The BIE celebrates its 80th Anniversary!

Vicente González Loscertales

BIE: 80 years of existence, 160 years of tradition

The history of the BIE and the history of Expos are inseparable. Though the BIE was created only 80 years after the first World Exhibition in London in 1851, some commissioners general had after the Expo of Paris in 1867 already prepared a memorandum in order to establish rules for these big events. Four Expos were enough to predict their usefulness, they were so important that they justified the need for a harmonious and concerted development between Nations.

The creation of the BIE in 1931 was the outcome of dialogue and reflection that experienced interruptions, new beginnings, and change of direction, which mirrored the historical conditions on one side and the different national realities of the participating Nations on the other.

The genesis of this course shows the essential role of national Committees, made up of industry, experts, exhibitors and public representatives, which organised two important conferences in Paris in 1907 and in Brussels in 1908. If professionals highlighted the crossroads of interests inside the Expos: business, technological progress and international public relations, the important political powers of this era were conscious of the governmental stakes linked to the Expos. This is why the final approach that led to the creation of the BIE was launched by governments, and in particular, in 1912 by Germany, setting up a diplomatic conference on that topic.

The Berlin Conference of 1912 saw 16 committed countries and started to define the frequency, the geographical rotation and the terminological foundations. Unfortunately the outbreak of the War did not allow the ratification of more than 50%.

Hence one had to wait until 1927, when the International Chamber of Commerce revived the idea, which was seized by France. The configuration of Europe and of the world, however, had changed and the efforts that had been started in Berlin had to be resumed from the beginning. 1928 was the year when an international conference, which gathered 40 countries, began in Paris and provided the first regulations of the Expos.

The time of the institutional construction under the direction of Maurice Isaac endowed the BIE with the legal instruments and a regulatory framework that allowed and still allows its functioning.

The entrance of the BIE was made with the on-going Expo in Barcelona in 1929 and other Expos that were being prepared. This was a time of important activity that was to be interrupted by the War, which also caused the cancellation of the Expo scheduled in Rome in 1942.

The need to adapt and to improve several regulatory aspects to the needs of each era and in view of experiences was felt very soon. After the 2nd World War, the BIE introduced some modifications that had become necessary due to the evolution of the relationships between Nations, of the technical advances, and of the means of communication (Protocols of May 10th 1948, November 16th 1966). In 1959, the BIE also established contact with the AIPH (International Association of Horticultural Producers) and included the International Horticultural Exhibitions to its field of interests.

The most important modifications were made with the Protocol of 1972 that came into force on June 9th 1980. Negotiations for a more flexible framework, which brought the 1982 amendment into being, had given rise to a proliferation of Expos.

This institutional situation was corrected with the 1988 Amendment that became effective on July 19th 1996 thus contributing to the restoration of an appropriate legal structure and to the institutionalisation of the current principles and resolutions.

Besides the development of an appropriate legal framework and the institutionalisation of general principles, the BIE has led a wider and more political reflection, in particular on the themes of the Expos and their contribution to global progress. So, among the topics of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on June 8th 1994, future Expos must respect the environment and strive to become innovative and educational laboratories for sustainable development.

For years, the BIE has not stopped growing and today has 157 member States, thus ensuring a complete geographical representation.

To date and at this hour of celebrating its 80th anniversary, the BIE is facing new challenges: increased political value; Expos that see a more and more active participation of developing countries; Expos that contribute to the development of the image of the countries; a socially aware participation contributing to the solutions of important issues of our era as shown in the themes of current Expos; a closer cooperation with other international organisations for a better global public dialogue on important challenges for humanity.

The BIE must carry on this path towards a promising future by giving more space beside the Nations to new actors, by intensifying the collaboration between member States and by calling for a more important commitment by Nations.

Vicente González Loscertales, Secretary General of the BIE from 1993 to date

FLASH BIE The 80th Anniversary of the Bureau International des Expositions was on January 19th, 2011
“On October 26th, 1912 a diplomatic convention was signed whose aim was to regulate the organisation of the International Exhibitions.

Sixteen States appended their signature to this act. They were all involved in the procedure of ratification at the outbreak of the war. As a consequence, this ratification never occurred and the agreement known under the name of Convention of Berlin stayed without legal power but not worthless in the doctrinal point of view.”

Maurice Isaac, First Director of the Bureau International des Expositions from 1931 to 1939

… A la différence de la Convention de Berlin qui, ayant pour but de réglementer les expositions, n’avait posé que des principes, la Convention du 22 novembre 1928, poursuivant le même objectif, a prévu dans son article 10, la création d’un Bureau international chargé de veiller à l’application de l’accord intervenu.

Le Bureau ne devait naturellement entrer en fonction qu’au moment de l’adoption du texte par une dizaine de nations du monde. La Convention a confié d’autre part au Bureau, en même temps qu’un contrôle sur l’organisation des Expositions à venir — une œuvre réglementaire importante à accomplir — classification générale des Expositions, règlement général type, règlement pour l’attribution des récompenses. Cette tâche est achevée, tout au moins les bases en sont jetées, car il est entendu que cette législation nécessaire doit s’adapter chaque jour aux besoins de l’expérience. Néanmoins, telle qu’elle est réalisée, elle permet aujourd’hui de faire face complètement à ce problème si complexe des expositions. J’ai donc cru le moment venu de systématiser les solutions adoptées, de mettre en ordre théorique dans les nombreux dispositifs de ces textes, d’en expliquer la raison d’être et parfois aussi l’insuffisance. Veuillez, je vous prie, accueillir ce travail comme le témoignage de la gratitude que je vous garde, et que je garde aussi aux délégués Présidents et Membres des Commissions qui ont été associées à l’œuvre entreprise. Les encouragements et les trois ont beaucoup aidé dans l’accomplissement de la tâche qui m’a été confiée.

Je voudrais qu’ils trouvent dans les pages qui vont suivre comme un écho des délibérations auxquelles ils ont pris part. Le rapport de cette collaboration qui, pour certains, remonte à 1928 leur sera, j’en suis sûr, agréable. J’insiste aussi que cet ouvrage deviendra, pour eux — et en sera un récompendium — un instrument de travail utile leur permettant de parachever plus aisément l’œuvre commencée.

Maurice Isaac.
The Bureau International des Expositions, BIE, celebrates its 80th Anniversary!

When the Bureau International des Expositions was created in 1931, the office was on avenue de la Bourdonnais in the 7th district of Paris. In February 1969, it was transferred in the 16th district, avenue Victor Hugo.

With the increasing development of the organisation at the beginning of the XXIth century, the BIE transferred its headquarters, at the end of 2003, in a larger and better adapted building situated at 34 avenue d’Iéna and the official inauguration of the new BIE headquarters took place on December 11th, 2003 in the presence of delegations and high personalities of all the BIE Member States.

Thus located, the BIE is surrounded with famous buildings, the legacy of seven World Expos hosted by the city of Paris from 1855 till 1937, which came to shape the landscape of this Parisian district.

"What gives our dreams their daring is that they can be realized", wrote Le Corbusier

Some examples:

Napoleon III chose the site of the Champ-de-Mars for the World Expo of 1867. The Eiffel Tower, built for the World Expo of 1889, was supposed to be demolished after the Exhibition. A little further away, the Railways Station of Orsay, now the Musée d’Orsay, was inaugurated on the occasion of the World Expo of 1900 and was, at that time, the terminus of the Company of the Railways from Paris to Orléans.

Hyphen between the left bank and the right bank of the Seine, the Alexandre III Bridge, a steel arch inaugurated for the World Expo of 1900 and whose first stone of the structure was put by Czar Nicolas II of Russia, symbolized the friendship between France and Russia. On the column of the right bank, downstream, we can read: "On April 14th, 1900, Emile Loubet, President of the French Republic, opened the World Expo and inaugurated the Bridge Alexandre III".

Built on the axis of the esplanade of the Invalides, it leads to the Petit Palais, Museum of Fine Arts, and to the Grand Palais, both built on the occasion of the World Expo of 1900. The " Grand Palais of Fine Arts" was built on the land of the vast but uncomfortable Palace of the Industry, built for the World Expo of 1855.

The Palais of Tokyo, inaugurated for the World Expo of 1937 under the name of "Palais of the Museums of Modern Art", presented a retrospective of French art; today, it presents XXth and XXIth century Art Works.

The Palais Trocadéro, built on the occasion of the World Expo of 1878, existed until the World Expo of Paris 1937

"Trocadero" was the name of a Spanish fortress near Cadiz, in Andalusia, Spain, which had been occupied by the French army in 1823. King Louis XVIII organized on the hill of Chaillot in 1826 a military commemoration of this victory. On this occasion, a temporary triumphal arch was raised and the ground lied fallow until 1878.


For the World Expo of 1937, the architects Carlu, Boileau and Azéma then built the two side wings in a quarter arc of a circle by reusing the skeleton of the Trocadero palace of 1878. The former dome will be replaced by a square and the former building will be covered with a sober, impressive and typical neo-classic facade of the 1930s.

As for the underground huge aquarium built for Expo 1878, it will close in 1985 for safety reasons to open again in 2006, after a long period of renovation.

You can see other buildings and pavilions, legacy of the Parisian Exhibitions, which were moved around the capital.

To have access to the Library and to the historic funds of Exhibitions, do not hesitate to contact us to ask for an appointment. We will be pleased to welcome you in the BIE, in the world of Expos!

BIE-Paris, April 2011
President of the BIE (2003-2007), Honorary President of the BIE, Wu Jianmin

This year marks the 80th anniversary of BIE. At 80, BIE remains healthy and robust. Few international organizations enjoy such longevity. BIE’s birth accompanied the industrial revolution which had a great impact on mankind. Its growth is closely linked with the progress of human civilization. Throughout the 80 years, BIE has always worked hard to fulfill its three missions.

First, to display the latest achievements of human civilization. Expo was born of industrial revolution in London in 1851. The industrial revolution brought about tremendous changes in science and technology and, as a result, greatly improved people’s lives. If we look back at past Expos, we can see that almost all the latest achievements of industrial revolution were first exhibited at the Expos which served as an excellent occasion for exchange and promotion of scientific and technological innovations.

Second, to draw attention to the problems facing mankind. Human civilization advances in the course of solving various problems that appeared in different times. Shanghai Expo is a case in point. Its theme is: “better city, better life.” In today’s world, urbanization is entering a new stage at a global scale. A large number of developing countries are rising. In 2007, urbanization rate exceeded 50%. In the next 30-50 years, the rate may be as high as 70%. This rapid urbanization is causing huge problems, such as environment pollution, shortage of labor force, just to name a few. Shanghai Expo has told us that we are facing tremendous challenges during urbanization.

Third, to contribute to the solution of these problems. Let me again cite Shanghai Expo as an example. In the 184 days of the Expo, people from various quarters of the world came to Shanghai to engage in a global brain storming in an effort to offer some solutions to the problems facing mankind. This undoubtedly will help solve problems in urbanization and indeed also inspire more ideas for making the city a better place to live. Herein lies BIE’s role in advancing human civilization.

I hope that we will make a good use of the 80th anniversary of BIE to promote its purposes, principles and ideals for the benefit of the whole world.

Wu Jianmin, Honorary President of the BIE, President of the BIE (2003-2007)

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the BIE, it gives me great pleasure to observe the impressive progress and the extraordinary contribution of the BIE and Expos to our world.

Thinking back to my first meeting of the Executive Commission in 1993, I see an organisation that has grown from a geographically concentrated membership of 46 countries and a modest headquarters, to an organization with a professional staff, a rigorous system of enquiry missions and event regulation and planning, a state of the art facility, and a membership that is a better mirror of the world than most of the existing global governance architecture. Along the way, the BIE has orchestrated the hosting of the largest scale events in the last and current century. The themes addressed at Lisbon (Oceans), Hanover (Nature and Technology) and Shanghai (Better cities) were prescient. These and other expos offered a venue for dialogue and spurred the sharing of expertise, technology and solutions in subject areas that are of prime interest even today. Every expo that I have seen from 1992 to 2010 has left an impressive legacy in terms of urban architecture and quality of life. But more importantly, each has achieved the challenge of strengthening the sense of nationhood while also enhancing commitment to the global commons. Most promising however, is the ongoing power of Expos to stimulate audiences and shape the minds and perspectives of generations of youth. Therein lies the future, one of progress built on education, hope, solidarity and peace among peoples.

Carmen Sylvain, Chairman of the Executive Committee (2001-2007)

Who would have thought in 1940 that the Bureau International des Expositions, born around ten years before, would survive the cataclysm which struck the world? However, once the peace returned, people attended a sensational revival with the World Expo project of Brussels, which the BIE had to carry on.

The next decades saw advancements on several levels: at first a profusion of specialized exhibitions on the most varied topics, showing that beyond the great exhibitions, these events could turn judiciously to ways of answering the need of specialization of the modern world. At the same time the movement spread in North America and in the Far East. The BIE, which supported this orientation and this expansion, saw the number of its Members States double with the turning of the century, which in itself is a testimony of the constant interest for this kind of event.

During this period, the BIE is not only going to exercise its statutory functions of regulation and control, but, with the persevering work of its committees, it is also going to finalize rules whose aim will be to homogenise the rights and duties of the organisers as well as of the participants. At instigation of the Secretary General, will it not go as far as to play the role of adviser with the organisers, who often have no experience?

The wild rhythm of the exhibitions during the 80s led the Bureau to reflect on new measures to moderate the candidatures and avoid the tiredness or the abstention of its members because of the high expenses required by these events. A decisive turn was taken with the adoption of stricter rules of interval from one Expo to another and with the introduction of a new category, the “recognized” Exhibitions, which can be held in the interval between two “registered” Exhibitions.

The BIE is now able to support the dynamics of the Expos while insuring the necessary balance between the requests of the organizing countries and the potentialities of the participating countries.


BULLETIN 2010/2011 - 80th anniversary of the BIE – The Living Ocean and Coast : Diversity of Resources and Sustainable Activities

Marcel Galopin
Ole Philipson

Eighty years ago, in Paris, a group of nations decided to put order in the world of the World Expositions. They created the BIE and entrusted it with the fate of all future EXPOS.

Some twenty years of my own life have been dedicated to the EXPOS: EXPO92 Seville, EXPO93 Taejon, EXPO98 Lisbon, EXPO2000 Hanover, EXPO2005 Aichi, EXPO2008 Zaragoza and EXPO2010 Shanghai. Seven highly successful and yet very different EXPOS - each with its own flavour and each very different from all the others.

Experience tells us that an EXPO traditionally bears the indelible mark of the host country and - of the theme chosen. During the last 20 years, nevertheless, some important changes have taken place in the BIE world. First of all the BIE has increasingly become directly involved in the preparation and execution of each EXPO. Thanks to this involvement - as a meticulous partner - the rules of the BIE, rules that have withstood the passing of time, have been more closely adhered to by the organizers than ever before. This increased respect for the BIE rules has been to great benefit for each and every EXPO.

All of these seven EXPOS have been acclaimed as successes both in the host countries and by the international media thus creating an extremely positive atmosphere for future EXPOS.

Gilles Noghès

THE BIE AND WORLD EXPOS
History – Development - Globalization

World Expos are an integral part of contemporary History. The Bureau International des Expositions at first supervised their development. But today, the BIE has taken the dimension of the globalization, which is applied in all fields and carried on the transformation of EXPOS. Expos no longer represent only a fantastic vector of communication for the technological advances. Recent Expos immerse us into the turmoil of human evolution and try to show new directions. Since Hanover 2000, a fearless way of conceiving Expos allowed to increase public awareness of the current realities.

While the World Expos at the end of the XIXth and the beginning of the XXth centuries were symbols of progress, the visitors who went through the paths of AICHI 2005 and of SHANGHAI 2010 realized that the world has changed era and that humankind now has to take his fate into his own hands in a more responsible way so that his environment remains sustainable. Together with nature, other essential themes have started to be addressed, such as the oceans, the city, climatology, health and also our food supply, which will be the theme of Expo MILANO 2015. At the same time, the participation in the decision-making of the BIE, as well as in the Expos, of most of the developing countries gives its entire significance to the concept of universality cultivated by the Expos since their origin.

It was striking, even more during the last Expos, to notice the emergence of a tremendous solidarity between nations and between participants. That is why it is so difficult for all the people involved in the Expos to leave this space, mirror of intelligence and exchange while they carry their hopes towards the next event.

Fortunately, the BIE, firmly restructured since 1993, under the leadership of a visionary and rallying Secretary General, continues to inspire brilliant candidacies for Universal and International Expos as well as the magnificent Horticultural Expos approved by the International Association of Horticultural Producers.

Gilles Noghès, Honorary President of the BIE, President of the BIE (1993-1999)
Jennifer McQueen

The BIE pays tribute to Jennifer McQueen who has just left us. Mrs McQueen was a precious witness of Expo' 67 Montreal.

When she knew that she was very sick, she wished to make a donation to the BIE of all her archives concerning the World Festival of Expo' 67 in which she actively worked.

Ann Farris, a very close friend of Mrs McQueen, inform the BIE that one of her last wishes had been to write herself the BIE's address on packages to be sent and that she had felt relieved to know that the memory of her work was going to be passed on. The documents reached us a few days after her death. We offer our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends and we are very grateful for her generosity and contribution to the enrichment of the archives of the BIE on Expos.

Bon-woo Koo

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Bureau International des Expositions.

Since its creation, Expos contributed to the development and to the blooming of human civilization throughout the 20th century. It is the BIE, as guardian of the International Convention signed in Paris in 1928, which always supplies not only the statutory framework but also the exceptional quality in these prestigious world events. In addition, International Expos are facing a new challenge today: how to contribute to resolve global problems of our time, such as climate change, poverty, urbanization, etc.

Korea, which, for several decades, participates with a great ardour in the diverse activities of the BIE is preparing to host an Expo in 2012 in the City of Yeosu under the theme: "The Living Ocean and Coast : Diversity of Resources and Sustainable Activities". Korea wishes, with this Expo, to help the international community in the field of the marine environment.

I should like to express once again my sincere congratulations for the 80th Anniversary of the BIE by wishing it a big continuous success in the years to come.

Bon-woo Koo, Chairman of the Administration and Budget Committee (2001-2003)
Spain maintains for the XIXth century a strong relation between International Exhibition and urban transformation by the creation of big landscaped entertaining parks. Now, the example of Zaragoza shows the possible outlets for a post-Expo city within the framework of the organisation of an international Horticultural Expo in Zaragoza in 2014.

It is a fact that, since the XIXth century and the first World’s Fair of 1888 in Barcelona, Spanish cities maintain strong links with the organisation of exhibitions and the legacy of big urban parks. With Barcelona 1888, industrial Spain opens its frontiers to Europe and the first Iberian Expo is recognized as a success that allows the region of Catalonia and Spain to acquire an industrial legitimacy at the European level. The city also inherits the Park of the Citadel with more than 56 hectares for the happiness of the population, which wished such a space of recreation and relaxation. It is moreover a place with a strong symbolic value for Catalonia where, on September 11th, the National Day, called Diada, is held yearly. As for the Parliament of the Generalitat of Catalonia, it is located in the centre of the park.

Currently, Michel Corajoud, the great landscape gardener of the School of Architecture and Landscape of Versailles is redrawing the circulation system of the green space inherited from 1888 and he suggests to return it to the proper essence of those whom the first planners of the project wanted to give to this Mecca of the "catalanism".

Some years later, in 1929, it is the turn of Sevilla and again Barcelona, to organise an international exhibition, which, for Barcelona, marks the rhythm of the urbanisation of the mysterious hill of Montjuich but also its "enjardinement", beautiful Catalan word which shows the will to make this space the biggest urban park of Spain with its 210 hectares. Nowadays, the infrastructures inherited from the exhibition set up the Fira de Barcelona surrounded with magnificent pergolas that the two greatest Mediterranean landscape gardeners and friends, the French JCN Forestier and the Spanish Mario Rubio i Tudurí restored giving them their lost value. Moreover, at the same time, Seville organizes an international Exhibition, which completes the exhibition of its North rival while it presents great architectural and landscaped long-lasting realisations as the Park Maria Luisa created also by Forestier.

It is then necessary to wait until 1992 and the World Expo of Sevilla to restart the story of the Spanish Exhibitions with the media success and the requalification of the Cartuja Island as a Business, Leisure and Research Centre. A large modern and entertaining park with a lot of fountains is offered to Sevillans who, every weekend, choose by a large majority this new public site.

Then, Zaragoza 2008 opens a new page in the story of Expos in Spain, which is at present the only country to have hosted two Expos within seventeen years. The relations and the activities between the various actors of the project (Spanish State, Region of Aragon, Municipality of Zaragoza and BIE) are an example of shared decision-making governance which supply together directions and activating urban forms of the lifeblood of a nation always in progress in a globalization context that allows an expected requalification of the banks of the River Ebro. These banks were reorganized thanks to the plantation of numerous shrubs and the creation of gardens as the Park of Ranillas for the satisfaction of the population of Zaragoza as well as the famous Ebro Park inside the site of the Expo. Today Zaragoza applies again to host an International Horticultural Expo and completes the 2008 installations with the post Expo creation of a big Fair and Congress complex.

In conclusion, the organisation of an Expo benefits not only the district and the site of the Expo itself but also the entire city, which wants to look smart to welcome the tourists. The main axes or water ways as the Ebro are privileged and on the very long term, parks become laudatory references and a memorial site thanks to the spirit of the place which is drawing out making reference to the short-lived presence of an expected long-lasting and beneficial Expo in the long term by the presence of a green presence-memory.

Milano 2015 tends to take example with these green corridors, its dirt tracks and water canals which will guide the visitors up to the World Expo Site across 50 000 trees which will be planted for the occasion in the city. Moreover, the planners want the Expo area to be a new garden of Eden with all the world horticultural varieties in connection with a theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", a kind of utopia coming true one time in cities more and more sustainable.

**Patrice Ballester, University of Pau (Francia), associated researcher at the Laboratory GEODE CNRS UMR 5602. MSH Toulouse. Doctor in Geography, Urbanist.**
World Expo BRUSSELS 1935

Liege and Antwerp declared with honour that they would organise the Expo of 1930 to celebrate the Centenary of the Independence of Belgium. At that time, it was decided that Brussels would organise, five years later, a World and International Expo.

The Project Managers were Mr. Adolphe Max, President of the Executive committee; Earl Adrien van der Burch, Commissioner General of the Government; the vice-presidents of the Executive committee, Mr. Raymond Vaxelaire and Dr Joseph Van de Meulebroeck; Mr. Edouard Caspers, Deputy Commissioner General, Mr. Charles Fonck, Director General of the Expo.

The Exhibition was organised in the site of Osseghem, a soft inclined 150 hectare park overlooking above the city. The perspectives, the decoration and the illuminations were carefully prepared to emphasize the palaces and pavilions leaving the visitors an unforgettable memory.

Joseph Van Neck, chief architect of the Expo handled the construction of the Stadium of Heysel, inaugurated in 1930, the main palaces and numerous pavilions. The Grand Palais is undeniably his most important realisation and was going to become the “highlight” of this Expo. These long-lasting Halles would receive, from 1936, all kind of events including trade fairs.

The main purpose is not to restore everything, but to revive one or several elements from its time and of its atmosphere, at the same time as a reflection of this event. The main objective of the reconstruction is to give life to what has disappeared.

Within the framework of Expo 1935, it was necessary to locate the symbolic pavilions of their time, with a preference for thematic pavilions rather than national pavilions. Oriented by the Professor Cooman, an important expert on this exhibition, the choice had to be made among a group of pavilions near the Grand Palais, designed by the Belgian architect Henri Lacoste, who had already become famous in Expo 1931 Paris by realizing the pavilion of Belgian Congo.

Henri Lacoste designed for this Expo the Catholic Life Pavilion, the Pavilion of Greece, the Gallery of the Decorative Arts, the Kiosk of Sculptors and the Palace of the General Commissionership. These last three elements were included together in the Valley of the Artists, realized in an Art Deco style, full of exoticism, with a lot of originality for time, with painted frescoes, bricks and tiles varnished in lively colours. All nested in a bosky bower.

In order to preserve the heritage connected to the history of Exhibitions and on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary of its creation, the BIE is implementing a project of reconstruction in 3D of the key elements of these great expos, which have marked history.

Although the Expo of Brussels 1935 was decided before the signature of the International Convention of 1928, the organizers required the registration of the Expo to be in conformity with the BIE regulations. This Expo is thus an integral part of this big project.

We invite you to discover it in the "video library" of the web site of the BIE: