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By NGOs For NGOs

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MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: CIVIL SOCIETY TAKES ACTION

57TH ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE, 8-10 SEPTEMBER 2004



A Record attendance at the 57th NGO/DPI Conference filled the UN General Assembly.

Thanks to the work of the 50-member Conference Planning Committee, the 57th Conference made a substantive contribution to the thinking and networking around civil society's involvement with the MDGs. It also inspired participants to continue to support efforts at the local, national and international levels to implement the eight anti-poverty measures.

The Conference was successful by all measures: 2,000 persons, including representatives from 555 NGOs in 69 countries met over three days at Headquarters. The Conference was characterized by unprecedented youth participation, new opportunities for networking, an interactive web site that enabled hundreds of persons in remote sites to participate, and extensive press coverage, which increased by 175 per cent over 2003. View the Final Report of the Conference at: www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/.

Conference participants voiced their determination to continue their work on MDGs. According to Jeffrey Sachs, a noted author, the next twelve months will be crucial in terms of securing sufficient government and civil society support. Otherwise, the final results will be problematic. Already, a Communications Workshop on how to plug into MGD campaigns at the local, national and UN levels took place on 9 December. Follow-up workshops are scheduled for February and May.

Arrangements for the 58th DPI/NGO Conference are also well underway. The NGO/DPI Executive Committee has appointed Joseph Donnelly (International Confederation of Catholic Charities) as the chairperson for next year's meeting. At the annual Town Meeting of NGOs here at Headquarters on 2 December, twenty-five representatives expressed support for continuing with the MDGs theme. Others, however, favored addressing UN reform issues, which will be the focus of the Millennium Summit +5 of the General Assembly. As our Conference immediately precedes the Summit, we may try to tie directly into that intergovernmental meeting. The questions now before us are: How will we put together these two important themes? How will the Conference contribute to the 2005 Summit deliberations and recommendations?

Stay tuned, as many decisions will be made in early 2005.

Paul Hoeffel

NGO Online Volunteering: www.onlinevolunteering.org

For organizations working in or focused on developing countries, the U.N. volunteers programme's Online Volunteering service connects these organizations with a diverse, abundant, worldwide pool of talent and expertise. Online volunteers can supplement the work of onsite volunteers, expand onsite resources and make it possible to serve a wider audience. Any nonprofit organization actively working in or for developing countries can host online volunteers via this service.

Elaine Michetti

NGO/DPI Executive Committee OPEN FORUM

The NGO/DPI Executive Committee held its Annual Open Forum on Thursday, 9 September, during the three-day DPI/NGO Conference. This meeting always takes place during the Conference so that NGOs in attendance have a chance to interact with the Executive Committee and each other. Many participants come from different parts of the country and the world. The Annual Conference provides them with an opportunity to visit United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The Executive Committee welcomed comments on how to improve contacts and relationships and how to better meet the needs of affiliated NGOs more effectively. Participants expressed a desire to connect to the Executive Committee and to each other. Many were interested in meeting NGOs with similar interests. All wanted to see more information on the Executive Committee's website. With this in mind, I have posted on the NGO/DPI website a list of sub-committee Chairs for those who wish to serve and/or offer suggestions.

Joan Levy, Chair

Second Youth Assembly Planned

Global youth participants are invited to apply to attend a three-day, free assembly programme at the United Nations in early August. This is the second year for the event that is open by application to young people 18-26 (visa, travel and accommodations at participant's expense). Visit: www.faf.org/youthassembly.html for applications, dates & details.

NGO Partnerships

The NGO/DPI Communications Workshop Committee, with invaluable assistance from the DPI/NGO Section, organized a one-day workshop in early December, entitled *NGO Partnerships for Achieving the MDGs*. The Workshop allowed for a realistic and open dialog between panelists and NGO representatives in the audience regarding the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. Working partnerships between the NGO community, governments and the UN was an agreed-upon priority. Participants also urged that effective mechanisms already in existence be highlighted.

During the morning session, speakers focused on how to help NGOs form partnerships with governments, UN agencies, and other civil society partners, and on identifying ways to achieve the MDGs as quickly and effectively as possible. A third issue was the role civil society should play in the Beijing +10, Copenhagen +10, MDG +5 Summits and the 60th Anniversary of the UN.

In the interactive afternoon session, presenters spoke briefly about best practices for partnerships between NGO's, governments and the UN and how these associations should support the agenda of the MDGs. Experiences were shared and new partnerships encouraged. NGOs from the audience posed important questions, such as—where and how to best approach the UN, how to guarantee that the partnerships created would actually benefit the needy, and how to ensure that NGO's are heard in the process of reporting on the MDGs.

Finally, NGOs were encouraged to become involved on the national level to make sure that the reporting process leading up to next year's Millennium+5 Summit reflects the "reality on the ground." NGO's in countries like Uruguay, Lebanon and El Salvador have demonstrated that it is possible to contribute to this process, either directly or by raising public awareness via parallel campaigns.

Shamina de Gonzaga and Ayse Toprak

IN APPRECIATION

On behalf of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, I express my gratitude to Dr. Eng-chi Yao for the generous contribution from the World League for Peace and Democracy. It will be used in the spirit in which it was given, to further the efforts of the Executive Committee to promote Millennium Development Goals. Support for MDGs by the League, and by NGOs worldwide, can influence the ultimate realization of these important objectives.

Joan Levy, Chair

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE NGO/DPI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FROM THE WORLD LEAGUE FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY



Dr. Eng-chi Yao

MDGs worldwide. Dr. Eng-chi Yao, the League's president, while attending the September conference with a large delegation of League regional and national officers, formally presented the contribution to Executive Committee representatives.

The League has more than one hundred national chapters worldwide. One of its major objectives is to promote international cooperation in economic development and educational and cultural exchanges that support social progress and improved standards of living.

In keeping with the wide international support for the Millennium Development Goals, highlighted in the recent DPI/NGO Conference, the World League for Freedom and Democracy has made a significant contribution the NGO/DPI Executive Committee's drive to promote

All chapters contribute to these efforts. Among the League's myriad of activities, it organizes a delegation of national chapter representatives to attend the annual DPI/NGO September conference. In addition to its own annual conference, usually hosted by a national chapter on a rotational basis, the League sponsors symposia and seminars in a wide variety of world academic settings. Recently, it organized and donated a humanitarian relief shipment of 100 tons of rice to Bangladesh relief agencies.

Dr. Yao is president of the NGO and has always been particularly interested in the welfare of young people. Under his leadership, the League is reviving its youth program in order to inspire those who are, in his words, the "hope of the future of mankind." He plans to enlist the cooperation of other NGOs to promote constructive activities among the "younger generation."

Dr. Yao has traveled widely to meet with world leaders and develop international contacts and support for the League and its objectives.

Lester Wilson



NOTES FROM THE RESOURCE CENTRE

In early 2005, the Resource Centre will launch a new audio-visual library. A computerized index to *World Chronicle* and *UN in Action* videos from 2000 to the present is also in development, along with a similar index to audio files of the Thursday NGO/DPI briefings. The indexes will be based on the use of keywords and will be very user-friendly. A limited number of hard copies of the indexes will be available in the Resource Centre for reference use only.

Mona Gillet

Editors' Desk

*So much comes across our desks; help support the Executive Committee so the **Reporter** may grow and carry more news. Here is a glance at some recent, important news ...*

Tsunami Disaster and Relief Efforts – As we watch from afar, the Asian tsunami disaster appears to be one of the largest natural disasters in modern memory. The United Nations is at the center of the assistance efforts for thousands of individuals and families. It is coordinating donations from countries, individuals and nongovernmental organizations as well as administering relief through such UN agencies as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and others. The scale and scope of the relief effort is unprecedented, throwing a spotlight on the global network of UN agencies and field representatives that, in many ways, are well positioned to respond to the crisis. Donations are needed over the long term. Various UN agencies are accepting donations directly or through their US Committees. Carol Bellamy, executive director of UNICEF, has suggested that donations be made in cash rather than in-kind, and that checks be written without strings attached. For those interested in volunteering, UN volunteers for all agencies are coordinated through United Nations Volunteers. Visit www.unv.org.

A Message from UNA-USA

UN Oil-for-Food Program – United Nations supporters launched a new website (www.oilforfoodfacts.org) to provide facts and dispel myths regarding the Oil-For-Food Program (OFFP), the subject of an independent investigation led by former US Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker and several US congressional inquiries. According to the UN Foundation: "For too long critics of the UN have made wild accusations and unsubstantiated claims about the Oil-for-Food Program. It is time that those who claim to seek the truth about the Oil-for-Food Program are held to the standard of truth themselves. And, it is time both the facts of the program and its benefits get equal time."

USEFUL LINKS:

Youth-centered Websites:

Global Youth Action Network (GYAN): www.gyan.org

TakingItGlobal: www.takingitglobal.org

Online Calendar: Your NGO is welcome to publicize its events at the NGO/DPI Executive Committee website. Visit www.ngodpixecom.org and click on "Calendar" where it appears on the menu along the left side of the screen. Fill out the simple online form. You are welcome to paste your entire press release into the Description section.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has a re-designed, user-friendly website. It features recent publications and an extensive database of reports, papers and speeches related to peacekeeping. www.un.org/peace-keeping/bestpractices.

The UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) has added a new section to its website that will provide information on UN reform, with a special focus on UN-Civil Society Relations. www.un.ngls.org/UNreform.

NGO REPORTER

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