



PROTOCOL

**18th MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND
17th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
AUSTRO-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Location: Hotel Sacher, Philharmonikerstraße 4, 1010 Vienna
Time: Monday, November 19th 2007, 11:00 h

President Dkfm. Dr. Stepic chairs the meeting and welcomes the attendees at the 18th Meeting of the Board of Directors and the 17th General Assembly of the AACC. He refers to a previously made decision according to which the two meetings are held in one with two different reports for each of the meetings. Furthermore, he explains the respective abbreviations which are BD standing for Board of Directors and GA standing for General Assembly.

Before starting with the actual agenda **Dr. Stepic** specifically welcomes the Ambassadors, who took their time to attend the meeting. He also welcomes from the EB KommR. Mr. Kuzbari, Dr. Roiss, and Dr. Strommer. He informs the attendees that H.E. Madame Feroukhi, Ambassador of Algeria and first Lady-Dean of Arab Ambassadors, is on her way. Dr. Stepic excuses the Ambassadors of Jordan, who was about to leave and the Lebanese Ambassador, who had an appointment at the United Nations Office. A special welcome goes to H.E. Mr. Wehbe, Head of the Mission of the League of Arab States in Vienna, who is representing Mr. Ahmad Toweigri, Assistant SG for Economic Affairs of the Arab League in Cairo. He further welcomes Mr. Suhaibani, Chargé d'Affaires of Saudi Arabia and permanent guest of the EB of the AACC, who represents Mr. Abdul Jawad, from the Council of KSA Chambers of Commerce & Industry. He then welcomes the board members from abroad; namely Mr. Ali Mostafa Moussa, Chairman of the Cairo Chamber of Commerce, representing Mr. Mohamed Abdelfattah El-Masry, President of the Egyptian Chambers of Commerce, Mr. Badi Fallah, Member of the BD of the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Commerce representing Dr. Rateb Shallah, President of the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Commerce; and Dr. Elias Ghantous, SG of the General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce. Then, Dr. Stepic welcomes the Austrian Board members and their representations starting with Dr. Weißmann who is representing Dr. Gasselsberger, Dr. Prettenhofer from SWARCO, representing KommR. Manfred Swarovski, Mrs. DI Jutta Strolz of ILF, representing DI Lässer, Mr. Dotzauer and Mr. Hasenkopf. Dr. Stepic continues by excusing Mr. Henry Hafez from the Lebanese Federation of Chambers of Commerce. He then welcomes the newly appointed Syrian Ambassador H.E. Mr. Khattab and thanks him for being present.

After the words of welcome and formal greetings of the members of the BD, Dr. Stepic continues with the

1. Approval of the Agenda

Dr. Stepic asks whether there were any issues on the agenda that anyone wanted to be changed. As this was not the case the agenda was approved. He then continues with item two, the

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Session

asking whether there were any remarks on this item. As this was not the case, the minutes were approved.

Dr. Stepic then continues with item 3.

3. Introduction of AACC Consultants

Dr. Stepic then introduces the two AACC consultants working together very successfully with Dr. Strommer in restructuring the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce. He starts with Mrs. KommR. Jeannette Monadjemi and refers to her as being a familiar face to many and now working for the AACC in a new function.

Then **Dr. Stepic** introduces Dr. Horst Machu as the AACC Chief Consultant, who unfortunately has not been able to attend. Dr. Machu grew up bilingual, as he was born in Cairo. He had served at the WKO for many years as commercial counsellor in most of the Arab countries. So he is the top expert that we have and he is also helping us as Chief Consultant.

Finally **Dr. Stepic** stresses once again that, after intensive discussions at the previous GA, the AACC has tackled the two major issues; the personnel and the financial situations. He gladly announces that the personnel issue has been solved by setting up a new team. Dr. Strommer has been handling (on an honorary basis, and therefore at no cost to the AACC), the day to day affairs and numerous activities of the AACC in co-operation with the two consultants, who are experts in their fields and not charging very much. So, Dr. Stepic concludes that the AACC has tried to manage both, personnel and financial issues. They are on a good way to form a new chamber with new activities, and that he will be informing on this shortly.

Dr. Stepic then explains, that especially this time, he would like to note, that due to the financial matters, which are vital for the AACC, there is pressure on the budget. A re-orientation can be observed among the Joint Chambers; this was a major point on the agenda of the meeting of Joint Chambers that is going to take place in Athens. And this was also the reason, why he asked Dr. Strommer to start with the financial report this time, prior to the report on the general activities of the AACC. He kindly requests Dr. Strommer to present his report.

4. Financial matters

Report by RA. Dr. A. Strommer, Treasurer & Coordinator of AACC Activities

Dr. Strommer greets the participants and quotes the well known proverb concerning money: that "Money is not everything, but if one has it, he feels much better and more comfortable". And this, in fact, also applies to Dr. Strommer himself, as treasurer of the AACC. He and the EB felt very uncomfortable in the past year when they realised, that there had been a shortfall of around € 40,000 for two years consecutively. A situation that really endangered the Chamber, with a reserve of € 130,000.00, which, had such shortfalls continued, resulted in the closing down of the Chamber. Such an outcome was not intended.

Dr. Strommer adds that before commenting on the figures, the positive news for the year 2007 was a balanced status after two years of shortfall. He explains that due to the GA being scheduled for the 3rd quarter of the year, the actual figures are already known to a large extent and therefore the positive status (no shortfall) can be forecast. Income and expenses are around € 364,000. However, Dr. Strommer states that in spite of the balanced status he was not going to lean back and relax. He adds that, due to the presence of the Ambassadors, he would like to refer to the structural problem at the base. He again states the two major issues of the past year, namely the required change of policy (many more activities) and the financial problems, both of which were interrelated. The time of leaning back and relying on the legalisation income was over. Furthermore, Dr. Strommer explains that there is more competition, even among NGOs, and the legalisation income is decreasing. The General Union too, assessed that worldwide legalisation fees are becoming more and more unpopular. However, looking at the figures made it clear that three fourth of the income stems from legalisations and that as the treasurer, he needed to be on the safe side and to foresee the downward development by finding an equivalent. One of the steps is to improve the service, as without this no money can be gained from members or companies to substitute the shortfall in legalisations and to bring sponsoring, advertisements and special fees. All this is hard work, requiring a very timely start. Dr. Strommer then quotes Gorbatschov by saying "He who comes late is punished by life". According to this statement, he concludes, that sponsoring can not be started in 2009, when the funds are gone, but immediately. And with good activities, sponsoring would be visible. In a brief discussion Dr. Roiss noted, that there was hope to acquire sponsoring from his company in the coming year. And hopefully some other companies would by then be prepared to provide sponsoring to the

AACC. But of course, they were right in saying that this would depend on the Chambers performance and activities according to its defined targets, one of which is the promotion of business between the countries.

Dr. Strommer again refers to the situation of the AACC in the last year, when it nearly reached a deadlock. Therefore the EB decided not to continue with the old management. He was asked by his good friend the vice president to take over the burden. He immediately realised that it was not only a question of money but also a structural one, which automatically led to personnel issues. Referring to the status-budget sheet he notes that the personnel costs in 2006 is around € 269,000 and comes down to 195,000 in 2007, a reduction of around € 70,000. The measures to reach this were not always easy. The work done by a smaller but highly devoted team, implementing the much wider range of activities was necessary. To Dr. Strommer's disappointment there was much time lost by the former 5 employees in fruitless internal discussions, and with no factual results. There were no events, no newsletters, no activities that would have been essential in order to achieve outside recognition and awareness among members and other companies and individuals. So the target was to enhance and improve the scope of activities with as little staff as possible. In brief, the motto was: make the maximum out of limited means. According to this the AACC now works with half the number of staff resulting in double output. Dr. Strommer concludes that the AACC has saved money on one side and got prepared to open new sources of income to compensate for the declining legalisation income on the other side. Though not strictly part of the figures, he resumes, these additional notes leading to the roots of the chambers existence, were essential.

Coming back to the figures Dr. Strommer then outlines the major items of the status of 2006, quoting the total expenses of roughly € 392,000, of which 269,000 were personnel and only 120,000 were for the rest of the expenses. In 2007 there were lower personnel costs with 195,000 and a lower balance sum of 364,000, in a balanced status. He then points out that in spite of the dark picture drawn before, the legalisation income has increased in 2007. The reason for this, however, was a major increase of legalisation fees in January 2007 by nearly 30%. As there had been no increase for the past six or seven years, this measure was justified, but could of course not be applied every year. So considering the increased fees and the number of documents there has been a loss of 20% of the number of legalisation documents. Assuming that this tendency continues in 2008 then next year there would be a shortfall of up to 70,000. And in order to compensate this possible loss in the year 2008, a further decrease of the personnel cost from 195,000 to around 170,000 and sponsorships will be required. Sponsoring would be associated with the events but not only and would be part of the AACC program to be started, also with the support of the expert Mrs. Monadjemi. Speaking of the personnel situation, Dr. Strommer again refers to the very active team, existing of one and a half Austrian ladies and one Arabic man, Mr. Elias who had been working for the past months as a volunteer and will be engaged as a full-timer. Thus the staff now consists of two and a half people and one person for legalisation, compared with four and one before, which is a reduction of 40% at double output.

Plus, Dr. Strommer adds, there were the two consultants, charging very little, thus contributed to the improved financial situation.

Finally Dr. Strommer asks, whether the status of 2006 with a shortfall of €45,435 and the budget 2007 with balanced status, were agreed on.

Dr. Stepic thanks Dr. Strommer for his report and opens the floor for questions and matters of discussion.

Dr. Prettnerhofer notes that a look at the membership fees shows that not only costs needed to be decreased, but that also the number of members needed to be increased, as this would be a fixed income. He resumes that according to the figures a lot of members seem to have been lost.

Dr. Strommer adds that, in fact, the number of members above was stable and that during the past few months 10 more members could be gained, although they would only start paying as of next year. This is actually the first time that members joined the AACC as a result of seeing and appreciating the new activities. The fees obtained, however, do depend to some extent on how much pressure is applied to make them pay their fees and this year there has been little time to follow up, due to the large number of events, especially the forum in September. Therefore the figures do

not exactly reflect the actual membership situation. In fact very few members were lost, but compensated by new ones, some of whom joined the AACC without being addressed, as they were convinced by the economic forum in September.

Dr. Prettenhofer again repeats, that the figures themselves showed a loss of members, but that also with the help of the new consultants, more new members were going to be acquired. He then adds, that in general there ought to be more communication between members and the Chamber and informs that his company had organised a symposium in Saudi Arabia, initiated by the Ministry of Transport on the 5th of December and nobody knew about it. He suggests making such information also available to other members, who could then also participate.

Dr. Strommer adds that the AACC was very keen to get such Information from other sources.

Mrs. Monadjemi comments that she considers this an interesting topic and asks Dr. Prettenhofer whether he refers to the lack of communication among the members of the Chamber. Dr. Prettenhofer confirms this and points out that there were certainly events and other activities of members, which would be of interest to other members.

Mrs. Monadjemi states that to her that would imply that companies organising such events abroad should, as a first step, inform the AACC by themselves so as to enable them to pass on the information to all other members and in time.

After a brief discussion on this subject a wide consent becomes apparent.

Then **Dr. Stepic** thanks for the suggestions and announces that the AACC plans to establish a communication platform to promote and inform on member activities, which will then be communicated by the AACC newsletter or other AACC media. He then asks whether there were any further questions regarding the finances. He specifies the status of 2006, and its shortfall of € 45,435.37 as well as the budget for the year 2007, which would end with a balanced status. He adds that this was an issue of the GA. On the question of whether there were any votes against or any constraints on the two issues, there was no reaction, thus Dr. Stepic concludes that those items are approved of unanimously.

Mr. Kuzbari put in that he would like to once again say that he was happy about the presence of the Ambassadors at the joint GA and BD and he regrets that due to other commitments they will not be able to attend the traditional lunch thereafter. He again welcomes the Syrian Ambassador H.E. Mr. Khattab, the Libyan Ambassador H.E. Mr. Menesi, and Mr. Suhaibani the Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Kuzbari refers to the establishment of the Chamber 18 years ago, describes its structure as being mainly based on helping Arab and Austrian members and non-members by legalising documents. This obviously has now changed and the focus nowadays was more on possible investments of Austrian companies in the Arab countries. However, a close look at the Arab region shows that there is a volume of over 2 Trillion Dollars yearly going to almost 90% to the United States with much less being invested in the Arab World. Therefore Mr. Kuzbari explains that there were a lot of opportunities for Arab money to be invested in Austria. This country has very outstanding relations with the region and a lot of good has been done to attract Arab money to be invested in Austria and that the AACC could support this kind of business. Mr. Kuzbari reports that at the Arab Business Council in Cairo that was linked to the World Economic Forum, from which he just returned yesterday, this very topic had been discussed heavily and the common wish seems that European money was attracted. He stresses again, that according to his opinion this was a field in which the Chamber should become active and could play a very constructive and helpful role. Certainly technology and know-how were still needed from the European side and specifically from the Austrian side.

Dr. Stepic thanks Mr. Kuzbari and adds that it was very important to get Austrian business people interested in further investments in the Arab World and that the AACC would continue to spot this very subject. Then Dr. Stepic goes on with item number five, the

5. Report of the President

Dr. Stepic emphasises again that they were trying with all their forces to put the Chamber on a new track. In other words: to make it more consumer friendly and at the same time to also adapt to the cost basis to prevailing circumstances, which were not very income friendly. That means to put the Chamber on a new financial platform and at the same time spend less money, mainly for personnel, which is the major cost factor.

Dr. Stepic refers to the new philosophy for all mixed Arab chambers and, specifically for the AACC, which was first of all to provide excellent service to its members, which means to assist with specific problems in order to stipulate business, to inform and to network. Dr. Stepic considers these as the prime tasks for any joint chamber and also for the AACC with regard to Austro-Arab matters. The AACC wants to be a bridge between both worlds and to position Vienna as an information platform. This has been done by introducing and inviting lecturers on Arab subjects, aiming at gathering a new interested community. Dr. Stepic points out that he finds this extremely important and – as mentioned by him often before – the Arab world was underrepresented in the news, and if there were Arab news, those were strongly one-sided, and thus whatever the AACC, as a joint chamber, can do to give a second view will be done.

Dr. Stepic explains further, that unlike in the previous years, the annual report (for the very first time in 18 years) has been distributed to all members in advance. Hoping to have now initiated a new and more sensible way of informing about the AACC activities, Dr. Stepic assures that from now on the report will always be sent well ahead of the meeting.

Dr. Kerschbaum addresses the GA by first thanking for the invitation.

As a representative of the Red Cross, he informs that in 2006 his organisation had the privilege of receiving almost 200,000 Euros. With the consent of the AACC this money had been devoted to a project in Darfur, one of the regions heavily struck by war and famines throughout the past years. He explains that Darfur was in the African country of Sudan and had the size of France. The Red Cross specifically deployed the money contributed by the AACC in the region of South Darfur, which he was privileged to visit with his colleague Andrea. He adds that it was not easy to enter Darfur and that journalists for example were not permitted. So they had been allowed to watch how the project was developing. It had been started in 2007 in the province of Mukjar, a region in South Darfur with some 150,000 inhabitants, where there are no roads, no electricity, no water supply and no health care system. Together with the Sudanese Red Crescent, the German and the Swiss Red Cross, the Austrian Red Cross started a project and succeeded in establishing basic primary health care in the region, by setting up 3 mobile clinics. Thanks to the AACC contribution the mobile clinic could be bought. It is a sort of truck-like vehicle with the necessary medical equipment. Each of these mobile clinics started in Mukjar and moved, day by day, to the remote settlements, taking care of some 60,000 people. In each of these cars there is one midwife, one medical assistant and one nurse. Together with the communities and the tribal chiefs, health communities were established. Those parties had to agree to setting up a health committee, recruiting volunteers in the community who would, once the mobile clinic arrives, help registering the people. Sometimes they would arrive on their camels or donkeys from regions of around 50 kilometres away. There was a very basic sort of building where people would sit on the floor and wait to be treated. On the specific day of the visit of Dr. Kerschbaum and his colleague there were around 100 people lined up for treatment and the tribal chiefs said that this would indeed be a sustainable support, as they had realised that they never had such a basic health care. One of the examples was a reduced infant and maternal mortality rate, as midwives were there. Less children were suffering from diarrhoea and other diseases. The project was being implemented in cooperation with the ministry of health of the province of South Darfur so as to guarantee, that after leaving in three or four years time, the system will not break down. They agreed to pay for the nurses, for the midwives and for the medical assistant. As to documentation Dr. Kerschbaum refers to a brochure issued in German, with the aim of showing that the money has arrived and that it is being

used at the proper place. People actually experience an improvement. They receive medical treatment and support that they never had before. Darfur, and this was one of the reasons for the crisis, has always been neglected by the central government, especially the region of Mukjar; there was not electricity, no roads no health service and so on. The whole effort was also strengthened by the fact that in Mukjar and in another small settlement the Red Cross Societies had established small hospitals.

Dr. Kerschbaum concludes by informing that in case of serious problems in the region, the people can be brought there and back in the mobile clinics for treatment. He finally thanks the audience.

Dr. Stepic thanks Dr. Kerschbaum for his activities and asks whether there were any comments or questions. As there were none he adds that he himself considered such activities as highly important and that the respective news on the Austrian and international TV were not very promising and he stresses, that he considers more support to be necessary in the future.

Dr. Kerschbaum states, that independent from war or peace, a workable health system was always needed in any of these countries.

Dr. Stepic continues by welcoming H. E. Mrs. Feroukhi, who has arrived and introduces her as the new Dean of Arab Ambassadors in Vienna.

He also welcomes the Egyptian Ambassador, Mr. Fawzy, and H. E. Mr. Galal Eldin, who have both also just arrived.

Dr. Stepic then proposes to continue with item number

6. Discharge

of the Board, namely the treasurer, then the EB and finally the BD.

Dr. Stepic then proposes the discharge of the Treasurer, Dr. Strommer and again refers to his function as Coordinator of AACC activities, requiring almost his daily presence in the chamber, and representing a main force in getting the chamber to reach its new goals. As there are no votes against Dr. Stepic's proposal no abstentions, Dr. Strommer is being discharged with thanks and honour.

Dr. Ambichl proposes the discharge of the EB, also with thanks, which is being accepted.

Finally **Dr. Stepic** addresses the GA requesting the discharge of the BD in the existing combination, which is accepted unanimously.

Dr. Stepic continues with item number

7. Presentation of the draft of the New Statutes of the AACC

He explains that those new statutes had been sent by email to all members and that upon request the AACC would be pleased to supply them again. Dr. Stepic requests Dr. Strommer, a former lawyer, who re-drafted the statutes to state the main principles guiding him in doing this.

Dr. Strommer outlines, in brief, the most important changes. He starts with the motives for the re-draft, which on one hand was the belief in the future existence of the chamber, and on the other hand the practical workability of the paragraphs. Apart from this, however, there had also been a change in the Austrian law of Associations, which applied to the AACC from the legal point of view. The law requires a clear definition of the leading body, a clear definition of the representing body and by minority right. Additionally, there was some practical experience. For example, the election of the full Board of Directors, that consists of some 30 or 32 members, for a three years period. According to the

statutes, every year one third of the Board members should be elected. This however, had never been done in practice as it was highly impractical. Another example was the EB which was (according to the statutes) to consist of around 8 or 10 people, who could practically never manage to agree on several specific meeting dates per year. And even for the 4 to 5 people it was difficult enough to fix their schedule.

Dr. Strommer then noted that he also streamlined the functions of the bodies in order to safe-guard efficiency. Finally he proposes to read the present draft, indicating the suggested changes and eliminations. He would then around six to eight weeks before the GA address the people from the Arab and Austrian side and request their comments and proposals and finalise the statutes in due course together with the consultants of the AACC.

Dr. Stepic thanks Dr. Strommer and ask whether there were any immediate principle statements on this issue or whether the audience could live with the suggested proceeding. These were namely to take sufficient time to read the proposals and then discuss probable amendments or additions with Dr. Strommer.

Dr. Stepic also refers to the initial draft of the statutes of 18 years ago, in which several mistakes had occurred, since it was a translation of the existing "Austrian Association Statutes", of which many parts did not comply with the legal requirements and the law, and were above that very impractical.

Dr. Stepic summarises that two things had to be done: The first was the compliance with the law; the second was to make them more practical so as to be able to "live" with them.

Dr. Stepic again thanks Dr. Strommer and continues with item number

8. Election and Replacements

Dr. Stepic states that under this issue two items were to be handled, namely the BD and its replacements to be decided by the GA, and the EB, i.e. President, Vice President and Treasurer were an issue of the BD. And the ratification of the EB was an issue of the GA. Dr. Stepic then starts with the election of the members of the BD, for another two years (since one of the total of 3 years, according to the statutes, has already passed).

Dr. Stepic starts with the two suggestions for the Austrian side (BD member no. 15 and 16), namely KR Ms. Jeannette Monadjemi and Dr. Horst Machu, who had both already been introduced. As to the Arab side (also BD member 15 and 16) H.E. Ahmed Al Midfa, Chairman of the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce & Industries is proposed. Mr. Al-Midfa who has received his nomination, is prepared to follow it, but is waiting for the answer of the General Union. A positive reply is presumed, yet his election is subject to this decision, which however could be considered a formality. Member number 16 was to be H.E. Mr. Isa Al Jaber, chairman and CEO of MBI International, who was not present, but was nominated. Dr. Stepic asks the GA whether there was an agreement or abstains or disapprovals on any of these four individuals. A positive voting was the result.

Dr. Stepic continues with the replacements, starting with the new Dean, H.E. Mrs. Taous Feroukhi, Ambassador of Algeria, replacing H.E. Mr. Al-Riyami, who had left Austria a week before and who had been very helpful to the AACC, especially but not only with regard to the communication with the Arab Ambassadors. Dr. Stepic stresses on the positive support of the former Dean and asks Ms. Sassarak to pass on the gratitude by the EB by also in writing to H.E. Mr. Al-Riyami.

The second replacement was Mr. Jafer Al Ghairi, President of the Iraqi Federation of Industries, replacing Mr. Mohamed Al-Tofuli.

Dr. Stepic asks the GA about any disapproval or obtains on these two nominations, resulting in an unanimous acceptance of the replacements from the Arab side.

Dr. Stepic continues with item no. c, referring to the EB being an issue of the BD. He addresses the BD, asking them to vote on the re-election of the EB in its present form, including an additional nomination of Mr. Henry Hafez, representing the Lebanese Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industries and CEO of Hafez Group, for Vice President .

As there are no abstains or disapprovals the re-election of the EB and the election of Mr. Hafez are approved of unanimously.

Dr. Strommer adds briefly that the nomination of Mr. Hafez in his specific function is ruled by the principle that an equal number of Arabs and Austrians should be represented in the EB and that this

principle had not been met so far, but was now being corrected. Dr. Strommer, being authorised to speak on behalf of Mr. Hafez notes that the latter was pleased to accept his function as a Vice President and would most probably quite often be able to take part in the EB-meetings due to his frequent trips to Austria.

Mr. Michail Wehbe, Chief of the Mission of Arab States and representing Mr. Toweigiri, Assistant of the SG of the Arab League, states that he had listened carefully to the reports so far. With regard to the mention of the BD he notes that since the foundation of the AACC there had been an SG and that he now did not hear anything about this position. He asks whether this was to remain or to change.

Dr. Stepic explains that as discussed in the previous GA, a solution regarding the termination of the work contract was found and agreed upon with Dr. Baharia in the summer and due to health reasons. Thereafter the EB had to find an interim solution and immediately informed Mr. Ghantous of the new situation and requested the nomination of an SG. Mr. Ghantous said he would come back to this subject. Dr. Stepic then openly outlines his view on the situation and considers it preferable to continue with the personnel setting as it was, also due to cost reasons, as the AACC was definitely not in the position to pay similar fees or salaries as were paid to Dr. Baharia and as were presented in the financial fact sheets. In fact the EB thought that with Dr. Machu in his competence and with his specific and highly suitable background the AACC could handle its tasks. However, the final decision to come up with a nomination was still outstanding and depended on Mr. Ghantous.

Mr. Kuzbari adds that he himself wrote to Mr. Ghantous several times, as the latter was responsible for the nomination, but had not yet received any reply.

Mr. Wehbe apologises for having mentioned that, but explains that the Arab League was giving major importance to that item and that they think that the AACC being the Austro-Arab Chamber, should remain as it was before, but at the same time become more efficient in order to strengthen the relations, give them more impetus, gain more members from the Arab side and play a more important role in the field of investment, as also mentioned by Mr. Kuzbari.

Dr. Stepic thanks Mr. Wehbe and adds that this was exactly in line with what the AACC wanted to achieve and that any individual contributions were highly welcome.

Then Dr. Stepic continues with item number

9. Other Matters

and asks whether there was anybody who wanted to raise his or her voice under this item.

H.E. Madame Feroukhi apologises for having been delayed and thanks very warmly for being able to attend the GA. Regarding her "replacing" H.E. Salim Riyami, as was mentioned by Dr. Stepic, she stresses that certainly she was not in the position to "replace" anybody. However, she would be able to succeed! Madame Feroukhi then assures her willingness to at least do as her predecessor did and that she would convince the Arab Ambassadors to Vienna to work with the AACC. H.E. Madame Feroukhi congratulates on the program for 2008, indicating that there was a lot to be done in times of great economic chances, the potential of which was not being used efficiently. This would particularly apply to the capacity building with regard to investments. H.E. Madame Feroukhi then congratulates on the new consultants, especially Mrs. Monadjemi whom she knows personally and also congratulates to the re-election of the president of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce Dr. Leidl, who was elected for the chair of the European Chambers of Commerce. Madame Feroukhi states that she could imagine Dr. Leidl to be helpful in AACC's common interests.

Dr. Stepic thanks H.E. Madame Feroukhi and adds briefly that indeed there was an ongoing and very intensive cooperation with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, as it would not make sense to duplicate but to coordinate the activities. And this in fact was being done. Dr. Stepic also notes that of course he did not think Madame Feroukhi to replace H.E. Riyami, in any other field but his function.

Dr. Stepic then refers to the more intensive cooperation, as supported and desired by Madame Feroukhi and notes that this would be highly appreciated. This in fact had not reached an ideal status so far. Due to the AACC's function for the Arab World a close cooperation with the representatives of the respective countries was necessary. And if this was not the case in the past, it needed to be worked on in the future, and the support of Madame Feroukhi in her function as Dean of the Arab Ambassadors was highly appreciated.

Before Dr. Stepic closes the meeting, Mr. Kuzbari wishes to place a remark. He outlines the efforts to be made by the AACC and stresses upon the support and also the importance of the physical attendance and presence of the Arab Ambassadors. Mr. Kuzbari states that often even in Arab Events the Arab Ambassadors and Arab Community were highly under-represented.

H.E. Mr. E. M. Fawzy, Ambassador of Egypt, adds that the actual strategy of the AACC situation should perhaps not be reducing cost and increasing activity but increasing cost and activity. This would of course require more funds.

He also briefly refers to the inconvenient timing of deciding on the budget, i.e. there is no time to react, as the budgetary period has almost passed. He also pleads for 2008 to have a more aggressive budget which, in turn, would cost more but also bring more.

Dr. Stepic responds that already in the few months when the new team took over, it became apparent that they were able to activate the chamber in a constructive manner. With regard to making any prospects about possible funds, Dr. Stepic tends to be careful. What he would like to promise, was their attempt to demonstrate that a lot of activities on a very short budget were possible and this was the aim. And once the AACC will have shown what they could achieve, sponsorships would become available. And this would eventually enable them to put the chamber on a much larger footing.

H.E. Mr. E. M. Fawzy agrees in principal with Dr. Stepic, but adds that he is looking at this from a purely business point of view and that reducing the cost too much might on the short term be essential, but might not be a long-term strategy.

Dr. Stepic explains that this of course would not apply to the long-term and that in fact there was a two-step plan. Jokingly he adds that those people working were doing their work almost for zero pay. As to the budget Dr. Stepic proposes that in future, in addition to the budget, an outlook on the coming year would be provided.

Dr. Stepic then specifically thanks the Ambassadors for their attendance, and Mrs. Gürtler for the cocktail and he invites all of the participants to lunch.

The meeting ended at 1.pm