

General Assembly

Minutes

Kulturhaus Helferei Zurich, March 26, 2011, 10-16h

Chairperson:

Marianne Frei

Participants:

Bürgin, Heinz	Hürlimann, Caspar	Rohrbach, Christian
Coley-Saner, Elisabeth	Hürlimann, Claudia	Rothacher, Daniel
Fischer, Rudolf	Kobler, Pius	Rüegg, Ueli
Frei, Christof	Kramer, Monika	Schindler, Karin
Frei, Marianne	Külling, Werner	Schindler, Peter
Frey, Richard	Maag, Hanspeter	Schmid, Peter
Frey, Rosmarie	Meichtry Fischer, Karin	Schwiter-Allenspach, Ruth
Gähwiler, Brigitte	Menk, Julia	Stern, Otto
Gähwiler, Franz	Müller, René	Tarnutzer, Andrea
Grossenbacher, Fabienne	Rauh, Christoph	Zingg, Claudio
Hösli, Hanspeter	Reinhardt, Ernst	Zürcher, Dieter
Huber, Charles Erik	Rieder, Peter	

Agenda:

1. Welcome Adress and Nomination of Teller and Keeper of the Minutes
2. Minutes of General Assembly 2010
3. Annual Report
4. Presentation of Accounts 2010 / Audit Report
5. Nomination / Election new Board Member
6. Program 2011+
7. Activities 2011
8. Budget 2011
9. General Assembly 2011
 - Aperitif at Kulturhaus Helferei
 - Lunch at Zentrum Karl der Grosse
 - Speech by Dr. Karma Phuntsho:
Socio-cultural changes in Bhutan between tradition and modern times

Decision no. 1:

The agenda is approved, the participants have no request for further topics.

1. Welcome address and Nomination of Teller and Keeper of the minutes

- Marianne Frei welcomes all members of the Society as well as the special guests Mario Fontana (Fontana Foundation) and Peter Schmid (Bhutan Switzerland Society). She

presents the excuses of the two Board Members who cannot attend (Dominique Guenat and Erwin König).

- Nomination of the Tellers and the Keeper of the Minutes
 - Tellers: Julia Menk and Andrea Tarnutzer
 - Keeper of the minutes: Karin Meichtry Fischer

Decision no. 2:

The proposed tellers and keeper of the minutes are confirmed by acclamation.

2. Minutes of General Assembly 2009

Decision no. 3:

The minutes of last year's General Assembly are approved by acclamation.

3. Annual report

Marianne Frei points out that 2010 was a particularly active year with many successful events:

In Bhutan:

- The sister organization in Bhutan, BSS, held its first meeting on August 1, 2010
- Peter Schmid reads a message from the President of BSS to the General Assembly (see annex)
- BSS board meetings with Board members of SSB in Thimphu in September and December
- BSS has 63 registered members
- Marianne Frei introduces the President and Board members of BSS:
 - President: HE Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang Dorji
 - Board Members:
 - Ashi Kunzang Choden
 - Dasho Jamphel Ngedup, Bumthang Representative
 - Aum Sonam Wangmo
 - Dr. Saamdu Chetri
 - Secretary: Mr. Namgyel Tshering
 - Treasurer: Ms. Tshewang Chhenzom
- Handing over of a cheque of Nu. 2.40M for Chamkhar fire victims on March 15, 2011

In Switzerland:

- SSB has been growing by 29 new members and counts 178 registered members now
- Because of the many events SSB has published 3 newsletters last year. Marianne Frei presents Otto Stern, the editor of the newsletter who receives a big applause (this year there will be only two newsletters as usual)
- General Assembly at the Musée d'Ethnographie in Neuchatel with cultural program
- Various events around the "Bhutan - Sacred art from the Himalaya" exhibition at Rietberg Museum which were attended by many people

- Concert Tour of Big Senn with 3 singers of Bhutan
- Visit of the Prime Minister of Bhutan
- Various events at Songtsen House, the Bhutanese cooking event being one of the more memorable ones
- Fundraising campaign in December 2010 / January 2011

Marianne Frei stresses that it was a very special year and naturally it will be impossible to keep up the same pace in 2011. However, we will do our best to keep the energy.

Decision no. 4:

The General Assembly approves of the President's annual report by acclamation.

4. Presentation of Accounts / Audit Report

Rosmarie Frey presents the Annual Accounts for 2010. In summary 2010 was a good year:

- SSB has no debts anymore
- Fund raising was increased and SSB received notable donations (partly for specific projects)
- More members joined - > increase in annual contributions
- Revenue from DVD (more to be expected next year)
- Expenditures were mostly for "business as usual"

Christian Rohrbach presents the Audit Report (s. annex, copies were made available on the SSB website and in the meeting room). He thanks Rosmarie Frey who did a tremendous job and managed to bring the accounts in order. It was not an easy task after the troubles that we experienced before. The auditors, Käthi Rüegg and Christian Rohrbach recommend the General Assembly that the submitted financial statements for the year 2010 be approved and the Executive Board can be discharged.

Decision no. 5:

The financial statements for the year 2010 are unanimously approved and the Executive Board is fully discharged.

5. Election of new Board Member

The Board is elected for 2 years. Re-elections will be next year.

The Board proposes Karin Meichtry Fischer as new additional member. Marianne Frei tells us how she met Karin in Bhutan and passes over to Karin and asks her to introduce herself.

Decision no. 7:

Karin Meichtry Fischer is elected as new Board member by acclamation.

6. Programme in Bhutan 2011+

As Patrick Vogel and Erwin König are excused Werner Külling presents a summary of the programme 2011+ on their behalf. He stresses that the main role of SSB is to support its sister organization BSS in Bhutan and to further develop its local capabilities. He explains that in Bhutan things take their time and that we have to adapt to our sister organization. The registration of BSS as an NGO under the Civil Society Act is legally required in Bhutan. This will take considerable time (estimate: 2-3 years to prepare all required documents and comply with all formalities) and support from SSB.

Marianne Frei adds that even if BSS is not yet registered, BSS is already a very active organization. Werner Külling confirms.

Activities of BSS in Bhutan:

- Upon request of the Tradijong primary school, the SSB Tradijong Schoolchildren Scheme plans to support 58 children (32 boys and 26 girls), the final budget has not yet been provided
- The Academic SSB Award is an idea by Dominique Guenat which will be decided upon at the next Board meeting of BSS in Thimphu
- Internet access for schools in upper and lower Kheng is a national project of the Royal Government of Bhutan and will therefore not to be implemented by BsS.
- The school-to-school exchange between Switzerland and Bhutan as well as the solar panel in remote villages projects have not yet been started (will be pursued after support in Tradijong).
- 250 books will be shipped to Bhutan with the next Helvetas transport.

Not all of the proposals and ideas received and developed earlier seem to be quite realistic or seem ready at the moment yet:

The Small-scale Industry Development Programme is another idea which consists of:

1. Procurement services network for second-hand machines
- > no request yet from the Bumthang chapter.
2. Training and consulting activities for tourism sector, including electricians and plumbers
-> no official request yet
3. SME and MoEA (Ministry of Economy Affairs) capacity building
-> still pending

With respect to the Community-based Tourism Development programme, Werner Külling explains that the private initiative is still weak in Bhutan. That's why the project could not yet be started. Marianne Frei adds that a pilot project in Bumthang was started with home village stays. In Bhutan, many are in favour of community-based tourism, it is slowly developing. The Board still thinks it's a marvellous idea.

SSB received a 2nd request for donation for the victims of the 2nd fire in Bumthang (Kidu Fund). Werner Külling reads the request (see annex) and compares the 1st and 2nd fire which evidenced some rather big differences:

- After the first fire there was a lot of public attention and immediate support by His Majesty the King.
- After the 2nd fire there was an immediate call for help to SSB apparently without much effort to get help from other sources.

Werner Külling recommends not to start a 2nd fund raising campaign.

Ernst Reinhardt who happened to be there on the night of the fire shows some pictures taken the day after the fire. He stresses that immediate help needs to be combined with a long-term plan, otherwise we encourage an attitude which is not really helpful. We should encourage more sustainable solutions in the long run.

Heinz Bürgin who has close contacts to victims mentions that there are rumours that the victims of the 1st fire have been helped and are well off, not so the victims of the 2nd fire.

Peter Schindler shows some pictures which he has taken one week before the meeting. The new village has been rebuilt by the army in the meantime. The new buildings have been reconstructed in the old location (not at a new location as initially planned).

Peter Schmid (architect living and working in Bhutan) adds:

- The buildings have no fire guards, no double brick walls
 - The Bhutanese can build by themselves, we are there to provide technical assistance
- If nothing changes fundamentally, it is likely that it will happen again.

Marianne Frei summarizes the different views of the members and proposes that the topic be discussed in a separate meeting by the Board and interested members.

Decision no. 8:

After a discussion round, the General Assembly decides unanimously that there should be no additional fund raising campaign at this point and that the topic of the aid for the victims of the 2nd fire in Bumthang should be discussed in a separate meeting by the Board Members and other interested members.

7. Activities in Switzerland 2011

Marianne Frei shows a picture of the exhibition “Bhutan by Bhutanese” at the “Gartenflügel” gallery in Ziegelbrücke. She expresses her gratitude to Erik Huber who donated the invitation card to the General Assembly (applause). The picture was taken by a student of *bim* (Bhutan Institute of Media) in Thimphu.

The collaboration with Songtsen House which was started in 2010 turned out to be a fruitful one and it should continue.

On September 10, 2011 there will be an excursion to Leuk to visit the bridge built by Bhutanese engineers and the town. All SSB members will be kindly invited to participate. Marianne would like to thank Christof Frei and Rosmarie Frey for organizing the event.

8. Budget 2011

Rosmarie Frey presents the budget and explains some key figures:

- Nice income from DVD sales at Rietberg Museum (SMS from Shangri-la)
- Notable donations
- Zhemgang project (still in budget but not yet started)
- Kidu Fund together with separate fund raising campaign
- Reserve of CHF 5'000.-

Overall, this results in a small deficit.

Rudolf Fischer asks how confident the Board is that the revenue from the DVD sales can actually be reached. Marianne Frei responds that this revenue has already been materialised (DVDs sold last year).

Ernst Reinhardt asks why CHF 10'000.- is locally restricted to the region of Bumthang. Hanspeter Hösli proposes that CHF 5'000.- should be reserved for Bumthang and CHF 5'000.- for other purposes. Marianne Frei responds that this is not possible since CHF 10'000.- have already been committed for Bhumtang, instead she proposes to add an additional position of CHF 5'000.- for an open fund (General Kidu fund) and asks to vote on this.

Decision no. 9:

The proposal to add CHF 5'000.- to an open fund (General Kidu fund) for aid projects outside Bumthang as well as the revised budget (s. annex) are unanimously approved.

Daniel Rothacher suggests that next time the budget should be presented in such a way that it is clear which donations have been granted for special purposes only. Marianne Frei agrees and explains that this pre-supposes that we get the inputs in time (this time it arrived on rather short notice and some of the donations were only verbally committed).

10. General Assembly 2011

Saturday, 31st March 2012 (suggestions for the location are welcome)

Keeper of the Minutes: 3.5.2011, Karin Meichtry Fischer

Lunch at Restaurant Karl der Grosse

Lecture in the afternoon by Dr. Karma Phuntsho: «Socio-cultural changes in Bhutan between tradition and modern times»

Annex:

- Message from the President of BSS to the General Assembly to SSB
- Revised and approved budget for 2011
- Report of the Auditors