

Message from the CIF President (Finland 2009)

As I sit down and try
to come up with
something nice
and worthwhile
for all of you to
read, I wonder if it might
be interesting to know that
I, Domenico Antonio
Merola, better known as
Mimmo, was born in
Northern Italy (Milan) in
1953, grew up in Omaha
Nebraska (USA) where I
graduated from high
school before moving
back to Southern Italy with
my family in 1972,
completing my degrees in
Social Work and
Education. How about the
fact that I have been
working as a probation
officer for the Italian
Ministry of Justice since
1979? And that in 1985 I
won a Fulbright
Scholarship that allowed
me to further my studies
at The School of Social
Work of Michigan State
University? I don't know,
and would there be any
curiosity to learn that I've
been married to Tina
Marcello for 31 years, who
has given me a wonderful
son, Marco Cesare, today
age 30, my favourite
musician! How about the
fact that in 1987, after
seven years from my CIP
Program in the USA and at
the third attempt, my
initiative to form CIF Italia
came to be thanks to ten
other wonderful Italian
participants? Well, and

could it enthrall that I had already served on the CIF International Executive Committee (EC) for six years as exchange program coordinator and vice president from 1993 to 1999? How about the CIF Conference in Sassone Rome in 2001? "Would people be attracted by all of this?" It's the ultimate question I ask myself in this "internal dialogue"! Anyway, here I am with this new challenging endeavor of CIF International, with my first thought going to all the exceptional and dedicated people that have preceded me/us and made it possible to be here to continue our meaningful journey in our professional/cultural/social/personal/human and more exchanges. A special thank you goes to Zarin Gupta, as our immediate past president, for representing CIF International so proudly, elegantly and eloquently, but always with a direct line to the heart. Another special thank you to that real, simple and concrete treasure of our immediate past treasurer, Birgitta Holmes. You may not be on the EC anymore, but I hope that CIF will continue to benefit from both of you in many other ways, as you see fit!

With many of you we have just experienced the very pleasant and stimulating Conference that CIF Finland worked so hard to put together in a true spirit of dialogue, which our association is actually about, but it's always good to be reminded, isn't it? KIITOS (thank you for those who

don't speak Finnish)!
Even the Post
Conference Tours followed
this pattern, and though
our dearest friend Leo
called the Lapland one a
RISK CIF FINLAND POST
CONFERENCE TOUR, the
only risk we perceived at
the end would have been
not taking such advantage,
KIITOS once more! Talking
to the other groups that
went to Saint Petersburg
and the Baltic Countries,
CIF Russia, CIF Estonia,
CIF Latvia and other CIF
people also worked hard
to provide a memorable
experience. Could this
open CIF to an internal
tourism sector? Why
not?!

As mentioned in the
presentation speech of my
candidacy in Kiljava, the
phase we have been living
in CIF in recent years
seems to be taking us to a
new level of awareness,
the awareness that
something needs to
change in order to survive,
an awareness that has
given us the courage to
accept the insightful input
presented by Dorothy
Faller when she started
talking about that strange
internal process called
Strategic Planning some
years ago. Definitely an
internal dialogue for CIF
International that we are
still struggling with, but
that has helped us to take
a look at where we are and
where we would like to go.
Will we ever conclude it? I
don't know, but in this ongoing
process we are
surely allowing CIF to
grow. Within such
dialogue we hope to make
the Branches stronger and
more involved, which
means, as I see it, a
stronger CIF International.

I believe that this is paramount. I like to use the expression that “personally we can't do everything, but everyone can do something” (thank you Karin). Participation does make the difference and hopefully the Executive Committee can continue to serve as a motivating force, but then each one needs to respond through the Branches, contact persons, and individually where none of the previous exist. You can and should be protagonists in the process. WE all together are CIF and CIF will be what WE can and want to make it.

New CIF International President Mimmo Merola