



## **75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY PRESS RELEASE HOTEL SCRIBE, PARIS, 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2009**

On the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of Skål International more than 250 tourism professionals from around the world have gathered in Paris. The celebrations started with a sumptuous Gala Dinner on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in the Galerie des Fêtes, in the French National Assembly under the auspices of M. Bernard Accoyer, President of the Parliament and Mr. Ertugrul Gunay, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey who sponsored the dinner and the publication of a book illustrating the history of Skål over the last 75 years.

In addition to Skål members and special guests from other International Organisation, the Gala Dinner was also attended by M. Hervé Novelli, Secretary of State in charge of tourism, French Government, The Presidents of French/Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Committee, Mr. Michel Diffenbacher and Mr. Yasar Yakis, Mr. Thierry Baudier, Director General, Maison de la France, the Commercial Director, Air France, Mr. Christian Boireau and a large number of Honorary and Past and Past Presidents of Skål International.

The celebrations continued on "World Skål Day" 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009 with a visit to Père Lachaise cemetery, where a wreath was laid at the tomb of Florimond Volckaert Founder President of the organisation and considered the Father of Skål.

A networking luncheon followed on board the Bateaux Parisiens attended by more than 250 members worldwide.

A special plaque was unveiled by the President of Skål International, Hulya Aslantas at the Hotel Scribe to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The first meeting of Skål was held in Hotel Scribe in April 1934 and this is already marked by a plaque unveiled in 1954 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

In her address, the President of Skål International, Hulya Aslantas said "It is indeed a great pride and honour for me to be to be the President of the Skal World in such a milestone year.

She added that Skål had to make the celebration of such a calibre that it would mark this special year and be an opportunity to revamp the positioning of our movement, however above all whatever we make, the first challenge was to try to be worthy of our ancestors who left us such a glorious history.

She said that in the 1930's tourism was not considered an industry and its giant dimensions of today could not even have been imagined. Yet when we look back and make a careful analysis, Skål International remains to be the first and world's largest civil initiative in tourism with senior professionals from all branches of the industry under its umbrella. Skål is present in 90 Countries with a very solid structure with over 20,000 members.

With these unique features, Skal International has gone through changing times, taking different attitudes and approaches. At the very beginning the emphasis was on "Friendship and Amicale", the basic idea that is still one of the core values - to develop friendly ties between the professionals.

With tourism becoming an industry, especially in the 80's with increased competition and faster life styles – Skål members started realising its networking power and "Doing Business Among Friends" concept was introduced by President Matanyah Hecht. The first Lady President Mary Bennett, chose as her Presidential theme, "Tourism through Friendship & Peace", underlining the important role Skål members could play in that respect, a theme which had been highlighted earlier by former President, Uzi Yalon.

In 1998 first "SKALITÉ" Quality Awards were launched, to draw attention to quality when mass tourism was gaining power.

In 2002 Skål International launched the Ecotourism Awards to help create a global awareness to "sustainability" which a few years later was adopted by President Litsa Papathanassi as her theme: "Sustainable Development in Tourism" pointing out to Skål members

and to the world the values we should carefully be watching along with our other professional activities.

Hulya Aslantas said she had chosen as her presidential theme, "Bridging the Cultures" to remind Skål members of the role we could assume as "Ambassadors of Peace" – to make sure our travel programmes focus on exchanging cultures, which in turn will help to increase understanding between nations and eventually contribute to world peace which is so necessary these days.

We are very proud that an organization which has "friendship and amicale" as its roots has continued tackling such important topics. Moreover being who we are and where we stand today as "World Leaders in Tourism" she also believed that it is our duty to assume responsibilities towards the healthy and sustainable growth of the tourism Industry.

The President wished all Skål members worldwide, many more years of Happiness, Good Health, Friendship and Long Life,

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