

The International Leprosy Association

The International Leprosy Association (ILA) is an international organization comprised of individual professionals actively engaged in leprosy work in medical, social and scientific fields. Also known by its French and Spanish equivalent names, *Association Internationale contra la Lepra* and *Asociacion Internacional de la Lepra*, the organization was established in 1931.

ILA objectives are "to encourage collaboration between persons of all nationalities concerned with leprosy work to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of leprosy and its control, to cooperate with any institutions or organizations concerned with leprosy, to help in any other practicable manner the anti-leprosy campaign throughout the world, and to publish a scientific journal of leprosy," according to the current ILA Constitution.

The International Leprosy Association is governed by an elected President. He or she is assisted by the immediate Past President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, four Vice-Presidents (one from each major geographical region of the world) and by the Editor of the *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY*. There is a Council made up of those officers and fifteen elected members selected on the basis of geographical representation.

The *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY AND OTHER MYCOBACTERIAL DISEASES*, official organ of the ILA, has been continuously published since 1933. The International Leprosy Association assumed the responsibility of organizing the International Leprosy Congress since the meeting in Cairo, Egypt, in 1938.

The International Leprosy Congress

The International Leprosy Congress, or its equivalent, has a history of 100 years, because an international meeting on leprosy held in Berlin in October 1897 was later recognized as the first of the series. Thus, this Congress, being held in Beijing, is the 15th as well as the "Centennial" Congress. There were two more Congresses prior to the establishment of the ILA in 1931, i.e., in Bergen in 1909 and in Strasbourg in 1922. As mentioned above, ILA took over the re-

sponsibility of organizing the Congress, the fourth in the series, in Cairo in 1938.

Since World War II, the Congresses have been held every 5 years with one exception, starting with the 5th in Havana in 1948, then in the following order: 6th in Madrid 1953, 7th in Tokyo 1958, 8th in Rio de Janeiro 1963, 9th in London 1968, 10th in Bergen 1973, 11th in Mexico City 1978, 12th in New Delhi 1984, 13th in The Hague 1988 and 14th in Orlando, Florida, U.S.A., 1993.