



WHAT'S NEW

◆ **WSIS Phase II – Tunis Nov 2005 - ECOSOC NGO Roundtable/Workshops on the theme “For an Interactive Dialogue to ensure ICT Access for All”.**

The UN-NGO-IRENE / NGO Section/ECOSOC and the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Association of Tunisian Mothers (ATM), Regional Coordinator of the UN-NGO- Informal Regional Network for Africa (UN-NGO-IRENE/Africa) and Formit Foundation together hosted the ECOSOC NGO Roundtable/Workshops to contribute to an effective implementation of the Tunis Declaration and Plan of Action on the theme “*For an Interactive Dialogue to ensure ICT Access for All*”.



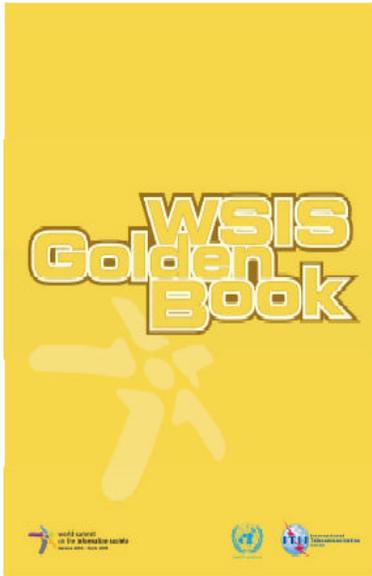
The objective of the panel was to follow-up on the April 2005 ECOSOC NGO Forum which was organized on the theme “*For an Inclusive, People Centered, Development Oriented and Knowledgeable Information Society for All*” and to effectively contribute to the implementation of the recommendations and the Tunis Declaration and Plan of Action which were adopted by the Forum

The outcome was a *STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN* for the United Nations ECOSOC NGOs to contribute to the effective implementation of the Tunis Declaration, which will serve as statement to the ECOSOC Substantive Session of Geneva, July 2006

◆ **Golden Book: Stakeholder Commitments and Initiatives**

Following the initiative announced at PrepCom-3, and based on the decision of the WSIS Bureau, the Golden Book was intended to promote new commitments and initiatives that stakeholders have announced, during the Tunis Phase of the WSIS. The Golden Book brings together new initiatives for information to all interested

parties. These initiatives complement those already underway, which have been recorded in the WSIS stocktaking database (see: WSIS-II/PC-3/DOC3).



The Golden Book database was launched in October 2005 and was frozen on 31 January 2006. Submitted information has been reflected in the Golden Book publication, released on 24 February 2006.

“One Dollar for Development”, a project initiative supported by UN-NGO-IRENE has been documented as one of the ‘creative content’ initiative in E-governance for overcoming the digital divide.

The electronic version of the Golden Book publication is available here.

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/goldenbook/Publication/GB-final.pdf>

COMMITTEE 2006 REGULAR SESSION

At its 2006 regular session, from 19 to 27 January 2006, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, under the newly elected Chair from Colombia, Beatriz Londono, had before it 146 applications for consultative status, including applications deferred from previous sessions. Of these applications, the 19-member Committee recommended 97 applications for consultative status and deferred 42 organizations for further consideration at a later date. It did not grant consultative status to three organizations and closed consideration of two organizations. It also recommended withdrawing consultative the status from one organization. The Committee also had before it three requests for reclassification of consultative status of which it recommended two. In addition, it reviewed 52 quadrennial reports and took note of 42 of them. The Committee heard seven representatives of NGOs.

The Committee decided not to grant consultative status to three organizations: The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), (international organization based in Belgium), The Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians (LBL), (organizational based in Denmark), by a vote of 10 in favor of denying the application to 5 against, with 3 abstentions, in both cases. These were controversial decisions that received journalistic coverage. The German Delegate stated that the Committee’s rejection was an act of discrimination based on sexual orientation and would “haunt us for a long time.”

The Committee also rejected, a Czech-based international organization, People in Need by a vote of 9 in favor of denying the application to 4 against, with 4 abstentions. The proposal to reject the NGO’s application was put forward by Cuba stating that this NGO

was a front for the Czech Government and used to destabilize regimes in different countries including Cuba.

The Committee decided also to end consideration of the request for consultative status for two organizations. In the case of the Women and Child Development Organization (NIRDAR), it was because there had been no response from that NGO for several sessions. In the case of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY International Inc.), it was due to ongoing legal proceeding with regards to possible terrorist links.

With regard to applications for reclassification, the Committee decided not to recommend reclassification to general status of the Armenian Relief Society (ARS), based on an intervention by the Turkish Ambassador who stated that ARS had not respected the principles of the Charter and Council resolution 1996/31, and had provided inaccurate information.

In addition, the Committee decided, on a request by the United States, to withdraw the status of the Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA), based in Sudan. The US delegation informed the Committee that IARA since 2004 had been placed on a list of terrorist organizations by the Department of the United States Treasury because of its links with Al Qaida and terrorist financing activities. Although several notifications were sent to the NGO, no reply was received from the organization and the Committee took its decision by consensus 'with a caution' as stated by Cuba.

While the Committee recommended consultative status by consensus for the Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, a Palestinian-based organization, the delegations of the United States, France and Germany disassociated themselves from the consensus, on the grounds that the organizations' position equating Zionism with racism was not clear.

The Committee also heard a statement made by the Chair on the reinstatement of status for the Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", an organization in special status that had been suspended by the Committee for one year pursuant to a complaint by the United States. The one year suspension of that NGO came to an end on 23 July 2005. The issue of the automaticity of reinstatement after suspension was debated at length, but no resolution of the issue was reached by the Committee and the Chair took the issue under advisement.

Another application that generated intense discussion was that of Venezuelan based Asociacion civil conscorico desarrollo y justicia. Speaking against this organization, the representative of Venezuela, an observer to the Committee, urged denial of the application. The Committee postponed action on that application, pending the receipt of answers to the various issues raised.

ECOSOC President Ali Hachani, Assistant Secretary-General Jomo Kwame Sundaram and the Chief of the NGO Section Hanifa Mezoui paid tribute to the outgoing Chairperson Paimaneh Hastaie (Iran). Initiatives such as ICT Task Force, High level Segment debates, the newly reformed ECOSOC were encouraged and seen as essential

elements facilitating the contribution of NGOs. The development of the “Paperless Committee System” was also highlighted as it reached several targeted goals under the UN Reform: quality, quantity, cost-effectiveness and timeliness.

The Committee will resume its work in May (10-19 May 2006).

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW



CONGO Presents Draft Resolution on the Creation of Human Rights Council

Under the leadership of its President Renate Bloom who gave CONGO a new strategic direction and who can be seen as a true partner in the process of the reform of the UN.

By virtue of their close working relationship NGOs have been considered to have the best insights into the grassroots population and are thus perceived by the UN as valuable contributors to the process of development. With the presentation of the draft resolution, CONGO has set an example by taking these ‘NGO insights’ to a new level and once again proved that the civil society participation is instrumental in drafting UN policies.

The President and Board Members of CONGO, meeting at the HQ of the UN in New York from 23 to 24 February, 2006, received the visits of the Secretary General, Dr Kofi Annan and the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Jan Eliasson. They explained to the Board the discussions and negotiations which had led to the presentation on 23 February of the Draft Resolution on the creation of a Human Rights Council: they further explained that the next days of governmental consultations would be decisive if the proposed Council was to be established before the meeting of the Human Rights Commission scheduled to begin in Geneva on 13th March 2006.

The members of the Board of CONGO expressed their conviction that this is a crucial moment for the establishment of the Human Rights Council in its proposed form. Despite some disappointments that it has not been possible to adopt some of the aspirations for necessary reform advanced by certain governments and civil society organizations and by the UN secretariat itself, the Board of CONGO urges that the Draft Resolution be adopted. It incorporates – for example by the new powers to sanction with suspension States which violate human rights - vital elements for the reform, re-invigoration and empowerment of the human rights agenda.

The CONGO Board warmly agrees with the description of the Council, given by the Secretary General, as “much more than old wine in new bottles” as well as with the description, given by the President of the GA, of human rights as “the soul of the United Nations”

In the present global crisis of tensions, breakdown of dialogue and loss of confidence among peoples, the CONGO Board further welcomes the emphasis, given by the GA President, to the affirmation in the paragraph PP7 that “States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion and belief”

The CONGO Board also notes the paragraph PP8 of the Draft Resolution which recognizes “the work undertaken by the UN Commission on Human Rights and the need to preserve and build on its achievements and to redress its shortcomings”. In particular the CONGO Board expresses its hope that among those achievements the proven consultation and advocacy roles of non-governmental organizations and others will be preserved and enhanced and notes the paragraph OP11 which decides for the continuation of such consultation and participation “while ensuring the most effective contribution of these entities”. In this connection CONGO offers the services of its recently constituted “NGO Information and Coordination Service” with its steering committee of major Human Rights NGOs.

The CONGO Board therefore gives its full support to the content of the Draft Resolution and to its early adoption by the General Assembly. The CONGO Board calls on the NGO community to urge such adoption upon all member governments with which they have contact and to pursue throughout civil society continued commitment and engagement in ensuring the success of the future Human Rights Council.

Themes for the 2006 High level Segment and Coordination Segment

The Economic and Social Council decided that the theme of the high-level segment of its 2006 substantive session would be "Creating an environment at the national and international levels, conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development",

Theme for the coordination segment of its 2006 substantive session will be “Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger.”

We have sent out the themes to the NGO and are expecting your contributions on how you have planned to adopt the themes in your activities. We encourage and welcome your contributions not only to maintain a dynamic and useful UN-NGO-IRENE Update, but also a full fledged participation at the NGO FORUM(6-7 April 2006)

The written statement has to be submitted in English or French by 25 March 2006. A written statement submitted by an organization will be circulated in full if it does not exceed 2,000 words for organizations in general consultative status, and 500 words for organizations in special or the Roster consultative status. Where a statement is in excess of the stipulated word limit, the organizations shall submit a summary which will be circulated or shall supply sufficient copies of the full text in the working languages for distribution. A statement will also be circulated in full, however, upon a specific request of the Council or its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations;

Please submit your statements, comments, remarks and information on your success stories to: mezoui@un.org. If your organization wishes to share information with the UN-NGO-IRENE community kindly add us to your mailing list.

UPCOMING EVENTS *Not to Miss!*

- ◆ 4-5 April 2006-Preperatory meeting for the 2006 High Level Segment;
- ◆ 24 April 2006- Special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD - New York;
- ◆ 3-7 April 2006- Commission on Population and Development, thirty-ninth session - New York;
- ◆ 6-12 April 2006- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific - Jakarta;
- ◆ 11 April 2006- “Sounds of New Orleans” A Concert by the New Orleans Preservation Hall Jazz Band in the ECOSOC Chamber. The event is a fundraiser for the rehabilitation projects identified for the disaster hit victims in New Orleans being organized by the Give them a Hand Foundation with support from the Permanent Mission of Italy to United Nations and the UN Staff Relief Fund;
- ◆ 20-21 April 2006- VI Info-Poverty world Conference, Conference Room 5;
- ◆ 1-12 May 2006- Commission on Sustainable Development, fourteenth session - New York As the first year of the second implementation cycle, CSD-14 will review progress in the following areas: Energy for Sustainable Development; Industrial Development; Air pollution/Atmosphere; and Climate Change;
- ◆ 8-10 May 2006- Economic Commission for Africa, thirty-fourth session and twenty-fifth meeting of the Conference of Ministers - Algiers;
- ◆ 10-11 May 2006- Economic and Social Council, resumed organizational session - New York;
- ◆ 10-19 May 2006- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations - New York 2006 Resumed Session;
- ◆ 15-26 May 2006- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - New York;

USEFUL LINKS:

- ◆ UN Public Private Alliance in Dominican Republic – One Dollar for Development; a UN-NGO-IRENE Initiative;
<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/Alliance/Dominican%20Republic%20One%20dollar%20for%20Development.htm>

'Give them a Hand' - A New Humanitarian Partnership Initiative

GTAH has now joined hands with UN-NGO-IRENE and a unique new humanitarian partnership initiative is under way.

'Give them a Hand' Foundation was organized initially for disaster relief and charitable purposes. It came into existence in August 2004 in response to the disaster relief activities for the Haiti and Grenada. This was largely done by donations from individuals and organizations. Gradually, 'Give them a Hand' Foundation grew to become an informal community based partnership initiative, which brings together Member States, NGOs, Private Sector, Artists and UN staff towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promoting the humanitarian causes of the United Nations.

Give them a Hand Foundation is today established as a Humanitarian Organization with its focus on developing the Human Capital. Through its humanitarian medical/other mission or training programs, GTAH strives to enable its clients especially in rural areas to lead an active and more meaningful life, thereby allowing them to participate in the process of economic development.

1) Relief Mission to New Orleans in aid of Hurricane Katrina Victims, 16 to 18 December 2005

To give the hurricane victims a helping hand as they try to rebuild their lives. The team undertook the rehabilitation of houses in Slidell and Chalmette that had suffered severe flood damage and were still filled with debris. On the last day of the mission the team distributed over three hundred toys, donated by UN staff, the United Nations International School and the World Addiction Foundation, at a camp in Chalmette. In addition the team distributed 50 boxes of clothing.

2) Humanitarian Mission to the Dominican Republic, 26 to 31 September 2005

To give depressed rural communities in the Dominican Republic a helping hand, the team visited a number of schools and orphanages as well as a hospital in the Sosua, Puerta Plaza area and distributed over two hundred cases of school kits, hygiene kits, clothing, stuffed toys, books and sports equipment (bats, helmets, balls, catchers mitts, hats, uniforms) according to needs. In addition to distributing supplies, the team entertained children at these facilities by dressing up as clowns.

Several other Hunger Relief / Medical missions have been undertaken in the past to the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Haiti. School and Hygiene kits, clothing, soccer balls, baseball gear and toys delivered to schools in Cabarete, Montellano and Jimani in the Dominican Republic including 13,000 school and library books. Mustard Seed, Maxwell Home to the Bustamante Children's Hospital and the Percy Junior Hospital amongst other institutions in Jamaica receive continued support from the partnership.

A benefit concert, "Sounds of New Orleans" is being planned with support from the Permanent Mission of Italy to United Nations and the UN Staff Relief Fund at the United Nations to raise funds for the rehabilitation projects identified for the disaster hit victims

in New Orleans on 11 April 2006 in the ECOSOC Chamber. The event shall also serve to promote the Millennium Development Goals and the humanitarian cause of United Nations. For further information on the concert, please email to UNneworleansconcert@gmail.com

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