



International Confederation of Midwives

PRESS RELEASE

April 15, 2002

A short history of the ICM!

It is known that midwives have been making efforts to meet internationally for over 100 years. There are records of a midwives' conference held in Berlin, Germany, in the year 1900, when over 1,000 midwives attended. You may like to consider for a moment that this was arranged without the use of telephones (even land lines!), computers, credit cards or aeroplanes – and took place at a time when women travelling on their own was difficult and not always acceptable.

In 1919, a group of European midwives, centred in Antwerp, Belgium, established the first beginnings of what was to become the International Confederation of Midwives. By this time, many countries already had a national association of midwives; communication among them increased and a series of regular meetings was launched.

During the 1930s and 1940s, travel and communication in Europe was disrupted by war and unrest. Unfortunately the detailed records of the earlier midwives' meetings and documents were destroyed. However, the desire to continue international work was still strong. In 1954, the initiative grew again and this time the location was London, UK. For the first time, the name of 'International Confederation of Midwives' was decided, and also the idea of regular triennial congresses was established. Since 1954 the series of such meetings every three years has remained unbroken.

The first salaried post in the ICM was taken by Marie Goubran who became part-time Executive Secretary in 1987. Very sadly, Marie died in 1990 and is now remembered through the ICM award for midwives which was set up in her name. The role was taken on by Joan Walker whose efforts over the following years saw the Confederation expand in membership and enlarge its headquarters and staff.

The governing body of the ICM – the International Council – decided in 1999 to move the location of the headquarters office away from London to The Hague, in the Netherlands. Petra ten Hoop-Bender, the current Secretary General, was already in post and has led the Confederation into the 21st century as a strong, vital organisation with expanded membership.

The ICM has 83 member associations from 70 countries in Africa, the Asia Pacific region, the Americas and Europe. Each member sends delegates to the International Council; each region elects representatives to the Executive Committee; and members of the Council select the officers who make up the Board of Management, which oversees the continuing business of the Confederation.

The site of each triennial congress is decided six years ahead and the host association nominates a midwife who becomes ICM president for the three-year period preceding the Congress.

The ICM's Mission is to 'advance world-wide the aims and aspirations of midwives in the attainment of improved outcomes for women in their childbearing years, their newborn and their families wherever they reside'.

For further information contact ICM headquarters or visit the website www.internationalmidwives.org