



58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference

Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal

United Nations, New York
7-9 September 2005

Story Idea 3

Voices for Partnerships: United Nations and NGOs/Civil Society

Over the past few years, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a key role in furthering political change and promoting sustainable development policies. Chile's transition to democracy was influenced by civil society work. China has 280,000 NGOs that continuously search for a voice in government policies. Many NGOs in South America have been teaching pregnant women about maternal health problems, and such teachings have resulted in reduced infant mortality.

The United Nations Secretary-General has recognized the increasingly important role of the NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world. He started a process of reviewing and revitalizing relations between the United Nations and the civil society actors. A High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons was appointed to produce a practical set of recommendations as to how the UN's work with the civil society could be improved. The final report of the Panel was presented to the Secretary-General in June 2004.

The Informal General Assembly Hearings with civil society on 23 and 24 June 2005 were part of this process. The Hearings were organized as an input to the preparatory process of the 2005 World Summit to be held from 14 to 16 September 2005 in New York. The summary of the Hearings was published 21 July 2005. The Hearings provided a historic momentum as NGOs and CSOs had the opportunity to stand up for increased and strengthened participation of the wider civil society in the United Nations system.

As part of civil society's more significant role at the United Nations, the Millennium+5 NGO Network conducted a series of consultations and published a report entitled *We Will Spare No Effort*, which contains the views and recommendations of civil society to be put forward at the 2005 Summit. Both the United Nations and civil society, wish to strengthen their partnerships through increased cooperation.

The 58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference is a good example of a joint effort between United Nations and NGOs. The conference is organized by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in partnership with its associated NGOs and with the participation of NGOs associated with the

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Conference will also be attended by representatives of other civil society organizations, private sector and governments.

As a preparatory organ of the conference, the DPI/NGO Conference Planning Committee, made up of DPI staff and NGO representatives started preparing for the Conference as early as January 2005. The Committee attempted to coordinate and harmonize the different perspectives and views of its numerous members. The major challenge of such partnerships seems to be the ability to make compromises and respect various opinions and views. This is also reflected in the title of the conference *Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal*. The Planning Committee succeeded in overcoming these challenges thus making this conference a true example of effective partnerships.

A set of roundtable discussions on the third day of the Conference, will provide a forum, similar to the General Assembly Informal Hearings with civil society. NGO and other civil society participants will have an opportunity to voice their concerns and exchange views with government representatives on issues of peace and security, eradicating poverty, the relationship of the United Nations and civil society, and the future of the United Nations. The recommendations made by Conference participants will be reflected in the final report of the Conference.

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During the 58th DPI/NGO Conference, the following speakers will participate in the roundtables:

Ziad Abdel-Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
Melba Pria Olavarrieta, Chief of United Nations Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
Liu Mingzu, Chairman, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China
Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Executive Director, Tebtebba Foundation, Philippines; Member, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Paul van Tongeren, Executive Director, European Centre for Conflict Prevention
Chikage Oogi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Japan
Anne O'Mahony, Regional Director, Concern Worldwide
Georg Kell, Director, Global Compact Office
Ann Veneman, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Jean-Louis Debre, President of the National Assembly, France
Sylvan Barnet, Rotary International
Teclaire Ntomb, President, Groupe d'Initiative Commune des Paysannes de Bogso (GICPAB), Cameroon
Uwen Robert Otu, President, African Youth Movement, Nigeria
Hanifa Mezoui, Chief, NGO Section, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Bill Pace, Executive Director, World Federalist Movement (WFM)
Renan Calheiros, President of the Senate, Brazil
Dan Hays, Speaker of the Senate, Canada
Alejandra Scampini, Uruguay Director, Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres (REPEM); Representative, Feminist Task Force, Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)
Paul Tennessee, United Nations Representative, World Confederation of Labour
Juan Somavia, Director-General, International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, President of the National Assembly of the People's Power, Cuba
Renate Bloem, President, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the

United Nations (CONGO)

Shirin Ebadi, Founder and Former President, National Association in Support of Children's Rights; President, Human Rights Defence Centre, Iran

During the three days, a number of midday interactive workshops organized by NGOs will also discuss the role of the civil society in the United Nations. Some of the speakers include:

Rita Balian, Founder, Armenian American Wellness Center, Yerevan, Armenia

Joan Grant-Cummings, Coordinator, Coalition for Community Participation in Governance, Jamaica

Noura Fatchima, Association Nigerienne des Scouts de l'Environnement

Warren Nyamugasira, Executive Director, Uganda National NGO Forum

Benjamin Quinto, Executive Director, Global Youth Action Network

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Useful Links:

58th DPI/NGO Conference www.unngodpiconference.org

In Larger Freedom <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>

Millennium Campaign <http://www.millenniumcampaign.org>

The 2005 World Summit: An Overview <http://www.un.org/ga/documents/overview2005summit.pdf>

High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly – Draft Outcome Document

http://www.un.org/ga/59/hlpm_rev.2.pdf

The Cardoso Report, "We the Peoples: civil society, the United Nations, and global governance"

<http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/N0437641.pdf> or <http://www.un.org/reform/panel.htm>

Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change

<http://www.un.org/secureworld/>

Hearings outcome document: www.un-ngls.org/GA-hearing-advance-unedited-summary-21july.doc

We Will Spare No Effort: www.ngocongo.org/ngomeet/millplusfive/M+5reportfull.pdf