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Dear MELCOM member

I thought I would write to you all after the recent conference in Istanbul to put down on paper a few thoughts about the present and future of our organization. Firstly, I would wish to say that the meeting in Turkey was extremely successful, attended by some 30 members, and made possible by the kind help of a number of Turkish colleagues. We were able to visit three major library and archive collections, and heard papers on library and archive affairs in Turkey. We were most impressed to learn of the projects under way and also of the manner in which these collections are administered. Of course they are often housed in superb buildings which made our visits all the more interesting. We also visited the French Institute of Archeology and we are grateful to its director for hosting a party in our honour. Those of you who attended will, I am sure, agree with me that it was a useful and worthwhile meeting. I had great doubts beforehand about whether many members would attend and whether in fact we would be able to put together a programme. My worries proved to be unjustified but the smaller number of papers presented showed me that a less overburdened programme is preferable to one such as that in Durham in which we were always pressed for time. It also gave members more time to meet and talk to each other and to our Turkish colleagues.

At the end of the conference we had our usual round table discussion during which we learnt of member libraries' projects and problems and we also spoke about the future of MELCOM. Several felt that the organization is too loose at the moment and this was underlined by the fact that in mid-preparation for the Istanbul conference Geneviève Joly left Paris for Egypt and Françoise Barrès-Kotobi very kindly took over. She was left, however, with very imprecise ideas about who would attend and the details of the programme. I know that some of you, in order to obtain finance to attend conferences, need at least an outline programme to present to your authorities and also the name of a sponsoring institution. In the past we have usually had someone on the spot who took responsibility for organization and hospitality. In the

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Last case of Turkey this was more difficult and until the last moment we did ~~not~~ know the details of the programme and which institutions would be hosting us. I feel partly responsible for this and in the future we should try harder to be better organized.

As a result of our discussions it was decided that Françoise would in the near future write around to all those who have attended the last three MELCOM International conferences and to ask who among them would like to become permanent members of our organization in a more structured manner. Those who reply in the affirmative will be asked to pay a small subscription and will then become official members. It was also thought that we should soon hold elections for the three positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. These would be selected from among those who had joined officially.

It was agreed that the 1991 meeting should take place in Rabat in Morocco from Monday 22nd April until Wednesday 24th. Mrs Ben-Jelloun Laroui has kindly agreed to look after the arrangements which will include a day trip to Fez. We will, of course, be letting you know details of this nearer the time.

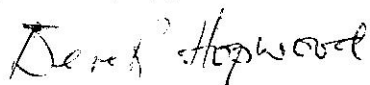
Means of keeping members in touch with each other and with developments in member institutions were discussed. The possibility of an informal newsletter was raised and this will be investigated further. In addition, the possibility of MELCOM International being affiliated to the new joint association of European Middle Eastern Studies Associations (EURAMES) was raised, particularly as this new body will issue its own newsletter to which we could possibly contribute.

It is always pleasant to welcome new members to our meetings and I was glad to see that we now have representatives from Switzerland and Denmark. I am grateful to Françoise for continuing to act as secretary.

I hope to see you in Morocco next year.

With all best wishes,

Yours ever



Derek Hopwood
(Chairman MELCOM International)