

THE EVENTFUL LIFE OF ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES

MONDAY MORNING. 7.33AM. TIME FOR ALL GOOD ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES TO GET UP AND FACE ANOTHER EVENTFUL WEEK OF SAVING THE WORLD, DEFENDING THE DOWN-TRODDEN, RAISING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, RESTORING DEMOCRACY TO BELARUS, COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING, PUBLISHING YET ANOTHER BOOK ON CIVIL SOCIETY, DRAFTING A LONG-OVERDUE CONVENTION ON OMBUDSMEN, OR ORGANIZING A CONGRESS FOR 10,147 SURGEONS, OF WHOM 1.2% WILL BE FEMALE. OH, AND NOT TO FORGET, THIS IS ALSO THE WEEK FOR PREVENTING THE EXTINCTION OF THE ANTARCTIC WHALE.

TEXT CYRIL RITCHIE, VICE PRESIDENT UIA, MTC (MASTER OF TONGUE IN CHEEK)



Cyril Ritchie

That's it, my friends: a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. So let's get on with contemplating MY

eventful week ahead. I have an appointment to see that uncultured banker who simply won't understand that our worthy goals speak for themselves, and speak millions, whereas he only wants to talk

about audits and spreadsheets and risk insurance and salary caps. What world does he live in??

Then there's that meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee that the Board imposed on me. Well at least it's 11.8% female so boy are we making progress on the gender-equality front. These scientific advisors - none of whom I would have picked if anybody has asked my opinion - think they know everything about

everything and even come with their own ideas instead of listening to mine. To finally get my views across, the energy I deploy would drive a wind-farm, except that these advisers include people who know all about wind-farms and hint that I am just about wind.

Later there's this ICT specialist coming in for an interview following our job advertisement in the FAZ. Of course to stay on the cutting edge we desperately need to fill this

position, but she'd better not start off by showing that she knows more than I do. I'd better read her CV again to find out where the gaps are. That'll keep her on her mettle. Ah but the week will get better when we have the general staff meeting, because after all those people HAVE to listen to me. Thank goodness I hand-picked them, which means that half of them actually know what they are talking about.

And then there's the really good part of the week, when the reports from the field are analysed: grass-roots community development in Kiribati (memo to Cynthia: when can I fit in a visit to Kiribati?); new X-ray machines delivered to Mauritius (memo to Cynthia: can I do Mauritius on the way to Kiribati?); a parliamentary hearing in

Of course in the midst of all this heavy scheduling I have to find time to finish off these far-too-detailed strategy and financial reports that members and donors always seem to want yesterday. Can't they just have confidence in my leadership? After all, the staff does...

Well that more or less takes care of this week, because on Thursday evening I have to go to some ten-day UN Conference in Estonia with a title three lines long (memo to Cynthia: make sure I get the working papers for this jaunt no later than Thursday lunchtime; second memo to Cynthia: can you arrange for me to nip over from Estonia to St. Petersburg for a cultural weekend with all the usual trimmings?).

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Uzbekistan on farmers' cooperatives (memo to Cynthia: if we have the money, see if Simon can go to that one).

Then, fortunately, comes a real highlight: attending a course on CSR as practiced in the convention industry. These chaps (some chapesses) really know what they're talking about. Funny, though, they haven't actually asked me to speak, but I shall have some unprepared remarks ready just in case.

Oh and one of these days soon I'd better give a call to the Board Chairman, just to make sure I didn't misunderstand him when he made some obscure remark about advance planning for when my current contract expires.

Footnote from the author: Any resemblance to any association executive you know is purely fortuitous. After all, the great majority do an excellent job, even if they sometimes have to say so themselves.

WHAT'S THE UNION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS (UIA)?

The Union of International Associations - UIA - is a non-profit, independent, apolitical, and non-governmental institution in the service of international associations.

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MAIN ACTIVITIES:

- + Yearbook of International Organizations - contains information on over 64,000 international organizations active in all fields of human endeavour, in all corners of the world, and over centuries of history. Available online and in book form.
- + International Congress Calendar - with information on over 350,000 international meetings. Available online, in pdf, and on paper.
- + Annual Associations Round Table - features both open-space / networking and discussion oriented sessions as well as practical skills training sessions for associations. See www.uia.be/roundtable

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For more information, please contact uia@uia.org