US Congressman Dan Burton for his keynote address at the FICAC European Regional Conference.

30th Anniversary Awards Presentations



Hon. Marc Aicardi de Saint-Paul receiving the FICAC Medal of Honour from FICAC President Arnold Foote.



Hon. Marja-Liisa Rosberg, Hon. Consul of Seychelles in Finland, receiving the FICAC Medal of Honour from Mrs. Patricia Foote.



Hon. Shewak Ram Mirpuri receiving the FICAC Medal of Honour from Mrs. Patricia Foote.



Hon. Leif-Kristian Sverstad receiving the FICAC Diploma from President Arnold Foote.



Hon. Ali Benkirane receiving the FICAC Diploma from the President, Arnold Foote.



Hon. Peter Daae receiving the FICAC Medal of Honour and Diploma from the FICAC President.



Hon. Marko Smole receiving the FICAC Medal of Honour from Mrs. Patricia Foote.



FICAC NEWS IN PICTURES



Hon. Peter Daae and Hon. Leif-Kristian Sverstad, both of the Consular Corps of Norway, seen at the FICAC European Regional Conference.



US Congressman Dan Burton in discussion with Hon. Dr. Virachai Techavijit, FICAC Director.



US Congressman Dan Burton is met by Hon. Aykut Eken, FICAC Secretary General, as he arrives at the Château Sainte-Anne, in Brussels for the FICAC European Regional Conference.



US Congressman Dan Burton with Hon. K.L. Ganju at the FICAC European Regional Conference.



From left - Hon. Marko Smole, Hon. Robert Blum, US Congressman Dan Burton, Mrs Shewak Ram Mirpuri, Hon. Thomas Amaral, Hon. Dr. Ihktiar Baig, Hon. Shewak Ram Mirpuri.



FICAC members seen above enjoying an evening in Brussels. From left are Hon. Aykut Eken, Mr. Patrick Debus, Hon Thomas Amaral and Hon. Count Niccolo Caissotti di Chiusano.