

**Report of the 28th Auroville International meeting in Auroville
8 – 14 February 2010**

Participants:

AVI Netherlands:	Linda Grace Mosselman, Jettie Zwaans
AVI USA:	Wendy and Julian Lines, Fanou and Bryan Walton
AVI UK:	Sonia Dyne, Martin Littlewood
AVI France:	Francine Finck, Devasmita Patnaik, Satyakam Karim
AVI Germany:	Dagmar Degen, Isa Wagner, Friederike and Christoph Mühlhans
AVI Canada:	Claude Daviault
AVI Spain:	Alfonso Galiana
AVI Sweden	Eveline Preibsch
AVI liaison Argentina	Anandi E. Fernandez
AVI liaison Switzerland	Camille Egger-Foetisch
Auroville	Vani Poirier, Mauna van der Vlugt

Minutes: Friederike

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A. Board meetings and General Assembly

1. Orissa

We could give a very positive report about the Orissa events, which took place during the week previous to our meeting, to Sonia and Mauna who had not been able to participate. For the first time we have managed to present Auroville and AVI to another Indian state than Tamil Nadu thus widening our network, something we had on our agenda since long. We are confident that valuable contacts have been established for Auroville. Our gratitude to the main organizers, Devasmita and Satyakam is immense, they have meticulously planned the visit and beautifully cared for every minor detail! They have submitted the following note:

“It was enthralling for us and for all the delegates as it was for the first time, the project of organising an AVI meeting in one of the states of India, to exchange the Auroville experience with the inhabitants and plunge into the rich culture of scenic, serene and sublime Orissa.

Something that will be very unique in the visit to this Indian State, and that is the presence of the ex-Governing Board member, Gajapati Maharaj ji, the king of Orissa, which gave a royal touch to our event. When we approached him, as suggested by Deepti, he took keen interest and accepted with pleasure to be the patron. He gave us lots of ideas. We could carry out a few of them. He followed each step of the development of the event like our Divine Mother. His and his wife's calm and serene presence throughout the conference during 5 hours is really praiseworthy.

As one outcome of our very successful meeting there were quite a few responses to this great adventure and special queries on the development of the city, education, environment and green work.

We are truly happy that the first seed has been planted and in near future we will hear the echo of the progress. After the conference of 2nd of February, Deepti was invited to discuss with the Task Force in the field of education, organised by the Minister of Culture and Education.

Joss could contact and meet the persons who are working with medicinal plants in Bhubaneswar. Toine met two enthusiastic persons with queries about Auroville.

So we hope this seed of Auroville's dream and vision will grow slowly and steadily. For most of our delegates, visiting the magnificent temples, discovering the arts and crafts of

different village folks and meandering on the stretched out golden beach of Puri, will always remain engraved as a beautiful dream.

We thank all the Aurovillians and the members of AVI Centers who participated and made this event successful by their presence in the adventure of Orissa.”

Regarding the final budget deficit it was agreed to contact Sauro and Pala for PCG and Luigi for the Auroville fundraising budget to find out if there are funds available. Thanks to generous donations from participants and AVI centers it could be reduced but not yet covered. A report on the Orissa event plus photos should be sent to Manohar for the Website.

2. Future meetings

We have agreed to hold our 2011 meeting in Addis Ababa. We had previous discussions with Sanjeev, Carsten and others to find out about their Ethiopia experience. They were encouraging us to hold the meeting there, according to them there is a good infrastructure and a team to support and prepare the meeting. The exact dates are still to be decided, Tekeste would favour late February/early March.

A team to support Tekeste has to be formed in Auroville. Jaya, Helmut, Sanjeev, Carsten and Joss should be contacted.

In a meeting with some board members Doudou Diène advised us to involve UNESCO offices in India and Addis, African embassies in Delhi and African NGOs at a very early date. He is prepared to support us in this venture.

The 2012 meeting will be in Auroville again, according to our schedule. Devasmita and Satyakam have offered again to help organize a visit to another Indian state, Gujarat, and an Auroville presentation there.

3. Reports from AVI Centers and liaisons at the General Assembly

Eveline, who is running this small center together with Karin, reported from **AVI Sweden**. There have been contacts with August from Norway, together they are planning to work on a Scandinavian pavilion. Contact with Danish and Finnish people have not been established yet. Eveline is planning to organize an Auroville exhibition in Stockholm this year.

Camille is the only AVI **liaison** person in **Switzerland**, living in Lausanne. There are connections with some individuals in Switzerland, some of them are returning newcomers. It is Camille’s interest to support youth programs, she is in good contact with Dominique from AVIS. In 2008 she was instrumental in the translation of Joan’s and Aloka’s book on “Awareness Through the Body” into French. Through a foundation she is involved with, the Fondation Diagonale, several Auroville projects received funding. Also through her contacts the Swiss UBS bank gave a donation of half a million Swiss francs for an environmental education program in the Kaliveli bioregion organized by Pitchandikulam.

Claude gave a short report about **AVI Canada**’s activities, which are centered mostly around Montreal, with 39 active members. They started meeting on a monthly basis (“Les dimanches d’Auroville”), sometimes going for a walk or having some other relaxing program together, which everybody enjoys. This year they could do some fundraising for Auroville and send 8.000 Canadian dollars to various projects. AVI Canada is suggesting that more Auroville material gets translated into French, this would make work more easy.

AVI-Canada's main project is today the completion of the landscaping around the Inuksuk, with installation of explanatory granite plates. Fundraising has already started and plans are now ready, which will be submitted to new groups of L'Avenir and IZ.

Satyakam spoke on behalf of **AVI France**. The number of its active members has decreased from 12 to 4 in the years 2007/08, some had left to live in Auroville. Paying membership, too has decreased from 150 to now 64. In the newsletter they invited to a general assembly and 20 people came, enthusiastic to support the work. So now again a group of 10-12 active people is there, among them Dominique Darr, Françoise, Yanne and Croquette, Gap and Robert and Enzo. Satyakam, who is going to settle in Auroville, has been appointed president for another year.

AVI France publishes a bi-annual newsletter, mainly sent as a soft copy. Participation in the Salon Zen in 2008 was very successful, 35.000 people came to this fair in four days and many people were interested in Auroville and Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Next year there will be a salon on the theme of “sustainable development” and AVI France will again participate.

Francine who is the backbone of the Alsace antenna, started a Savitri reading circle, they have chi-gong and yoga sessions in between. In 2009 she organised a classical Indian concert at which she offered info material on Auroville.

Tanja Elder is a member of AVI France, she is involved with the American University of Paris, bringing students to Auroville.

In December 2009 a seminar on Town-planning was organized with Luigi as a speaker. In the years 2007/08 150.000 € could be raised for Auroville projects like ACT (community transport), Aikiyam School and a collective housing project. Dominique Darr also gave a considerable donation for Citadine, which laid the foundation for a permanent exhibition on Roger Anger's works of art.

Anandi was the only representative from a Latin American country, she is the **liaison** person from Buenos Aires, **Argentina**, collaborating with Maga, also living in Buenos Aires, who also gives information on Auroville. In the recent years Anandi has made several presentations on free progress education all over South America including Brazil. According to her experience many people today get their information on Auroville through the web or through Auroville radio. A Buenos Aires radio station made an interview with her on poetry and she translates Savitri into Spanish together with a friend.

Alfonso from **AVI Spain** reported about a series of lectures given by Ananda Reddy in various places in Spain. Auroville films have been presented at several occasions. For 2010 an exhibition in Alfonso's home town Tortosa is planned with the support of the former Director-General of UNESCO and former GB member Federico Mayor. Alfonso suggests that in IZ planning it is taken into account that some nations are a conglomerate of different cultural groups, and these cultures also should be represented.

Julian from **AVI USA** spoke about a June 2009 event in Chicago, to which three Aurovilians came. The film “The City of Dawn” by F. Rothluebber was shown, a former Catholic nun who had had a vision of the Mother whom she did not know until somebody showed her a picture. The film demonstrating the power of conscious unity will be available soon. The next AUM meeting in July 2010 will focus on “The Spiritual Destiny of America”, attempting at laying a basis for further pavilion research. Representatives of the Native American tradition will be invited. Joan and Aloka will come from Auroville and offer Awareness Through the Body workshops. Bryan reported that the AVI USA Board had to deal a lot with the question of the US dormitory, a problem which hopefully will be solved soon.

For **AVI The Netherlands** Linda-Grace explained their three-year fundraising schedule. A task force of five people has developed an ambitious plan to raise funds of at least one third of the total sum required to build the Auroville city. In this first year they want to raise 250.000 € to finance the fundraising efforts, contact fundraising experts and develop appropriate material. For this task they need the full cooperation of Auroville planners. During the second year they want to extend their work also to other European countries and agencies. In the third year funds shall be collected. Two members will start working 20% of their time for fundraising in the first year to full time in the third year. In 2009 AVI The Netherlands has collected donations for Isaiambalam School, Savitri Bhavan and 80.000 € for an integrated water project in Edayanchavadi.

Martin spoke about the Auroville exhibition at the Nehru Center in London, which was organized in 2008 by **AVI UK** and became a big success. He also mentioned the contacts with CHEC, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, which has long-standing contacts with Auroville and has given funding for projects of about three million Pounds Sterling. Sonia is on the board of CHEC, so hopefully more funding will come in the future. Fundraising for Auroville is becoming increasingly difficult, Martin said. There is a big competition for EU funding, for example, but AVI UK is still able to channel funds for Aikiyam School, farms, Matrimandir and other projects.

Friederike and Isa had brought an updated PPP on the activities of **AVI Germany**. Being one of the major centers with 164 paying members it has been able to set up an organized scheme of sending young volunteers to Auroville. Since 2000 more than 80 young people have been sent for a full year's service, mainly to village related development projects. Under the present "weltwärts" scheme the German Ministry of Economic Relations and Development even gives financial support, to the volunteers (now 16 per year!) but also to the Auroville projects offering work places. Through this program it was also possible to channel an additional sum of close to 200.000 € in the years 2008/09 to different Auroville projects like Aikiyam School, Thamarai, Wellpaper, Isaiambalam, Lively Boutique and Sadhana Forest. AVI Germany's sister organization VFAVR (Association for the Promotion of the Auroville Region) could channel about 300.000 € for two projects, a smaller sum of 20.000 € for Kulapalayam High School quite some years ago and 275.000 € for AIAT. This funding again came from the same ministry. Administration for these funded projects is horrendous – AVI Germany is lucky to have dedicated people running the administration – but it is regarded as one step towards the Mother's wish to bring Auroville in contact with state governments. AVI Germany still has a fairly active pavilion group which meets regularly. It has hosted a second meeting of European pavilion groups in October 2009, at which it was agreed to commonly approach further IZ development and start planning together for a European Plaza. The last annual meeting of AVI Germany was attended by 90 people, at least one third of whom were young people, mainly ex-volunteers who want to keep in contact and want to support the volunteers program further on, or applicants for next year's service.

4. Future contacts with liaisons

Unfortunately there was not much progress in the strengthening of our contacts with our liaison friends since we discussed this topic in Venwoude. We agreed to make a fresh attempt.

Argentina:

Mauna and Alfonso reported about their contacts with Maga from Buenos Aires who seems to be very dedicated to work for Auroville, make presentations etc. For example she invited a

Spanish scholar for a speech in Buenos Aires who wrote his thesis on Sri Aurobindo. Alfonso met Maga twice in Spain. Anandi should be encouraged to further cooperate with her. Friederike will write a letter to Maga offering collaboration from AVI and inviting her to future meetings.

Brazil:

Paulo spent some time in Auroville earlier this year. He seems to be fully recovered, planning to take up again his work for AVI very soon. Friederike will write a „welcome back“ letter.

South Africa:

Jasmin, who is still our liaison person for South Africa, has just moved to Pondicherry. She has proposed two future liaison people. Friederike will try to find out more about them. She will also ask Marti if she has any valuable contacts there.

Italy:

Mauna reported about a film made by an Italian film team, which mainly consisted of interviews with Ananda Reddy, Sraddhalu etc. Marco was interviewed, too he really spoke from his heart being „the highlight“ of the film. It will not be presented as an Auroville film.

Russia:

We have met with Vladimir who lives at Ethnomir, close to Moscow. He wants to become the liaison person for the Moscow area. The Russian Aurovilians support him. He has been given our guidelines for becoming an AVI liaison, which he should study and sign. Friederike will contact Michael Bonke to find out about the situation in the St. Petersburg area.

Possible new liaison in Burkina Faso:

Martin, Vani and Friederike reported about their meeting with Rachel of Hungarian/Belgian origin and Hassan of Moroccan origin. Hassan came to know about Sri Aurobindo as a young man, came to Pondy and Auroville 25 years ago and kept it as a dream to come into closer contact. Meanwhile he has worked for different NGOs in Burkina Faso and other African countries, in the field of rural development and organic farming. Rachel is based in France and has set up a company producing and selling Essene bread and biscuits. Hassan is planning to create an „Aurovillage“ in Burkina Faso and asked for permission for the use of this name. Their names and email address are: Rachel Revesz and Hassan Aslafy, aslafy@gmail.com

5. Contact with CHEC (Commonwealth Human Ecology Council)

Martin reported about the visit of a CHEC official to Auroville and his good interaction with him. There are contacts with Joss regarding CHEC's possible support of a fishery project. Further possible funding could come for educational training programmes on human ecology, further Village Action projects, the Botanical Garden and L`Avenir development since there is a lot of expertise in town planning within CHEC. If there are concrete projects following these proposals these could build the basis for a CHEC desk at the Unity Pavilion.

6. Auroville exhibitions and AVI brochure

There are several plans for Auroville exhibitions in Europe, like one that Kosha is planning for Belgium and one that AVI Germany is planning for Berlin. AVI UK already has material for an exhibition, so efforts should be coordinated. It should be communicated to the Auroville

Project Coordination Group that in case of funding requests in this field, they should contact AVI to find out if material is already available.

For the exhibition in Belgium Marc Luyckx and Doudou Diène should be contacted to find out about their EU contacts, and also the Auroville UNESCO group (Dominique, Fabienne, Luigi) as well as Auroville Outreach should be informed.

The issue was raised again that AVI centers should not have to pay for photos from Auroville photographers for publications, exhibitions etc., even if it is well understood that they have to make their living. A clear copyright policy should be developed.

Nothing much has been achieved since the idea to present AVI in a brochure was developed. The brochure published by Dianna in which she has collected individual stories of how people came to Auroville will hopefully encourage AVI people to tell their own stories, in order to make AVI more tangible. Isa and Friederike will collect the material.

7. Voting of new Chairman - Executive Group – AVI France

We had to vote for a new chairman since Julian Lines, who held office for two consecutive periods of two years, had to step back following the rules of our statutes. The board thanked him for his excellent work and proposed Martin as his successor to the General Assembly, which unanimously voted for him. Julian will take over the office of Executive Director from Martin. Sonia and Christian have been confirmed as our two vice-chairmen. Friederike was confirmed as the AVI secretary and Francine as the treasurer. Vani will remain the Auroville Representative.

The executive group, which was formed in Venwoude, has done a good job to prepare and facilitate board discussions between our meetings. It consist of the four previously mentioned office holders plus Friederike and Vani.

AVI France will have to look for successors when Devasmita and Satyakam (president of AVI France) are settling in Auroville fairly soon. It was proposed that Devasmita should remain on the AVI board to represent India.

8. Involvement of Youth

Following the example of the successful volunteers programs run by AVI Germany, which are supported and funded by the German government, it was suggested that other AVI centers should do some research whether similar programs also exist in their countries.

Adequate youth accommodation is still not available in sufficient quantity. The security situation, too is unsatisfactory, a young German volunteer has been severely harassed three times in a short time. Inappropriate clothing or behaviour is not an issue, they get very well trained before coming. Perhaps self-defence training courses or the setting up of an escort service might help. Also the use of motorbikes instead of bicycles might be advisable, even if it goes against the will of most volunteers to avoid polluting means of transport.

AVI Germany is planning to host an international youth conference, probably in 2012. Marc Luyckx has supported the idea and should be involved at an early stage. Joan and Aloka could be possible invitees to offer their workshops.

Young Aurovilian Tanja has brought a students group from the American University of Paris to Auroville, which was a very good experience. The Chancellor of the University is interested to establish a regular program.

Julian suggested that we make better use of platforms like Facebook, which become more and more popular, being a good tool to reach out to young people.

9. International Zone

We unanimously supported Sonia's thoughts on the International Zone, which were published on the Auroville Intranet:

I feel moved to try to put into words what I feel about the development of the International zone, in the hope of finding a unified approach to the problems confronting us. Sri Aurobindo wrote: 'from thought we must leap up to sight' and as we continue to search our hearts as to whether the recent proposals truly reflect the Mother's original vision and purpose, this unified approach may begin to emerge. We in AVI, as well as the Aurovilians themselves, have not yet sufficiently explored possible alternatives in the light of a more profound understanding of the Mother's lifelong work for the transformation of consciousness.

Since the emergence of a new consciousness is the primary reason for the creation of Auroville, it follows that we need to ask ourselves, at every stage of the planning process, this most important question: How will the future International Zone contribute directly to that one primary aim? Unless we find at least the glimmer of an answer, all the debates, plans, projects, will come to nothing; consensus will not be achieved; the true International Zone will remain where it is, a bright dream in the subtle dimension, and it will not manifest.

The Mother's consciousness, open at every level to the evolutionary need in nature as in humanity, received moment by moment all that could be corrected, perfected or transformed. This was her work as she herself has described it. In every human collective where the development of a 'nation soul' has taken place over time, that too has been part of the evolutionary process and therefore a portion of her work to be reflected in Auroville. It is not for nothing that the IZ occupies such a large proportion of the geographical area of the emerging city!

All of us are shaped by the culture in which we were born and grew up, whether we are conscious of it or not. Aurovilians bring their 'nation soul' as a potential gift to the new collective consciousness, and the more they are aware of what it is that they bring, the more they are able to refine and perfect it in the force-field of Auroville, the more valuable that gift becomes. The IZ as conceived by the Mother was to serve as a permanent reminder to future generations of Aurovilians of the offering that they themselves are called upon to make by virtue of their individual ancestral inheritance - and this is but one aspect of the IZ, one of the 'bright hints' left by the Mother, and it has been overlooked in the recent planning process.

In its outward looking aspect, the IZ wants to be the world's gateway and portal to the New City and will reflect all the values that Auroville has and will embrace. It will reflect the free exuberance and limitless creativity of evolving Nature and the playfulness, wit, inventiveness and spirit of adventure of evolving mankind. Those who come to Auroville will discover their own national spirit represented there at its highest and most typical, so from the beginning they will feel welcome and already a part of what is happening. An idealistic view - yes, but one that is achievable if Auroville wants it. The current plan, conceived in purely architectural terms, offers us a jigsaw puzzle of geometrical shapes, in the hope that 'research' will somehow reveal the possibility of expressing the soul qualities of a nation through these shapes. Architecture alone can never answer the need for a living, vibrant environment. There is real danger in expecting it to do so. Do we really want the IZ to be a giant 'garden of remembrance' where stylised monuments enshrine the 'symbolic' remains of nation souls? I hope, I pray, that we can do better than this.

This paper was also forwarded to the International Zone group as a basis for discussion. None of the board members is in favour of rigid geometrical shapes for the different continents. The hope was expressed that the present Auroville process to re-nominate the L'Avenir group and shape a future approach towards town planning which is more participatory and inclusive will also open up new ways in IZ development.

A further basis of our approach will be the integration of IZ planning with the efforts to create the University of Human Unity, with the national pavilions as institutes of this University. The plans of the European pavilion groups to start with the creation of a “European Plaza” will also be a topic for discussion with the IZ group. In this context the question arose who, in IZ project realization, will be the client ultimately choosing the architect. This has to be clarified with the IZ group and the WC.

AVI Canada has raised the topic of the protection of land and buildings in the IZ, the Canadian Inuksuk not being respectfully treated by villagers and outside visitors. This raised the question of how far the neighbouring villages have ever been made familiar with the basic concept and ideas of the IZ. The European pavilion groups have planned to organize a European cultural event in the IZ. This could serve as an opportunity to involve and inform the Auroville neighbours.

Even if there was a strong feeling that Aurovilians are more open towards the idea of Auroville’s outreach mission than in previous years we should help to promote the International Zone concept in Auroville itself. Mauna proposed to establish a regular AVI section under the AVI logo on the Auroville Intranet and in the AV News&Notes.

10. “The Lives of Sri Aurobindo”

Due to the imminent threat of Peter Heehs being deported from India, the Board decided to issue a statement on the controversy regarding his biography “The Lives of Sri Aurobindo”. The following statement has been presented to the General Assembly and was approved:

Auroville International Statement on the controversy surrounding “The Lives of Sri Aurobindo”

We in Auroville International would like to express our sympathy with those on all sides who have suffered pain and anxiety due to the controversy over the biography “The Lives of Sri Aurobindo”. We are saddened and concerned by the polarization of opinion, much of it ill-informed or ill-judged which continues to divide the Aurobindonian community.

Auroville International believes that disagreements must be resolved without court cases and threats of expulsion from India. These tactics have been the source of irreversible personal loss and lasting damage to the reputation of our community.

We strongly urge those who have expressed themselves forcefully (in favor or in opposition to the book) to remember that the practice of Integral Yoga enjoins upon us all an attitude of detached benevolence towards others without exception.

Sri Aurobindo was a spiritual and intellectual giant who belongs to the world and it is certain that the biography in question will be followed in the course of time by many other studies reflecting differing views and different cultures. Natural justice demands that we would not attempt to suppress these. Modern scholarship and criticism is notoriously intolerant of heroes and saints, but in the end only the verdict of history decides the reputation of the truly great.

Auroville International will do everything in its power to reconcile opposing factions and restore the harmony to which we all aspire.

11. Miscellaneous

Board mailing list

We will try to find a new host for our mailing list. The “aurobindo.org” host is not practical enough since the size of mails is very limited and attachments mostly cannot be sent.

Visa situation

The visa problems some AVI visitors are facing due to the new Indian visa regulations have

to be discussed with the Working Committee. The present Auroville policy is that, in case of need, the WC issues a paper stating the purpose of a visit (such as a conference), which can then be presented to the Indian embassy or consulate. A valid regulation should be found as to which purpose of visit AVI officials should mention in the application form. Mr. Srinivasamurthy, Finance Officer of the Auroville Foundation, advised us to hand in a paper to the Foundation describing AVI's role, history and activities which then could be forwarded to Delhi. Martin will make a draft.

Matrimandir Access

It was reported that board members and other active AVI members still have problems in getting Matrimandir access, even though a list of active members has been presented. It seems that a new up to date list has to be created by each center and handed to the access group.

It was also mentioned that visitors and even VIP are sometimes treated with little respect. Perfectly understanding the immense task the Matrimandir access group has to handle, the Board feels that also this group should regard active AVI members as ex situ Aurovilians and treat them accordingly.

Alfonso reported about his request to the access group to install a webcam at the Banyan tree for the Auroville exhibition he is planning in Spain. He wanted to use the live transmission to create a meditative space in the exhibition. His request was denied. But the idea came up to also use similar live transmissions for the Auroville Info Center, which might reduce the amount of visitors to Matrimandir.

Addresses of visitors interested to keep contact with Auroville via AVI

The address lists are presently with Aryadeep from the land service. In future it would make more sense to collect them at the guest service.

Shanghai World Expo 2010

Mauna mentioned that Auroville is represented with a one-minute clip at the Shanghai 2010 Expo as part of India's/Tamil Nadu's presentation.

B. Interaction with Auroville groups and services

International Zone group

We agreed that it is time now to open a new chapter in the collaboration of AVI and the IZ group. The two afternoon sessions we had together showed that there is openness and good will on both sides to focus on joint activities and on the planning of a first building project. In the first session a member of the IZ group mentioned one possible reason for the difficulties IZ planning has been facing in the past: Many Aurovilians feel disconnected from their nation of origin, while the Mother has stated that the search for the soul of nations is the main *raison d'être* for the IZ. Until now the IZ group has failed to promote and facilitate this search inside Auroville while some AVI pavilion groups already have focused on it. It is now planned to make a compilation of what Sri Aurobindo has said about individual nations and their destiny. The pavilion groups are requested to share their own findings in this field.

AVI Germany reported about a revealing session they had had in 2009 on the question of "how can we help to unblock IZ development" to which they had invited a facilitator trained in Systemic Constellations. It appeared that, on a very subtle level, there is considerable resistance which dissolved right in the moment when India, as Auroville's host country, felt appreciated for its generosity, the direct neighbourhood felt informed and included and, most

important, when it was understood in Auroville that each individual living there is carrying a great gift, the soul of his or her nation, or the search for it. On this soul level the beauty of human diversity and the feeling of real brotherhood could be experienced and cherished.

The European pavilion groups, which have met for the second time in October 2009 in Berlin, reported about their plans to organize a European cultural event in the IZ to get the neighbours involved (see point A, section 8 of this report). They also reported about their willingness to start with a common project. Ideally this would answer to an actual need, so all people involved (also possible donors) would feel inspired to contribute.

This actual need was felt in two fields, which are closely connected with an important contribution AVI centers make: Firstly the volunteers they are sending to Auroville through different programs very often don't find appropriate accommodation. Secondly AVIS (Auroville Internship and Students Program), the service, which supports these volunteers programs and individual volunteers, urgently needs a space, as Dominique had told us earlier in her very interesting presentation. So the inspiration came down to start with the creation of a volunteers complex, incorporating accommodation, office for AVIS, study facilities for interns and students and a library. Perhaps this complex could also integrate guest service facilities, as was suggested in a discussion with the guest service.

Before we had our second session Jaya guided us on a walk through the IZ, starting from the Matrimandir Nursery, which gave us a better feeling for its scope. It was mentioned that the present renewal process of L'Avenir creates a very important momentum and opens up chances for a possible renaissance, with an Auroville planning body that is more grounded in the community. After Roger's passing the architect Balkrishna V. Doshi has been asked to become a Governing Board member and help Auroville to build the city. He is especially sensitive to participatory processes, reminding Aurovilians that it is not so much the city which has to be built, but the society.

Taking up the thread of the previous day's discussions the idea to start creating a volunteers complex concretised. When, during our morning walk through the IZ, we passed the US dormitory, the hope was expressed that also the stalemate situation around it might be unblocked, in a way that the US dorm becomes part and starting point of an "international volunteers complex". This could open the way for AVI USA agreeing to Roger's plan, which sees the continental area of the Americas closer to Matrimandir. AVI will further discuss this and the European pavilion groups will organize another meeting to discuss whether this new idea could be a starting point for the European Plaza.

Even if there are still a lot of open questions it was felt that it is better to discuss and solve them "on the way" to the realization of this possible first common project than to continue with endless theoretical discussions. To quote Dominique: "Let's act!"

Working Committee

We gave a report about our visit to Orissa and expressed our hope that we have managed to act as good ambassadors for Auroville, helping to establish valuable contacts. Our plans to go on a similar visit to Gujarat in 2012 were welcomed, as well as our plans to have our 2011 meeting in Addis Ababa. We asked for support, especially in the establishment of an organising team in Auroville.

We also reported our discussions with the IZ group and our ideas to create a volunteers complex. Gilles gave the information that right from the beginning the Mother has seen the

national pavilions as part of a university. She had mentioned the geometrical forms not for the continental areas in the International Zone but for the four different zones of the Galaxy, cultural, residential, industrial and international, but Roger has never implemented this. At one point he had the idea to apply them to the different continents – there is no indication that the Mother wanted this.

A topic for discussion was the visa situation after the new regulations by the Indian government. The WC is prepared, in case of need, to issue letters stating specific purposes for visits, like conferences. We mentioned that Indian consulate officials have warned us against coming on tourist visa when we are actually doing voluntary work for Auroville. We should come up with a description of our work, which could also be forwarded to Mr. Srinivasamurthy and through him to Delhi. Perhaps, based on this description, an appropriate regulation will be found.

Another topic was the security situation, which is also a problem for the young volunteers some centers are sending. It was advised that should try to get organized themselves, book self defence training courses, establish escort schemes and preferably use motorbikes. Every incident has to be reported to the security service.

Regarding the question of land consolidation we were informed that in the greenbelt a bigger plot has become available. The centers could help to raise funds for its purchase.

AVIS (Auroville Volunteering, Internships and Studies Program)

Dominique, who took over responsibility for AVIS from Shivaya last year, presented her very interesting research on the situation of volunteers and students coming to Auroville.

There are presently 3 categories of volunteers:

- Those coming on organized set-ups (US “living routes”, German “weltwärts”)
- Individual volunteers who come through direct contacts with Auroville projects
- Young adults looking for volunteering possibilities coming through AVIS

There has been a considerable increase, from 74 requests arriving at the AVIS desk in 2004 up to 367 in 2009. Now daily applications come in from young enthusiastic people.

Splitting these recent numbers up by main countries, the following picture emerges:

India	26 %
US	15 %
France	12 %
Germany	11 %
UK	7 %
Italy	4 %
Canada	3 %
Spain	3 %

There are 60 % females and 40% males applying, mostly younger students and professionals but sometimes also seniors offering their skills.

The reasons given for their application are:

- Internship
- Participation in courses, mainly on environmental topics
- Practicum
- Getting to know alternative models to live
- Curiosity about Auroville
- Experience the Auroville vision and projects
- Being exposed to the Auroville spirit

Quite a lot of applications do not work out, mainly because of lack of accommodation and financial set-up.

The most urgent needs that are becoming apparent from this study are:

- A welcome program
- Low cost or free accommodation – this is the biggest problem
- More places for work and study
- A well structured website
- A clear framework for volunteers with basic agreements – what is expected from the volunteer and what do they get back
- Assistance by AVIS to Auroville units who have no experience in receiving volunteers

A 2008 survey showed that there is presently a (theoretical) capacity of around 1.000 work opportunities for volunteers per year, among them:

700 in Sadhana Forest

100 at Solitude Farm

25 at Auroville Earth Institute

15 at CSR

130 (minimum) or 168 (maximum) others

This means that 85 % of the applications could be covered.

AVIS itself urgently needs better working facilities. Concentrated work in the Unity Pavilion, where its desk is now, is not really possible. Apart from an intern who supported Dominique in carrying out the survey, she has no staff and also no budget. In view of the 400 applicants per year (numbers rising!) and the 65 documented work places in Auroville this is no basis to carry on with the work. So Dominique is in the process of working out an AVIS development plan. Its main features and needs are:

- Extend the database on AV units, their needs and offers
- Work out policies for volunteering services
- Increase AVIS staff
- Raise awareness about the importance of volunteers in the AV community
- Develop website and other communication tools
- Extend partnerships with foreign agencies
- Networking and fundraising

It is Dominique's proposal to build a House of Volunteers in the International Zone, which would offer

- Volunteers residences
- Study and work places
- Facilities for research like a library (which could also contain copies of the many academic studies on Auroville – so far only a list of them exists)
- Interaction with AVI activities
- Interconnection with national pavilions

Dominique, who is also a member of the Auroville UNESCO team, envisages the work of AVIS as one major tool to help Auroville become a living laboratory for the UNESCO ideals thus strengthening relations with this international body.

We very much appreciated Dominique's presentation and promised to follow up, like in our discussions with the IZ group.

Entry service

Cecilia and Ross came to present the fresh approach of this recently appointed group towards entry to Auroville. After the old entry group had stepped down eight months ago they are now facing a big backlog of work. Since recommendation letters have been issued in the meantime without previous interviews, they have to clear this backlog. They also want to work out new

guidelines, which make the entry process more welcoming. In future facilities for online applications shall be provided. Also new guidelines for becoming official “friend of Auroville” are being elaborated.

They stressed that suitable housing for younger people still has to become a focus in housing policies. 25 % of the applicants are above sixty, from the younger category 60 % are Indians, and altogether more males than females apply.

To live as a newcomer in Auroville you need between 5.000 and 20.000 rs/month, according to your own standards and situation, and a deposit for a return ticket (for 4 years). Simple housing can be obtained at Rs. 10-12 Lakh (ca. 16.500-20.000 € or 22.000-26.500 \$).

Asked how AVI could support their service they answered that, quite naturally, we can give recommendations or feedback on applications by AVI members.

Housing service

Joseba and Sajar stated that the housing service is facing a much better situation than two years ago. Meanwhile nine new housing projects have been started, creating 120 new homes out of which 32 % can be given for free thanks to a grant from the Indian government. Critical is the high inflation in recent years, which made most projects 15-17 % more expensive than planned. Another problem is the migration of skilled labour in the building sector to bigger cities like Bangalore and Chennai.

If the AV population is to rise at a desirable speed 80-120 newcomer units would have to be built per year, but presently only 40 units per year are realistic. To enhance this situation the establishment of a revolving fund as a development fund is envisaged. Also rent and lease schemes could be considered to ease the situation.

Unfortunately the discipline is sometimes low, so people tend to be hesitant to give their houses to house sitters in times of absence. Sometimes the people don't want to move out when the “owners” come back. Loans, too are sometimes not paid back. Clear guidelines and ethics and also an exit policy still have to be developed.

Asked why a lot of concrete has been used for the present buildings and green standards and a sustainable approach have not been applied, Joseba answered that to build green is too expensive. We questioned this since it may be more expensive in the building phase but altogether cheaper in the long run. He encouraged us to do fundraising for the revolving fund. Loan schemes could also be possible. To begin a sum of Rs. 100 Lakh would have to be raised (ca. 165.000 € or 220.000 \$).

Outreach Media

Vinodhini, Tim and Robert spoke on behalf of the Outreach Media team, which consists of seven members. They are catering for the local and international press and other media. The first press conference in 2008 was a great success, it helped to take out a lot of negativity in reporting from the local press. It had become obvious how little is known about Auroville in the bioregion. As a matter of fact the press is mainly interested in eye-catching news, hardly anybody goes deeper into matters. But now contacts are more positive, journalists understand better that Auroville is not closed up but open to the world. The “litter free” campaign in Auroville, for instance, got a good media coverage. The concept of human unity, however, meets with little understanding so far, this has to come over time.

However, internationally the openness towards Auroville's goals is considerably increasing, in film festivals a new momentum can be experienced, and some organizers are enthusiastic about Auroville films.

When international journalists come to Auroville the AVI centers can play an important role in preparing the journalists for what they can expect in and from Auroville.

We expressed our disappointment about the discontinuation of Outreach Newsletter, which has been a very good tool for contacts with official bodies. It was explained that this was due to funds and manpower missing. We suggested that, in order to save manpower, a compilation of AV Today articles and a collection of other press articles could be made.

We requested the Outreach team to keep us informed about new film releases and, if possible, see to it that subtitles in different languages are created. These, however, should be sent for correction to the respective countries since the quality of translations done in Auroville is sometimes not fully satisfying.

Guest service

Marco began his presentation by quoting the Mother who had said about Auroville “All who live there will participate in its life and development”. The big question is how to implement this without excluding anybody – this is the challenge the new guest service is trying to tackle. Guests, 70 % of whom stay less than a month, should be invited to share the Auroville experience. People who stay more than one month will also be encouraged to join some work and will be regarded as volunteers, so a close cooperation with AVIS is envisaged. A website www.aurovillevolunteers.org is under construction. It is the aim to present practical and meaningful ways to join the real Auroville experience and give less room for just “holiday making” and workshop-hopping. Some incentives like special discounts and special guest passes are proposed. Guest introduction tours have proven to be a good tool for the integration of guests. The growing group of people staying outside of Auroville but making use of its facilities without contributing has to be considered as well.

The guest service is presently working with a budget of Rs 2.000, which is by far not enough, since the workload demands for a strong and well-equipped team. A central location for the guest service is also necessary. The ideal place would be close to the Visitors Center in the International Zone, preferably pooled together with AVIS facilities. So perhaps this could become also part of the volunteers complex as discussed with the IZ group.

We supported the idea very much and advised the group to see that an online guesthouse booking system is put into operation. With 600 beds in Auroville guesthouses and 100 more in Sadhana Forest there is often much frustration expressed by guests trying to book accommodation and it seems high time for this.. We also expressed our expectation that a system will be developed giving long term AVI associates a status different from first time visitors.

L’Avenir d’Auroville

Sauro started the presentation by describing how the L’Avenir planning group has concentrated in recent years on city development in specific areas, mainly along the Crown Road, in the Industrial Zone and the Cultural Zone. So far it has worked mainly with an internal team but more and more external experts have to be invited, which proves to be difficult because there are no funds available. An important present project is to develop innovative solutions for the infrastructure, like for wastewater treatment in the Residential Zone. In terms of transport it is planned to continue building the Crown Road up to CSR and install a bus service. A team is working on a solar train solution but an electric bus might prove to be more flexible.

Luigi added that it is the aim to free the city center from any polluting traffic and make it a peaceful area. The Crown is meant only for internal quiet transport.

Asked by Julian which anchoring building exists for the Cultural Zone, like Bharat Nivas does for the International Zone, Lalit answered it is a challenge to support a new genuine Auroville

culture growing, in all its diversity. So the main buildings are still fairly spread out, like the schools, the planned CRIPA center for the performing arts, the Auroville Library etc.

A major focus of work has been to create housing and considerable success can be observed in this field. It is the aim to have 5-6.000 Auroville residents in the nearer future to create an urban situation. Housing plans are ready for 1.000 people.

Prashant reported on the growing integration of bioregional planning, for example there are close links established with PondyCAN (Pondicherry Citizens' Action Network), an initiative mainly of ex-Ashram students. The problem of coastline destruction along a strip of 30-40 km is now tackled in a coordinated approach of Pondy and Tamil Nadu, with support promised from the central government. Delhi is drawing up a convention on the coastal situation, making it a national issue. As a consequence the Pondy harbour extension plans are now on hold. Also plans to build an international airport in Pondy are officially questioned since the land situation doesn't allow for it. A site for a new garbage dump is already identified but the moving there is a slow process. Litter-free campaigns have also started with school children in Pondy.

To tackle the problem of salt water intrusion desalination projects are under way, strong emphasis has to be put on rainwater harvesting. Here experts will be involved, also to develop schemes for the recharge of ground water layers. A change in agriculture towards low water consumption would be one step.

Martin informed the L'Avenir group about AVI's plans and developments in and around the International Zone, like the European meeting in Berlin with our agreement to have a common European planning approach, the planned European festival in the IZ and our plans to start with a volunteers complex in the IZ in collaboration with AVIS. Answering to our question Pino stated that Roger's plan can be interpreted in a very flexible, creative way. Our direct contact has to be the IZ group.

Luigi added that AVI centers are to be seen as centers of development. After the completion of Matrimandir a new energy of reaching out is active, so our role, as Aurovilians working outside, will become increasingly important. According to him our future task will be very much related to the field of fundraising and human resources, volunteers and experts will be more and more needed. Friederike concluded on a positive note saying that the present times of crisis in the outside world seem to work in our favour – people are losing trust in conventional money investment, becoming more open towards “ethical” investment and also highly skilled people losing their jobs are increasingly looking for alternative engagements which “make a difference”.

C. Auroville presentations

Aquatica

Kathryn, Martanda and Daniel came, on behalf of a team of 13 Aurovilians, to give us an introduction to their initiative to build “an aquatic bodywork oasis in the heart of Auroville for treatment and training” and to spread the multiple benefits of holistic warm water therapies.

While aquatic bodywork was introduced to Auroville already in the 1990s after the construction of a warm water pool at the Quiet Healing Centre the pool usage there is now stretched to its limits. The team has received planning permission to build close to the future Health Clinic at Arka but still needs funds for the building of the pool, which is designed to minimise environmental impact, using solar heating and an alternative water purification system. For more information see <http://www.aquatica.in>

AVAG (Auroville Village Action Group)

Anbu and Iris gave us a PPP on the wide range of projects the group is involved with to help create a healthier social, economic and environmental set-up in the Auroville bioregion of around 90.000 people in 80 villages. Their programs are based on the vision of interweaving traditions of the local population with the Auroville universal township's dream of all beings living in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. Its mission is to partner a process of integral development with all the local village communities surrounding Auroville, with particular emphasis on facilitating community solidarity, fostering capacity for self-empowerment, and promoting gender and caste equality. Environmental education is becoming increasingly important, so the AVAG men's and women's self-help group programs are engaged with solid waste management activities in the villages, also organizing visits to Auroville sites and projects like the Botanical Garden. For their programs they rely fully on donations, so the centers can play an important role in supporting their activities. (The PPP and other material for presentations can be obtained from Friederike. Email address: info@auroville.de)

Auroville GREEN Center

Tewa and Lisbeth presented the new Auroville GREEN Center (Auroville Green Resource and Environmental Education Networking Center). This group formed as an attempt to coordinate individual initiatives working in the area of ecological research, planning and education. Networking is one important focus of their work, education and the facilitation of concrete action, especially with school children being the others. They started the regular Saturday market at the Solar Kitchen, a green market for Auroville producers and a platform for Auroville green initiatives to present their work, which is a great success. Very soon the Green News will be published, starting as a regular column in the Auroville News&Notes and as an online magazine. Subscription will be free (for more information please see: http://www.auroville.org/environment/AVgreen/AVgreen_main.htm).

There was one important remark from Julian: why did architects and planners not see to it that the VIP guesthouse is built in an eco-friendly, sustainable manner, to create a kind of "flagship" for Auroville? Instead there is AC in rooms and other energy consuming features.

International School for Holistic Management

Irena from Croatia, who is associated with the CBA Business School in Zagreb (whose Dean is Marc Luyckx Ghisi), presented the idea to set up in Auroville an "International School for Holistic Management". She is spending her sabbatical year in Auroville and has been proactive in organizing the workshop "Business with Consciousness" in April to which the first CEOs have registered. Auroville could become instrumental in the working out of new business ethics and in the training of these.

Farewell group

Pala and Suzie came to talk about their initiative to create facilities enabling a conscious passage at the end of individual life. Research has started seven years ago, based on Mother's words that a conscious passage needs enough time, favourable surroundings and an inner preparation. Until now the ex-operation theatre at the Health Center is used as a "farewell room" but there is the wish to create a more appropriate space, perhaps attached to the new Clinic. India allows keeping the body for up to seven days under cooling conditions and many Aurovilians want to be kept for some days before the burial or cremation. The group has prepared a paper for Aurovilians to put down their "last wishes".

Presently there is an average of five deaths per year in Auroville. Up to now the cremation ground in Edayanchavadi is used but there is no favourable atmosphere and often problems with village festivals etc arise. A burial ground is in use close to Adventure with space for up to 5.000 people, no stones are marking graves until now.

There is no funding for this important initiative so far, it relies fully on individual input and donations.

Jettie recommended the Japanese film “Departures” on the theme of accompanying the deceased in the passage.

Divine Orchard

Ingo presented the project he has developed in collaboration with the Auroville Farm Group, displaying all different kind of garden styles of the world. He mentioned an ancient Chinese emperor who had a garden created which displayed all the different climatic zones of his vast empire. He wanted to experience how, for instance, people in the desert feel, then only he was prepared to start ruling. In the same manner Aurovilians and visitors could experience the different cultures and mindsets through the diversity of the gardens of the world.

International section at the Lycée Français in Pondicherry

Brigitte came to speak about the international section and the new section of excellence in science at the Lycée for English speaking students from India and abroad, for which she is the program manager. Working for cultural relations in the French Foreign Ministry she has been in charge of international events and of the university cooperation with South India. This is how she came to Auroville. Today she is also on the board of the Pondicherry University and could help in working towards the creation of the University of Human Unity in the IZ.

There are some Auroville students going to the Lycée Français after finishing Transition School, so presently 10 different nationalities are represented at the Lycée. Since there is an urgent need for scholarships, especially for gifted Indian and other Auroville students, she has approached us to help with fundraising. The annual fee is 4.000 €per student, they have to study for four years. Donations can be channelled through the Auroville Educational Fund.

Inside India – Insight Seminars

Joster and Bunty made a short presentation of their recently developed programs. They are offering different seminars and tours to visitors and guests helping them in getting to know Auroville and India in their practical manifestation and spiritual quest. This includes study tours to the highlights of Indian culture in the closer surroundings of Auroville, introduction seminars to the spiritual dimension of Auroville and weekly interactive sessions on Auroville. These include multi media presentations on different fields of Auroville reality, like “vision and ideal”, “education”, “economy and organization”, “eco-restoration” and “town planning and architecture”. These weekly sessions are offered for free by Inside India, also educational tours for school kids from the surrounding villages are organized.

An information leaflet has been sent around to the centers with the request to inform AVI members about these programs and seminars.

Legends of Creation – a Theatre and Dance project

This interesting project was presented by Aryamani, Aurelia and Anadi. “Legends of Creation”, an international and intercultural project, is a four-year multi-disciplinary cooperation project between professional artists from Finland and Auroville. It is the aim of the project to create partnerships between different cultures through their own oral myths and

stories about the beginning of creation. Auroville, comprising more than 40 different nationalities, can be used as a pool for further research on this subject.

As the first project phase the Finnish group visited Auroville in September 2009, examining the concept of genesis and rebirth in the “Kalevala”. It will be followed by a trip of the Auroville group to Helsinki in June 2010. Its work is based on a combination of two among India’s many tales, “The Dance of Shiva” and “The Egg of Brahma”, on Sri Aurobindo’s “Savitri” and on Vedic texts. An Auroville presentation in Helsinki is part of the schedule. The Auroville group relies mainly on outside funding, so the Centers are kindly requested to report on this initiative to their members and ask for support.

The Play of Painting

Mita introduced us to this new initiative .An AV Today article about its work has appeared in the December 2009 issue. Mita is trying to raise funds for a room, which has already been installed in Edyanchavadi for Udavi school kids on private donations. It is a room where the local kids can learn to connect to their inner being by painting freely in a psychologically safe environment.

A group has formed around Claire le Touzé who has written a book published by SAIER in 2009 „Looking at children’s paintings in a new light“. To carry on with their activities and create an atelier also for other school kids and Aurovilian adults they have taken a loan, which has to be paid back soon. Support would be very welcome!

Auroville Institute for Integral Health

Jocelyn, Veronica and Sumeet spoke about the new Institute, which is already running since 2008, temporarily located at Kailash. Its aims are to treat and heal individuals using an effective, low cost and resource efficient approach based on a synthesis of Western medical knowledge and traditional healing systems as well as on modern discoveries in energetic medicine and environmental science. Preventive approaches will be a major focus.

2.5 acres of land have been allocated for the project on the crown road, next to Arka, the first building phase expectedly being completed by the end of 2010. It will be an outpatient clinic with a minor operation theatre, emergency room, 5 consultation and treatment rooms, lab and pharmacy. Total costs are Rs. 88 Lakhs (145.000 €or 195.000 \$).

Phase two is planned to be completed by the end of 2012 and will add additional spaces and expand the range of outpatient holistic care, expanding the number of consultation and treatment rooms to 11, adding group therapy rooms, scanning and inpatient care. A total of Rs. 210 Lakhs (345.000 €or 465.000 \$) is required.

The centers are kindly requested to call for donations or develop ideas for fundraising.

Auroville Earth Institute

Satprem and Ayyappan came to present their work on earth architecture and the production of CSEB (Compressed Stabilized Earth Blocks). The institute has trained 6.241 people in 64 different countries in this technique. Unfortunately only 20% of Auroville buildings are using it so far. Planners and architects still resist, based on wrong assumptions that CSEB don’t last long enough. In terms of compressive strength and water absorption results are even better than for the local fired country bricks. In terms of resource friendly they are by far superior. It is a cost effective, fast building technique, which can involve unskilled labour, even the house-owners could produce their own earth blocks. The manual earth block press, which has been developed by the Earth Institute and is produced in Auroville, has an output of 850 bricks per day from one machine.

The Auroville Earth Institute is the representative for Asia of the UNESCO Chair "*Earthen Architecture, Constructive Cultures and Sustainable Development*". It has won several national and international awards and today offers training and consultancy in many countries worldwide. Major completed building projects are the Visitors Center, Vikas community and Mirramukhi in Auroville, a 22.16 m diameter dome for the Isha Foundation, built in 9 weeks, the Al Medhi Mosque in the heart of Riyadh, built in 7 weeks, and the Sri Karneshwar Nataraja Temple, 12 km north of Auroville, on the request of Dr. Karan Singh. In order to keep up with the demand for training and education the Institute has to extend its premises. Donations will be appreciated! For more information about this interesting work please see <http://www.earth-auroville.com>

Auroville Institute of Applied Technology (AIAT)

Karin and Lavkamad reported on recent developments in AIAT, formerly known as Auroville Industrial School, located at Irumbai next to the AVAG compound. Thanks to a major grant by the German ministry of Economic Relations and Development and other donations an extension building could be financed, which has been inaugurated in September 2009 by the German Consul from Chennai, Mr. Sauerteig. Courses are offered in civil draughtsmanship, electronics and communication, hardware maintenance, software applications and modern office management. "Personality building" is also part of the curriculum, it includes training in communication, English language, yoga, health care and family planning.

The school fee is comparatively low to enable local youth from the bioregion to apply for the courses. With nationally approved certificates all students have found jobs with good companies so far.

To cover expenses for school maintenance it is planned to offer short-term courses of 6 months, which will be financed by the Tamil Nadu Government. But donations from other agencies and individuals are still needed to cover all running costs.

Auroville Scholarship and Educational Fund

Auralice and Satyam came to present this fund which is designed to support Auroville youth studying or getting training abroad. Seven youth could already get funding, the rules are such that funds shall be returned from future income. Stichting de ZAAIER gave initial funds but the AVI centers are kindly requested to help with fundraising or collect information on possible funding agencies and institutions, which might be willing to collaborate.

Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Center

As a final highlight Joss came to talk about two projects he is presently involved with, the Adyar Poonga and the Integrated Rural Development Model.

Some of us had taken the great opportunity to visit Adyar Poonga on our way back from Chennai airport after the Orissa visit. The Adyar river, running through Chennai, up to the 1960 showed a balanced eco-system and beautiful environments. Today it is heavily polluted by domestic and industrial waste. To turn an area of 58 acres at the estuary of the Adyar river mouth into an eco-park has been a venture that Joss has been involved with as early as 2004. But then the tsunami hit and the project was put on ice. In 2006 the project was re-animated and in the end run and financed by the Chennai authorities and the Tamil Nadu state government.

Its objectives were to fulfil the recreational and open space needs of the city, creating a new landmark of international interest; to enable the citizens of Chennai to interact with nature and learn about sustainable living; to create a fresh water reservoir by the treatment of sewage and

storm water in co-existence with a restored estuarine-mangrove ecosystem; to help the process toward the restoration of the wetlands and forests, thus bringing back the indigenous flora and fauna.

In 2008 finally work on site could be started and Pitchandikulam Consultants were appointed as contractors for the project. 60 tons of garbage have been moved away in a very short time and 90.000 indigenous plants of 172 species from seedlings from Auroville got planted. In a period of 18 months only the dump area has been turned into a recreational and educational site which is beautifully designed and executed.

Plans to extend this eco-restoration program to all of Chennai's waterways, including the Buckingham canal, which runs from Andhra Pradesh to Marakannam through Chennai, are under way.

The second project Joss came to present is called "**Integral Rural Development**" (IRD). At the invitation of Dr. Sam Pitroda, Chairman of the Indian Knowledge Commission, a proposal was submitted by Auroville to the Knowledge Commission in December last year to create a replicable model of rural development on a relatively large scale, targeting a population of about 200,000 people in the Kaveli Bioregion.

The proposals create a "knowledge based" approach to development in six fundamental areas of life:

- a. Education & Livelihood
- b. Health
- c. Agriculture & Environment
- d. Energy
- e. Shelter
- f. Advanced Technologies

This integral development approach is based on the principle that development must be sustainable – environmentally, socially, economically, and culturally – it must create a model of rural transformation that integrates advanced technologies and traditional values, making the rural lifestyle attractive to a new generation of teachers, technicians, service providers and entrepreneurs.

After a row of up to 50 meetings the project is now approved both by the Central and the Tamil Nadu government. Auroville is asked to run the management of the project, which is designed to be a replicable model for other Indian rural areas. 10-12 Auroville units are involved in this project, like Pitchandikulam, AVAG, Well Paper, Upasana, Earth Institute and others.

This project could also be an important step to develop the coastal strip from Chennai to Auroville in a sustainable and ecologically sound manner. The biggest present challenge, however, is to recruit enough skilled labour for the Management Production Unit (PMU). AVI centers are requested to support Auroville in this venture by informing about it, helping to engage experts, professionals and volunteers, establish contacts with Universities and other institutions. For more information please contact Friederike, (info@auroville.de)

D. To-do list

- a. Orissa budget: contact Sauro and Pala from PCG and Luigi (Satyakam)
- b. Orissa reporting: check if there are enough photos on the website (Vani)
- c. Addis Ababa meeting: decide about a date (Board)
- d. Addis Ababa meeting: contact Jaya (Africa House), Dominique (UNESCO) and follow up with Doudou (Friederike and Satyakam)

- e. Liaisons: Letters to Maga, Paulo, Jasmin, Marti, M. Bonke and Hassan (Friederike and Vani)
- f. Exhibition in Brussels: Contact Kosha
- g. Copyright policy for photos and other media (Vani)
- h. Collect material for brochure (Isa and Friederike)
- i. Plan European event in International Zone
- j. Give regular IZ information under AVI logo in News&Notes (Vani)
- k. Find a new host for Board mailing list
- l. Write an AVI description and send it to Mr. Srinivasamurthy (Martin and Friederike)
- m. Create and send updated list with names of active AVI people to MM access group
- n. Inform AVI members about requests by Auroville projects and services, as presented by them.