The First Psychiatric Congress of Eastern Europe

GEORGE CHRISTODOULOU

President, Psychiatric Association for Eastern Europe and the Balkans

When the WPA-affiliated Psychiatric Association for Eastern Europe and the Balkans (www.paeeb.com) took the decision to organize the First Psychiatric Congress of the region, the outcome was uncertain. Yet, the decision was made and the outcome was excellent. The Congress was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, from 21 to 23 September 2007. More than 700 psychiatrists from practically all Eastern European countries participated and the scientific presentations have drawn great interest. The main topics of the Congress were: a) psychiatric reform, urgently needed in the area and b) suicide, in view of the fact that the top nine countries in number of deaths from suicide in Europe are Eastern European

ones. There were panel discussions on achievements, problems and perspectives, to which all representatives of National Associations participated, panels organized by families and relatives, courses by the European Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, presentations by the European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees and young psychiatrists, a panel discussion on violence in the Middle East, with the participation of the Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian psychiatric society presidents, and many other topics that stimulated vigorous discussions.

During the General Assembly, in which representatives from 13 countries participated, the Declaration of Thessaloniki was voted upon. The Declaration draws attention to the serious economic difficulties of the countries of the region, to the severe stress that has followed war conflicts, to the great number

of refugees and to the psychosocial consequences of calamities that have occurred in the region, to the limitations in communication of psychiatrists of the area with their colleagues elsewhere, to the need for the upgrading of scientific knowledge and the return of scientific input from Eastern Europe to its previous level of excellence. The Declaration urges the international scientific community and the political leadership to contribute to the reconstruction and advancement of the countries of the region and to the upgrading of the productivity of their psychiatric communities for the benefit of the patients, their relatives and society as a whole.

The Second East European Congress of Psychiatry will be held in Moscow, Russia in 2009 under the leadership of Prof. Valery Krasnov, with the collaboration of Prof. Yuri Savenko.