

**Paper on the modalities for
the informal interactive UN General Assembly Hearings (23 – 24 June 2005)
preparatory to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the 60th session
of the UN General Assembly (14 – 16 September 2005)**

1. This paper has been produced through consultations with a wide range of non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives in response to paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 59/145,¹ which reads as follows:

“Requests the President of the General Assembly, in consultation with representatives of non-governmental organizations, to organize informal interactive hearings in June 2005 in New York with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, as an input to the preparatory process of the High-level Plenary Meeting.”

2. The paper is intended to provide the basis for consideration of the modalities for the proposed informal interactive General Assembly Hearings to be held on 23 – 24 June 2005 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA.

3. At the outset, it is important to ensure that the preparatory process for the informal interactive Hearings is broad-based, transparent, inclusive, and open to all interested parties, including recognized representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations, and the private sector.

Coordination with the Office of the President of the General Assembly

4. We propose to establish a Task Force after consultation with accredited and recognized representatives of NGOs and civil society organizations, including those that represent private sector networks. The Task Force would co-ordinate participation of all partners in the Hearings and liaise with the Facilitators appointed by the President of the General Assembly to prepare for the High-level Plenary Meeting. The Task Force will both reflect and maintain outreach with the broad diversity of NGOs, civil society organizations, and private sector networks involved in the UN intergovernmental processes and help to ensure a coordinated and organized approach over the life of the preparatory process and the High-level Plenary Meeting. The objective will be to ensure effective civil society inputs and participation in the entire process and in the modalities for follow-up.

Aims of the Hearings

5. The aims of the Hearings are the following:

- To offer opportunities to NGOs, civil society, and the private sector to engage Member States in an interactive dialogue on their recommendations for the preparation, conduct and desired outcomes of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

¹ The text of resolution 59/145 is contained in General Assembly document A/RES/59/145.

- To explore how NGOs, civil society, and the private sector can play an enhanced role in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in line with the last bullet of paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration²: *“To give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general, to contribute to the realization of the Organization’s goals and programmes.”*
- To reflect further on the recommendations in the Report of the Secretary General (General Assembly document A/59/354) in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. (General Assembly document A/58/ 817).

Outcome of the Hearings

6. As was done for the “World Hearings on Development”, held from 6 to 10 June 1994 (General Assembly document A/49/320), an official report on the Hearings should be issued as a document of the UN General Assembly for circulation to all Member States, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, the private sector and the media, prior to the High-level Plenary Meeting.

Format for the Hearings

7. In keeping with the importance of the High-level Plenary Meeting, it would be desirable that the opening and closing sessions of the Hearings take place in the General Assembly Hall.

8. The interactive Hearings to be held on 23-24 June 2005 would consist of two sessions a day from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m. and from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The first session would start immediately after the opening of the Hearings.

9. The exact format of the Hearings, the speakers to be invited, the subject matter of the Hearings and the time allocations are items that would be worked on by the Task Force, with the support of the NGO Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information, the Non-Governmental Liaison Office, the UN Fund for International Partnerships and the Office of the Global Compact.

10. Taking into account the lessons learned from previous Hearings that have been held in the context of international conferences, it is desirable to ensure that adequate time is included for interactive dialogue among the parties.

² The text of the Millennium Declaration is contained in General Assembly document A/RES/55/2.

11. A guiding principle should be that the Hearings facilitate a meaningful interactive dialogue between Member States, NGOs, civil society organizations, and the private sector. It may be possible for the Hearings to employ various modalities, including round-tables, panel discussions and testimonials.

12. Experts from the UN system may be invited to provide technical inputs or studies that could support or contribute to the discussion.

13. The Hearings should be open to the media.

14. Possible themes for discussion could be based on the Millennium Declaration and the Secretary General's forthcoming March 2005 comprehensive report.

NGO participants

15. To ensure equitable geographic NGO participation, funds must be secured to cover travel and accommodation costs of civil society groups and NGOs from the South, who could not otherwise attend the Hearings.

16. We propose that the Task Force make recommendations to the President of the General Assembly on the special guests to be invited to participate in the Hearings. The selection process will be based on criteria to be agreed, including geographical and gender balance, relevant expertise on substantive issues for discussion, and inclusion of broad-based representational networks that engage with the relevant UN processes.

Preparatory processes

17. In May 2000, the NGO preparatory process for the Millennium Summit was a one week conference, the "We the Peoples" Millennium Forum, attended by about 2000 NGO representatives at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. However, this year NGO preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting, are not concentrated on one major event. Instead, NGOs are taking the opportunity to consult and act upon their priority issues and desired outcomes at many of the meetings and conferences already on the UN's worldwide calendar.

18. For example, the Millennium +5 NGO Network, formed by The Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relations with the UN (CONGO) and the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, is holding NGO consultations in conjunction with meetings of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies (the Commissions on Social Development, Status of Women, Human Rights, Sustainable Development). Among other events, the DPI/NGO Town Hall Meeting on 3 March in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium and the ECOSOC NGO Forum on the MDGs to be held in the ECOSOC Chamber on 10 March 2005 will be valuable opportunities for NGOs to share their ideas on the priority issues and desired outcomes of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

19. There are other NGO consultative processes in play which will feed into the Hearings and directly to the High-level Plenary Meeting, notably work being done on the Millennium Development Goals and on Financing for Development, including the Global Call to Action Against Poverty; the follow-up to the High Level Panel reports on Threats, Challenges and Change and on UN-Civil Society Relations; and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict which will hold the Global Partnership Conference “From Reaction to Prevention” at UN Headquarters, New York, 19 – 21 July 2005.

20. All constituencies are encouraged to formulate their ideas and recommendations, including children, youth, the aging, women, indigenous peoples, faith-based communities and labor.

21. The annual DPI/NGO Conference will be held at the UN in New York, 7 – 9 September 2005, in the week before the High-level Plenary Meeting.

22. The Millennium +5 NGO Network will ensure that the results of any preparatory meetings for the Hearings and the High-level Plenary Meeting are available in ample time for circulation to all interested parties.

- - - - -