



World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy Accepted WAZA President's Speech opening Taipei Conference of WAZA, Nov. 2004

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the presence of: Dr Pao-Chung Chen, Director of Taipei Zoo, Dr Bob Lacy, Chairman of CBSG, Mr Chris Peters, President of the IZE, Members of the WAZA Council, Colleagues, Members and Friends.

The conference we are about to commence is an important one for a number of reasons. Firstly, because it will be the first time that a WAZA Conference has been held in this part of the world, but more importantly, it will be the conference where we will accept the revised World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy. Notice, I say that we will accept it; I say this because all of the feedback I have received has been very positive and there is a definite and genuine wish to have the document accepted.

Having said that we will accept the document does not mean that I am suggesting that it will not change. I believe there may be some small details to be "sorted-out" but the document will be accepted in principle. Then the work will really begin as we decide upon the Action Plan which will allow us to implement the strategy. I tell you now that I have a goal in mind; I would like the completed document launched by next (Northern Hemisphere) spring. It would be a source of great pride and pleasure to me if it could be launched, simultaneously, around the globe at the same time as the WAZA Council, ISIS Board and CBSG Board are in Australia attending the combined ARAZPA / SEAZA Conference. I would urge all of you to be there.

At this point I wish to acknowledge the work of all of the authors and sub-authors for the nine chapters in the document. I acknowledge the efforts of the group who have worked so hard to bring the document to this point. While it is always dangerous to mention names in a case like this, I believe I would be remiss if I did not mention Jo Gipps, Miranda Stevenson, Onnie Byers, Peter Olney and Peter Dollinger. I congratulate you and, on behalf of the WAZA Council and Members, I thank you for your hard work and dedication.

While one of the most important reasons to be here is to accept this strategy, let us not forget the other reasons we are here. There will be a number of resolutions to be considered during the week, I commend these to your attention. The implementation of the new Constitution and Rules will occur during the week and I take this opportunity to thank the membership for accepting them. I believe these amended rules will make the WAZA a more responsive and effective organisation. I thank, in particular, the group led by one of our Past Presidents, Willie Labuschagne for its efforts and thank Colleague Steve Wylie, for his parliamentary skills. I thank the Council for their input during the past year.

During the week, I will have the pleasure of welcoming, on your behalf, a number of new members of the Association. We will also have the pleasure in hearing these members tell us a little about their organisations. To our new members, congratulations on your decision, I believe that

co-operatively we can do much more than we can as individuals. To new members, please make sure that you introduce yourselves to members and to you older members, if you see an unfamiliar face, please make the person welcome.

I look forward to hearing the papers that will be presented during the week and I congratulate Peter Dollinger and Dr Chen Pao-Chung on putting together such an interesting program. A program which, not only allows us to exchange information in a formal sense, but allows time for us to socialise and learn something about the Taipei Zoo and other organisations nearby. I am also looking forward to learning something about this fascinating and beautiful country during the next week. I always like to remind future hosts that this is a WAZA Conference and must obey some guidelines, but we do expect to get some local colour and feeling for culture and people of the host country. I am sure we will not be disappointed during the week.

I have had the pleasure of meeting the staff from the Taipei Zoo at a number of SEAZA Conferences and I am aware of the excellent work they are doing in the areas of conservation and conservation education. I am pleased that other colleagues from many different parts of the world will get the opportunity to hear about these activities.

Many of you have heard me before, on numerous occasions, say that the thing which makes this profession strong, and different, in the fact that we are a group of friends who share a common interest or passion. Being friends does not necessarily mean that we always agree on every point, it does mean that we can discuss matters and come to the best decision. To do otherwise, i.e., to always agree unquestionably is a sure road to mediocrity. I encourage you to discuss and debate. No particular group has the mortgage on knowledge and we all need to be open-minded enough to accept the other person's point of view. The resultant decision will be so much the sounder.

During this week we can celebrate our differences and enjoy each other's company. It is always a great pleasure to me to meet up with old friends and renew and strengthen friendships built up over more than a decade. It is also a great pleasure to meet and make new friends, which I do each year, friends who I know I will retain far into the future, perhaps even a life after WAZA.

Colleagues, I commend this conference to you, I commend Dr Chen Pao-Chung and his staff for their efforts, I encourage you to participate fully in all activities, both formal and informal. At the end of the week, I expect you all to be tired; tired but happy that we have done our best for the community and the animals we serve.

Ed McAlister, President, WAZA

