



UN-NGO -IRENE UPDATE

Issue no 7 – April 2004

WHAT'S NEW

- The NGO Forum and Panel were successfully held on 18 March 2004 from 1:15 to 6:00 pm in the ECOSOC Chamber of the United Nations, New York with participation from over 150 organizations. They were covered by UNTV and broadcast live through a web-cast that you can find at: <http://www.un.org/webcast/2004.html> of 18 March 2004 (NGO/Civil Society).

The Preparatory NGO/Civil Society Forum and Panel for the High Level Segment of ECOSOC held a meeting in New York on 18 March 2004 to prepare its contribution to the ECOSOC 2004 theme: “Resource Mobilization and Enabling Environment for Poverty Eradication in the context of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010”. It was jointly organized by the UNDESA NGO Section, OHRLLS, the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA), Conference of NGOs (CONGO) and the LDC Watch. UN officials, about 150 NGOs and representatives from the business community participated in the meeting. The panelists represented NGOs from both developed and developing countries, including LDCs. Some delegates representing members of ECOSOC also attended the Forum as observers. Most notable among them were Mr. Rogatien Biaou, the current chairman of the LDCs the Foreign Minister of Benin, and Mr. Richard Ryan, the Permanent Representative of Ireland as the current President of the European Union. Their presence indicated the importance they attach to the contribution of NGOs to the work of ECOSOC.

Before the forum, a panel entitled “Developing and enhancing the General Voluntary Trust Fund for UN-NGO IRENE with NGOs, IGOs, Foundations, Governments, Local Authorities and Donor Community” took place in the ECOSOC chamber. The Project Coordinator, Ms Najet Karaborni, presented the UN-NGO IRENE Network to the participants, underlining that the aim of the IRENE Network is to promote the communication and information exchange between national and regional consultative status NGOs. The first regional network was launched in 2001 in Tunisia, the second in 2003 in Bucharest and it was stated that further networks are expected to be launched in 2004/2005 in the different other regions. A general voluntary trust fund had already been established by ECOSOC in July 2002 in support of the UN NGO Informal Regional Network IRENE to which the government of Turkey had made a pledge of \$ 10,000.

It was highlighted to the participants that in cooperation with its various partners, the NGO Section had developed various initiatives over the past two years; and that a number of projects proposals, focusing on MDGs issues, have been formulated and

are ready to be submitted for funding and to be executed in Africa, Europe and the Mediterranean region. In this context, the president of READI presented the programme of the Euro-Arab Network of NGOs for Development and Integration and mentioned that the READI's priority is to achieve one of the MDGs that is to develop a global partnership for development. And the president of CONGO stated that her organization is also a partner of IRENE, and that one of its missions is to ensure that the voice of NGOs is heard at the UN.

During this panel, several funding mechanisms to execute programmes and projects were identified, such as a well-oriented research, creativity, a networking, a professional presentation of the project/programme to be funded and specially to keep in mind that donors are looking for recognition and something in return.

The chief of NGO Section, Ms Hanifa Mezoui, concluded that in being deeply convinced of our mission we succeed to convince others to join in the accomplishment of a common goal.

The Forum was addressed by the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Marjatta Rasi, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, UN Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the LDC, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries, Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary General in UNDESA and Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Director UNDESA. Their statements highlighted the importance and necessity of the contribution of NGOs to the work of inter-Governmental bodies such as ECOSOC and the need to improve systems and structures that would channel this contribution in an organized manner into the work of ECOSOC. It was pointed out that this Forum was one such effort in a series of steps to ensure closer interaction between the NGOs as the voice of people at the grassroots level and Governments in their deliberations in ECOSOC. In this context several concrete recommendations were made by different speakers. They also acknowledged the unique role of the NGOs in promoting development at the grassroots level and their global advocacy role at the international level on issues that are of particular concern to the LDCs such as resource mobilization.

The President of ECOSOC invited the Forum to consider how to better use ECOSOC to make a real impact on the global millennium campaign to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015, especially in the LDCs. In this context he encouraged the participants to include in the final statement of the NGO/Civil Society Forum action oriented and practical proposals and in doing so to be bold in their imagination but precise in their explanation on how to implement the changes. He hoped to maintain a dialogue with the NGOs on the basis of the final report of the Forum in the time lead up to the High Level Segment on 28-30 June 2004.

The speakers made the following concrete suggestions to improve the contribution of NGOs into the work of ECOSOC:

- The United Nations should explore new and more systematic ways to

collaborate with NGOs as an integral and crucial part of the process of strengthening and reforming the UN or in making the UN more responsive to the problems facing the world in these times. In this context the UN Secretary General has established a Panel on Civil Society along with another blue ribbon panel to improve this relationship and make it more effective in addition to the steps already taken.

- While the UN has a positive and extensive experience in the preparation of and follow up to global conferences it has not yet found ways to translate this experience in a systematic and intensive way to ensure the same level of participation in the regular meetings of the inter-governmental bodies, such as ECOSOC.
- The NGO/Civil Society Forum should become a regular forum for contribution of NGOs to all future meetings of the High Level Segment in particular to focus on LDC issues. Preferably it should meet on an annual basis but at least in alternate years either in Geneva or in New York in parallel with the ECOSOC session.
- Methods should be explored for the submission of the final report of the Forum to the formal session of the ECOSOC High Level Segment so that it can be included as an input in the deliberations on the final ministerial declaration of the High Level Segment. Opportunity should be explored for NGOs not only to submit their inputs to the High Level Segment but also to be present at the meeting when deliberations take place.

A report highlighting the activities in LDCs of 135 NGOs from 46 countries based on a survey conducted by the UN DESA NGO Section in cooperation with CONGO and WFUNA was submitted to the NGO/Civil Society Forum to facilitate discussion. On the basis of a questionnaire the NGOs provided examples of their success stories and concrete recommendations on eradicating poverty and achieving other relevant Millennium Development Goals. During discussions at the Forum participants shared their experiences and perspectives on how to develop a successful fund raising strategy in order to strengthen the NGO/Civil Society General Voluntary Trust Fund with the aim of promoting and implementing pilot partnership initiatives, projects and programmes between NGOs, corporate sector, Governments and the UN system to eradicate poverty in the LDCs. The recommendations by the NGO/Civil Society Forum will be submitted to the President of ECOSOC for consideration in drafting the Ministerial Declaration of the High Level Segment of ECOSOC to be held on 28-30 June 2004.

Relevant documentation is now available at:

<http://www.unpan.org/NGO-ECOSOCSession.asp>

COMING SOON

The ECOSOC Substantive 2004 Session will take place from 28 June to 23 July in New York:

- **High Level Segment of ECOSOC : 28-30 June 2004**

The theme of this year's High-level segment is "*Resources mobilization and enabling*

environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". The preparatory meetings for the segment, including the NGO Forum, were held in February and March.

<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/hl2004/index.htm>

▪ **Coordination Segment of ECOSOC : 1-7 (am) July 2004**

The Council adopted two themes for its Coordination segment "*Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system*" and "*Coordinated and integrated United Nations system approach to promote rural development in developing countries with due consideration to Least Developed Countries, for poverty eradication and sustainable development*"

▪ **Operational Activities Segment of ECOSOC : 7(pm) – 12 (am) July 2004**

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation Segment:

- (a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council;
- (b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme;

▪ **Humanitarian Segment of ECOSOC : 12 (pm) – 14 July 2004**

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance;

▪ **General Segment of ECOSOC : 15 – 22 July 2004**

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major international United Nations conferences and summits

- (a) Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits;
- (b) Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010;

▪ **Concluding Session of ECOSOC : 23 July 2004**

SOURCE OF INSPIRATION / EXAMPLE ***To Follow***

The two first NGOs' Success Stories have been chosen from the Survey Report of NGO/Civil society Forum and related to activities undertaken in LDCs, the third one was received as a response to the questionnaire sent out to the NGOs on MDGs.

- **The Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Traditional Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children** based in Ethiopia, with national committees operating at the country level, aims to improve maternal health through campaigns against female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices. It has recorded successes in several countries. In certain districts of *Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania* circumcisers have abandoned the practice. Parents have rejected female genital mutilation for their daughters in *Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Sudan, Niger and Chad*. This was achieved through the national committees in each of these countries. Legislation against female genital mutilation is effective in *Burkina Faso and Ghana* through the efforts of the national committees in these countries. IAC contributed to the additional Protocol to the African Charter on

Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women. Through IAC lobbying at the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights 6 February was adopted as the "International Female Genital Mutilation Day". In Guinea, to fight female genital mutilation in a sustained way, the circumcisers were not only informed about the negative effects on these practices on women's health but also trained in other skills as grinding, dying, gardening, etc.

- **World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM)**, an NGO based in Tunisia, has implemented programs in several LDCs such as *Benin, Chad, Congo, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal*. It is a communication-related success story, as they decided to declare a World Day for Women Entrepreneurs. All national members of FCEM celebrate the third Friday in May as Women Entrepreneurs' Day. They are also lobbying the President of the UN Assembly to declare a World Day for Women Entrepreneurs. The program has brought increased visibility to each national association, and many have increased their membership as well. So far, three countries have responded. In Canada, the mayor of Toronto declared an official "Women's entrepreneurs Day". The President of Mexico declared an official day for women entrepreneurs and also the President of Croatia has declared his support to women entrepreneurs.
- **International Tunnelling Association / Association Internationale de Travaux en Souterrain (ITA/AITES)** is an NGO based in Switzerland. Under a bilateral agreement, *Spain and Morocco*, through their respective agencies SECEG and SNED, are jointly studying the feasibility of a fixed link across the strait of Gibraltar. ITA has been directly asked to cooperate with the two government organizations in preparation of several international workshops linked to the project. The first of these events was the Open Session on the Gibraltar Strait Crossing (Cairo, April 1994). The second was the workshop on Characterization of TBMs for tunneling in flysches (Tarifa, February 1997). Important parts of the workshop have been the field visits to the sites of the three large scale in-situ experiments: the Bolonia and Malabata experimental shafts and the Tarifa experimental tunnel. The third workshop was devoted to the Methodology to establish the construction costs of tunnels with TBMs (Vienna, April 1997). A number of specialist organizations were invited to this workshop. The fourth workshop was focused on the challenging subject "Costing of TBM-built tunnels" (Rabat, April 1999). The meeting, organized in two working sessions, gathered 35 participants and received 15 papers by experts from 9 countries.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2004 *Not to Miss!*

- *14-30 April*: Commission on Sustainable Development – 12th session – New York
Info/registration: csdmgregister@un.org
- 26 April: Annual Spring Meeting with the BWIs, WTO and UNCTAD- New York
The meeting will be an opportunity to build on last year's success by focusing the discussion on specific issues, within the integrated approach of the Monterrey Consensus.
- *26 April-7 May*: NPT – Preparatory Committee for the 2005 review conference of the parties to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons – New York
To register for the meeting, a fax should be sent to the NGO Focal Point in the Department for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Gary DeRosa, or to the Secretariat of the

PrepCom, NGO Liaison and Coordination, Mr. Charles Mahaffey, at fax no. (1-212) 963-8892)

- *10-28 May:* Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations – 2004 Regular session – New York
- *10-21 May:* Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – 3rd session – New York
Special theme: Indigenous Women

USEFUL LINKS:

- Find out more about our commitment to peace, human rights, sustainable development and the environment. <http://www.peaceboat.org/english>

NGOs' CONTRIBUTION ***Submit your contribution***

- Thirty leading NGOs already sent to the NGO Section written statements to the ECOSOC HLS of 28-30 June 2004.

To maintain a dynamic and useful UN-NGO-IRENE Update, we encourage and welcome your contributions.

Please submit your comments, remarks and success-stories to share to Karaborni@un.org

Should your organization produce an update with information that you would like to share with the IRENE community, kindly add us to your mailing list. Thank you.

We thank very much all those who submitted kind words and contribution to this update.

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