

Millennium +5 NGO Network

Background paper on NGO participation in the preparations and conduct of the informal interactive UN General Assembly Hearings (proposed for 23 – 24 June 2005) preparatory to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the 60th session of the UN General Assembly (14 – 16 September 2005)

The UN General Assembly resolution 59/145,¹ states:

“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.”
(paragraph 8)

It is proposed that the Hearings be held on 23-24 June 2005 and 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 likely themes for discussion will be based on the Millennium Declaration and the Secretary-General's forthcoming March 2005 comprehensive report.

It is important to ensure that the preparatory process for the 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.

Background on the production of this paper

On 14 January 2005, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) arranged a meeting of NGO representatives with the Chef de Cabinet of the President of the General Assembly to discuss the modalities for the GA Hearings with Civil Society. The Chef de Cabinet noted that the first meeting of all the Facilitators would be held on 25 January and that he would welcome a paper from NGOs outlining their views and recommendations for the Hearings as soon as possible.

On 24 January, the UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette, held a one day briefing for NGOs on the preparations for the High-level Panel Meeting of the General Assembly in September.

To start the process of NGO consultations on the requested paper a draft was produced on 28 January and discussed at an informal meeting on 2 February. The resulting paper, included contributions from various NGOs, notably participants in the one day briefing on 24 January, all of whom received a copy of it. However, not all the proposals in this paper were considered appropriate, particularly the suggestion that the number of civil

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

society participants in the Hearings could be determined in advance. Further consultations among NGOs and with the Secretariat led to modifications of the paper, which then became the basis for a meeting on 17 February with the Ambassadors of Norway and Nicaragua, the two Facilitators appointed by the President to facilitate arrangements for the GA Hearing. In response to their feedback comments the paper was further revised and sent back to them and to the Office of the President on 18 February.

There was a suggestion that this version of the NGO position paper could be widely circulated through the NGO offices of DPI and DESA. However views differed about this, one of the concerns being that NGOs outside New York who do not yet know anything about the GA Hearing with Civil Society could find that paper misleading.

This document, endorsed by the Millennium +5 NGO Network, is intended to provide a summary of the key points in the NGO position paper to enable NGOs around the world to engage with the preparatory process both for the Hearings and the High-level Plenary meeting in September.

Aims of the Hearings

From an NGO perspective, the aims of the Hearings are:

- 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.
- 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

As was done for the “World Hearings on Development”, held 6-10 June 1994 (GA document A/49/320), an official report on the Hearings should be issued as a document of the UNGA 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.

NGO preparatory process

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

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. 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 coordinating many of these NGO consultations. Priority is being given to meetings of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies (the Commissions on Social Development, Status of Women, Human Rights, Sustainable Development). Other events include the DPI/NGO Town Hall Meeting on 3 March in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium and the ECOSOC NGO Forum on the MDGs in the ECOSOC Chamber on 10 March 2005.

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 MDGs 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 Conference “From Reaction to Prevention” at UN Headquarters, New York, 19 – 21 July 2005. 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.

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

The Millennium + 5 NGO Network has set up an email list to share and disseminate information quickly. To join, simply send an email to the following address:

millenniumplus5ngonetwork-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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