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IRC NEWS – 019

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HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS VISITING THE INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER



Group photo with Public Affairs Officer Sharon White presenting the IIP Publications and a selective Nouveaux Horizons titles to Mr. Stephane Odrekou

On May 8th, 45 members of the Cocody local section of Amnesty International visited the Information Resource Center. The program consisted in a PowerPoint presentation of the IRC activities, services and resources available in Human Rights issues. The IRC guided tour was an opportunity for participants to get access to print materials as well as online resources such as the Human Rights headline of America.gov. Participants expressed their pleasure to have access to relevant

and accurate information and resources they can benefit from the IIP new Web site www.america.gov. They were particularly impressed by the section on *'Heroes in the Fight for Human Rights'*. All of them registered for IRC membership card. The Director of the Amnesty International-Cocody section was pleased to receive some documentation, especially the e-journals and the IIP Publications *'Introduction to Human Rights* and *'Outline of US Legal System'*.

Book of the Month of May

‘The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development’

On May 22, 2008, Public Affairs Abidjan organized a conference based on the Nouveaux Horizons title ‘*The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development*’. The 85 participants included the Representative of the Minister of Communication, the President of the National Television board of directors, Economists, Media professionals, Government Officers, Businessmen from the public and private corporate sectors, NGO leaders, academics, and students attend the event. The panel was composed of Massinga Ervin, the Political and Economic Officer of the US Embassy, Louis Amede Speet, the President of the National Association Economic Journalists, and Dr. Toure-Diabate, a Teacher and Researcher from the University of Cocody. The welcome address was delivered by the PAO Sharon White who focused on the key role of free press in forging a sustainable and transparent society by disseminating reliable information accessible to the public. Then followed the panellists who on turn exposed the Medias situation in Cote d’Ivoire compared to the case studies from the book. They underlined

that it is essential for Medias to operate in a favourable environment in order to achieve their role as catalysts to social development and economic growth.

The audience attested the usefulness of the book. By assessing the Ivorian Media general situation, they deplored the irresponsibility of some journalists who sometimes provide articles likely to impact negatively the operation of free and ethical press. Thus, they considered the book as a valuable reference tool for Medias professionals. The panellists appealed to each journalist personal responsibility, frankness, and ability to document their writings with true and reliable sources. They urged them to work according to their job ethical requirements, but not incline to a specific political figure or party. PAS presented 100 copies of the IIP E-journal on ‘*Media Making Change*’ to the participants. The event was covered by print press and broadcasted by the National Television



A partial view of the participants



The panelists from left to right: Louis Amede (Economic journalist), Massinga Ervin (Political Officer), and Dr. Toure-Diabate (Teacher- Researcher)

Cross-Cultural Dialogue

A Conversation with American Students

On May 28, 2008, visiting students from Oral Roberts University and the University of Virginia had a lively information sharing conversation with English speaking students from the universities of Bouake and Cocody in Côte d'Ivoire.

The 20 visiting students, who had arrived in Cote d'Ivoire two days earlier from Mali, were warmly welcomed by 15 Ivorian university students, who had been anxiously waiting in the Information Resources Center at Embassy Abidjan for the rare opportunity to engage American students in a face-to-face conversation. The conversation, which began with the traditional Ivorian welcome - the lead of the Ivorian students' group first consulting with his "adviser" and then asking the visitors for the "news" - was followed by self introductions. The topics of the conversation included campus life, the role of student unions, how students can effect change in their countries, diversity, American values, security, war,

reasons for studying English, presidential elections, freedom and, patriotism.

The highlight of the conversation was the presidential elections in both countries. The visiting students asked about the noted keen interest of Africans/Ivorian in the ongoing US presidential election primaries as well as the Ivorian student's views on the presidential elections, which are scheduled for November 30 in Cote d'Ivoire. The overwhelming response from the hosting students on the keen interest on US elections was the support for the Democratic candidate Barack Obama for his African ancestry. On the presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire, the hosting students expressed optimism and vowed to do their part to ensure that "war does not come to Cote d'Ivoire again."

At the end of the program the visiting students gave IIP publication "*This is America*" to their new Ivorian friends and exchanged contact information.



US Presidential Election 2008 Conference:

‘Man of the People: The Life of John McCain’

PAS Abidjan initiated a series of conferences called ‘Get Acquainted with the Presidential Candidates’, aimed at reinforcing the Ivorian public knowledge of the United States electoral system along with biographical information on the Democrat and Republican main presidential candidates.

The third conference organized on May 29, 2008, was based on McCain biography ‘*Man of the People: the Life of John McCain*’. The PAO Sharon White delivered the welcome address underlining that the US Embassy in Cote d’Ivoire does not intend to give a special support to any candidate.

The program gathered 52 participants including political leaders, woman leaders, university teachers and students, media professionals, religious leaders and NGOs. The panelists portrayed the republican candidate focusing on his rich navy background and his political evolution. With insider access, panelists flushed out the personal history to present a candid portrait of the political evolution of McCain.



Panelists Coulibaly Mariam, Eric Agnero and Jacqueline Dreesen (From left to right)

McCain's life is not only the story of the most compelling politician since Ronald Reagan but also the history of the transformation of American politics over the last thirty years. John McCain continues to push the political system, thus capturing the attention of the American public. The straightforward, no-nonsense style that has become his hallmark shines through every page of this telling biography. Several questions on the Republican Party enriched this conference. The national Television and print press covered the event.

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