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Chairperson's Corner

By Alan Cooke

I consider myself very privileged to serve you as the International Section Council chairperson for the 2010-11 council year. There are many interesting international activities under way in 2011 both by your council and by other parts of the Society of Actuaries, (SOA) so this is an exciting year on the international front. Before I discuss these activities in more detail, I would like to express my personal concern to our Japanese colleagues as the humanitarian crisis continues to unfold in Japan. The thoughts of International Section members everywhere are with the Japanese people as they face these difficult challenges.

As mentioned in my November blast e-mail our main 2011 objective is to increase our International Section membership by continuing and expanding the services we have been providing to our members. These services include our Ambassador Program, the *International News*, overseas seminars, SOA meeting sessions, international experience studies and the Country Feature Article competition. We are also reaching out to other sections to cosponsor more activities.

Alycia Slyck is coordinating our Ambassador Program this year, and she is working on expanding its activities and extending it to more countries in 2011. We added 11 countries to the Ambassador Program in 2010, bringing the total number of countries where we have ambassadors to 27.

We have already added an additional three ambassadors in 2011 and will be introducing them as well as future ambassadors to you through this newsletter. You are encouraged to visit the International Section page on the Society of Actuaries website to learn more about the Ambassador Program.

Our newsletter, *International News*, continues to provide a wide range of quality reading material under the leadership of our hardworking editor, Carl Hansen. We are conducting our popular Country Feature Article competition again this year and have decided to award a second as well as a first prize. The quality of these articles is always high, and we are finding it difficult to pick just one winner each year. You are encouraged to submit your entry by May 15, 2011. The rules for this year's competition were summarized in my January blast e-mail and may also be found on page 22 of this newsletter.

We have planned a seminar on international financial reporting for insurers in Hong Kong, Aug. 28-31, and several seminars are planned in other countries on this and other topics, such as variable annuities. I was invited to speak recently on global pension issues at the Current Issues in Retirement Benefits meeting sponsored by the Institute of Actuaries of India in Mumbai. My experiences there confirmed the value of the exchange of information that can occur at such seminars.

The International Section will again be sponsoring learning sessions at the SOA Annual Meeting as well as at other SOA meetings such as the Health Meeting and the Life & Annuity Symposium. Your suggestions on meeting topics are always very welcome. We will also be co-sponsoring the international reception at this year's Annual Meeting in Chicago, and we are planning to make it the biggest and best reception yet. We hope you can join us for this evening of fun and networking.

As Darryl Wagner reported in earlier issues of the *International News*, the SOA established a task force in 2010 to review its international membership strategy. The International Section has been well-represented on this important task force as I have been fortunate to serve on it along with Darryl, our staff partner Martha Sikaras and our Board liaison Ronald Poon-Affat. In January 2011, we had a full-day discussion to refine our strategic priorities and develop tactics. Our main conclusion was that the quality and portability of the SOA credential, as well as support of member communities, are our key global value propositions and that our future growth must not compromise this quality. At the March 7-8 SOA Board of Directors meeting, the Board provided guidance on and indicated its support of this strategic direction. A revised strategy will be presented to the Board at its June meeting, which will include a summary of information gathered from interviews of international members and, where possible, recommendations regarding international growth opportunities, as well as operational enhancements that support international mem-

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2011 INTERNATIONAL PENSIONS COLLOQUIUM IN EDINBURGH



The Pensions, Benefits and Social Security (PBSS) Section of the International Actuarial Association (IAA) is one of the seven sections of the IAA set up for the benefit of individual actuaries. The PBSS Section aims to bring together and support actuaries working in the private sector pensions practice area, as well as actuaries working for social security institutions and other public sector pension entities, including regulators and guarantee funds. Through its international membership and global perspective it is of particular interest to actuaries who want to learn from practices elsewhere in the world, and it is well-placed to address public policy issues relating to pensions and social security and to assist the actuarial profession to serve the public interest in this important field.

On September 26-27, 2011 the PBSS will hold a colloquium in Edinburgh, Scotland, co-hosted by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, with an overall theme of International Challenges in Providing a Safe and Sustainable Retirement. The meeting will be held at the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh and is expected to attract a thoroughly international level of participation. Sessions will include keynote lectures from eminent figures from the world of pensions, panel sessions on topical pension issues and workshops involving the presentation of submitted papers.

The topics for the conference and online registration are available through the PBSS website www.actuaries.org/Edinburgh2011/. Discounted participation fees are available for members of the PBSS Section—any actuary can join up by checking the box on the dues renewal for your own association, or, if you missed that opportunity, by contacting the IAA Secretariat directly (christian.levac@actuaries.org).

Edinburgh is an outstandingly beautiful city and offers participants opportunities for exploring its history, architecture and culture, as well as providing a great jumping-off point for exploring Scotland.

For more details, contact Pamela, the secretary to the Organising Committee (Pamela.Attieh-Durrant@actuaries.org.uk).

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ber communities. We will keep you updated on the task force's progress and its impact on the International Section's activities.

An SOA Advisory Team made up of SOA members in Canada has been recently set up that will work on the business plan for the SOA to more fully engage its Canadian members. The SOA's goal is to increase the value of its research and continuing education programs to our Canadian members and candidates. To do this, the SOA will use a strategy of establishing a closer partnership with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, developing dedicated Canadian educational programs, and adding the new role of a local Canadian staff person.

We very much want to hear from you on how our council can better serve you. Please do not hesitate to contact our section specialist, Jill Leprich, at jleprich@soa.org with your suggestions. □