

FSRI Fall 2020 Update

Dear Friends/ Supporters:

While 2020 has been a productive year for FSRI, it has come about in a very different way than we anticipated. Similar to almost all NGOs, the pandemic has dramatically altered the way we provided our services. We have evolved from personal delegations to virtual platforms for webinars, systems counseling with judicial officers and mediation leaders of host countries, and individual consultations with mediation executives and administrators around the world. All travel plans for international travel were put on hold, and this remains true for the foreseeable future.

All of this has required us to be flexible and creative in how we carry out our mission under the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Fortunately, the host countries we serve have been equally flexible and receptive to the use of virtual tools and platforms. They have proven to be understanding and willing to experiment with new approaches so we can continue to support and promote viable, effective mediation programs. For example, we have proceeded with webinars and training (best practices to successfully mediate cases online, and advanced mediation techniques), conferences with high judicial officers and bar representatives, and numerous counseling sessions with mediation leaders and administrators of ADR programs. Looking ahead to 2021, we have similar projects planned and several pilot programs with new initiatives under discussion. As always, when it is prudent and safe to do so, we will resume our personal delegations to visit our host countries as we have done in the past.

Fortunately, given the success of our last fundraising drive in 2019, and in light of our reduced international travel costs in 2020, we have been able to meet all our financial requirements this past year. We are in a good position to continue meeting our operational needs, assuming

that international travel will not be realistically possible until the latter part of 2021. Knowing that many of our donors support other organizations which may have more immediate (if not dire) needs, we have decided to postpone our annual fundraising drive until later in 2021 when the picture will be clearer as to international travel requirements. We are confident that our past donors and supporters will be there when such financial needs will be more identifiable.

In the meantime, let me assure you that we will be continuing our projects and services as requested by host countries where we have worked. For those that might be interested, I have attached a link of a brief video I was asked to prepare to inaugurate the 10th anniversary celebration of the Bulgaria mediation center in Sofia [<https://youtu.be/pdCsVjKajMA>]. In addition, I cannot overstate the effusive gratitude which has been expressed by senior judges, mediator administrators and lawyers for our continued willingness to work with them during the pandemic. It has been truly enheartening and inspiring.

Lastly, for those who would like to make a donation to FSRI in 2020, we welcome such gifts to support our ongoing work. Checks can be sent to me at our FSRI address [190 Golden Hills Drive, Portola Valley, CA 94028] or via PayPal [<http://www.fsriadr.org/financial-contributions>].

Thank you again for your ongoing interest and support. All of us at FSRI look forward to a full return of all our overseas programs, not only to continue the fulfillment of our mission, but also in the hope this will reflect greater health and safety for all of you and your loved ones. As always, feel free to contact me directly if you would like to discuss any aspect of our FSRI programs.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy holiday season, and a better New Year, Vic