

Transnational Associations

The review of the Union of International Associations



3/99

Protection for NGOs
on hazardous duties

Interactions entre
les ONG et les
Nations unies

Revue bimestrielle
mai - juin 99
Bureau de dépôt Bruxelles X

Associations transnationales

La revue de l'Union des associations internationales

Transnational Associations Associations transnationales

Transnational Associations is a unique bilingual journal whose aim is to deal with major current problems within the perspective of international nongovernmental organizations. It is intended to provide a forum for authoritative information and independent reflection on the increasing role played by these organizations in the international System, and on its philosophical, political, economic or cultural implications.

The approach is intrinsically interdisciplinary, and calls for both specialist expertise and practitioner experience in transnational association matters. Transnational Associations provides background information about the actions and achievements of international associations, and insight into their interrelations with intergovernmental organizations. It covers a wide range of topics, among which social organization, humanitarian law, scientific cooperation, language and culture, economic development, to cite just a few.

The programme of the review, in accordance with the principles of the UIA, clarifies general awareness concerning the association phenomenon within the framework of international relations and, in particular, informs associations about aspects of the problems which they tend to share or which are of common interest to them. Contributors to the journal review include association officers, research workers and specialists of association questions who engage only themselves.

Founded in Brussels in 1907 as the Central Office of International Associations, the UIA became a federation under the present name in 1910 at the 1st World Congress of International Associations. Activities were closely associated with the Institut international de bibliographie, which later became the International Federation for Documentation. Its work contributed to the creation of the League of Nations and the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (the predecessor of UNESCO). During the 1920s, the UIA created an International University, the first of its kind.

The UIA has consultative relations with UNESCO, UN/ECOSOC, and ILO. It collaborates with FAO, the Council of Europe, UNITAR, and the Commonwealth Science Council.

Associations transnationales est la seule revue traitant des grands problèmes contemporains dans la perspective des organisations internationales non gouvernementales. Elle se propose d'apporter des éléments d'information provenant des sources les plus autorisées, propres à susciter une réflexion indépendante sur l'affirmation du rôle joué par ces acteurs dans le système international et sur les aspects philosophiques, politiques, sociaux et culturels de cette évolution.

La visée adoptée est essentiellement interdisciplinaire et fait appel au savoir comme à la pratique des spécialistes du champ d'action des associations transnationales. Les documents, articles et études publiés par Associations transnationales traitent également des liens établis entre celles-ci et les organisations intergouvernementales. Les domaines couverts s'étendent aux problèmes de société, au droit humanitaire, à la coopération scientifique, aux questions linguistiques et culturelles, au développement économique ou à tout phénomène affectant la vie de ces associations.

Le programme de la revue, conformément aux buts de l'UIA, vise à éclairer l'opinion sur la signification de la dimension associative des relations internationales, notamment en informant les associations au sujet des questions qui relèvent de leurs domaines ou affectent leurs intérêts communs. Les textes des auteurs publiés par la revue (dirigeants d'associations, chercheurs et spécialistes des questions associatives) n'engagent que leur opinion.

L'UIA a été créée officiellement en 1910 à Bruxelles au cours du premier congrès mondial des associations internationales. Ses fondateurs, le Sénateur Henri La Fontaine, prix Nobel de la Paix 1913 et Paul Otlet, Secrétaire général de l'Institut international de bibliographie, avaient mis sur pied en 1907 l'«Office central des institutions internationales» auquel l'UIA succéda sous la forme de fédération. En 1914, elle regroupait 230 organisations, soit un peu plus de la moitié de celles qui existaient à l'époque. L'UIA devait incarner, dans l'esprit de ses fondateurs, les aspirations internationalistes et les idéaux de paix qui animaient les associations et qui allaient aboutir en 1920 à la création de la Société des Nations.

L'UIA a obtenu le statut consultatif auprès de l'ECOSOC, de l'UNESCO et de l'OIT. Elle collabore avec l'UNITAR, la FAO et le Conseil de l'Europe. Elle entretient des relations générales et ponctuelles avec les organisations régionales.

Protection for NGOs on hazardous duties
by Mario Bettati
Page 118

*

Interaction between NGOs and the UN System

Arrangements and practices for the interaction of NGOs
in all activities of the UN system
Page 133

A response of the CONGO to the UN Secretary-General's
draft report on interaction with NGOs
Page 152

Statement by UAI's Council on relations between NGOs
and the UN
Page 159

*

Association News
Vie associative
Page 162

Transnational Associations
Associations transnationales

Protection for non-governmental organisations on hazardous duties

by Mario Bettati*

Well aware of the growing security problems that non-governmental organisations have to face when undertaking humanitarian and other tasks, the Union of International Associations (UIA) has decided to proceed with a study of protection that such organisations require when undertaking hazardous duties, by means of a specific evaluation of the situation as perceived by "on the spot" persons concerned themselves. A questionnaire was prepared for this purpose under our own scientific management, with participation by our team from the University of Paris 2 and in cooperation with the working group from the UIA.

Amongst those non-governmental organisations that replied, some indicated that their activities were not such as to entail "hazardous duties". They were not therefore faced with the problems covered by the questionnaire and, for the same reason, were unable to provide the information requested. Others, such as a leading humanitarian body, objected that they did not regard themselves as non-governmental organisations and, while it was true that they had had to encounter serious security problems, they did not wish to answer our questions. Those who agreed to answer them in detail sometimes appended documents to their return indicating their status, main activities and/or a brief history of their tasks.

Having regard to the objectives pursued, which determined the structure of the questionnaire, it was inevitable that each non-govern-

mental organisation should have to make a number of choices when answering each type of question. The results, on passing through a data processing procedure, therefore displayed proportions in terms of quantities and values that varied absolutely in relation to the open question put and to the distribution of the number of replies, itself varying according to subject. The analysis set out below follows the order of the questions and uses the headings printed in the questionnaire.

I. Your scope of work

The questionnaire asks the non-governmental organisations questioned to spell out their work sector within the area in which they operated.

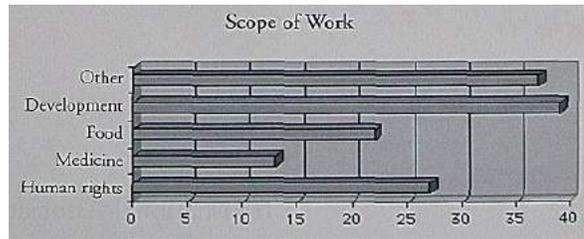
A. Your area of work

As far as the operational speciality of the non-governmental organisations studied is concerned, the replies show a clear emphasis on development aid. This finding is increased if those of the replies that were classified as "other" are added; they included agriculture, reconstruction, economic reform, mine clearance and the environment. The heading "Human Rights" could also be usefully extended, since certain organisations included the work they do amongst refugees, immigrants and displaced persons and journalists in the "Others" category. This redistribution would not alter the initial classification, which places particular emphasis on development and

* Professor at the University of Paris 2.

2. Rather less than 100 replies were received. Questionnaires were despatched to 440 international associations; 98 replies were received, i.e. 22.27%.

Transnational Associations



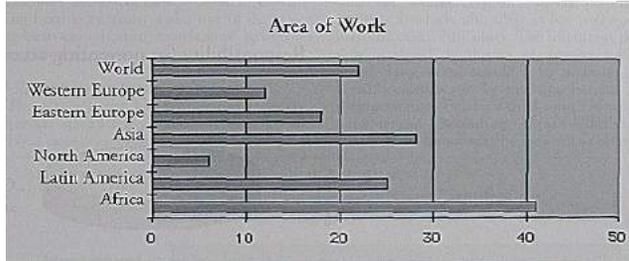
human rights as soon as the "Others" sectors, which would be extensively reduced by a redistribution, are left to one side. Activities in defence of human rights are placed in second position - subject to the offsetting mentioned above - amongst the non-governmental organisations preoccupied with a lack of security. This is confirmed by the recent resolution of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, which was due to be adopted by the General Assembly, on protection for the protectors of the fundamental rights of the individual.

One notes that the organisations stating that medical activities are included are altogether the least numerous, which waters down the effect of

are the most pressing topics, even though the work done there is far from negligible. It is, therefore, hardly surprising to see that a high proportion of work is done in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Twice as much work is done in relation to any other area in Africa alone.

II. Type of incidents that have affected YOUR association since 1990

Under this heading, the associations questioned were asked to distinguish between incidents obstructing the proper conduct of duties,



the high profile they enjoy in the public mind, where they are believed to be more exposed because more than most they are in the front line in conflict areas.

B. Your field of work

The results obtained by sampling with regard to the location of non-governmental organisations' activities and therefore implicitly the location of risks - since the associations who replied are those that are beset by the problems of protecting their members or their property - came as no surprise.

In fact, it is not in the countries of Western Europe or in North America that destitution, the defence of human rights and famine relief

where the effect was simply to delay them, to defer them or to complicate their execution, from acts of violence directed against property or persons that had the same effect but with far more serious consequences for individuals and equipment as far as the harmful effects of actions were concerned.

A. Actions obstructing the proper discharge of duties

These varied in nature. From prevention of access to victims to administrative obstacles to access, with obstruction to the delivery of goods and supplies and restrictions on movement in between.

a) Barred access to victims

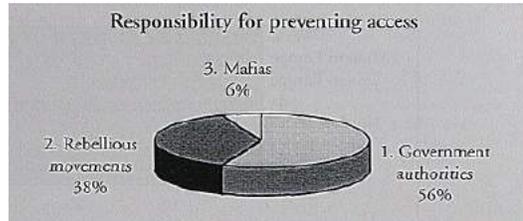
While at humanitarian level, the nature of conflicts has changed and rebel movements are more likely than government forces to cause obstruction, it is clear that in other fields of activity, especially in development aid or in defence of human rights, government authorities remain the principal interlocutors. It is therefore not really surprising that they are the principal source of difficulties of access.

b) Administrative obstacles to victim access

Non-governmental organisations have become a source of profit to a large number of protagonists, especially - but not only - in developing countries. The wealth - sometimes ostentatious - of their resources, the distribution that

delays at the frontier for political or bureaucratic reasons. Delays are relatively less frequent than they used to be, but refusal of a visa is still a considerable problem.

The United Nations has on numerous occasions since the early nineties demanded freedom of access to humanitarian aid for victims in connection with the various internal conflicts in which the UN has been concerned. We know, for example, that the Security Council adopted 114 resolutions on these lines between 1990 and October 1998. The wordings of the resolutions vary but their content is the same as that found in Resolution 1193 of 28 August 1998 concerning Afghanistan where it "... requires of all Afghan factions, especially the Taliban, to do everything possible to guarantee the safety and



3. The countries or situations concerned in these 114 resolutions of the Security Council concerning access to victims are Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Burundi, the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, the Gulf States, Gorny Karabakh, Liberia, Mozambique, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tadjikistan, Yemen and Zaire.

they undertake, and the stocks that they have amassed for this purpose are often a source of temptation for the public or private agencies who have a smidgen of power and who use it to draw some material advantage by taking samples. This explains why the obstacles most frequently mentioned are extensive delays at a checkpoint and requests for payment. The latter demand is most commonly made together with the former. These are the two most frequent obstacles.

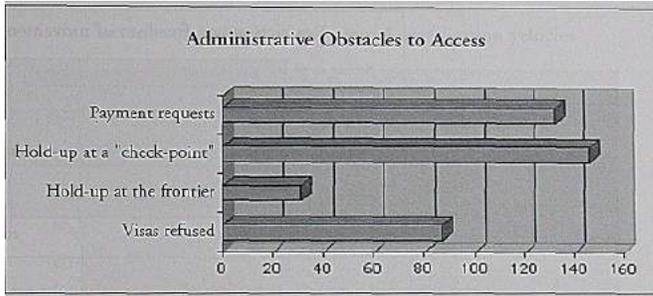
But the administrative obstacles are not always dictated by avarice. It also happens that associations come up against refusals to provide visas or

freedom of circulation of personnel of the United Nations and other international and humanitarian organisations" ...³

c) Obstacles to the delivery of goods and supplies

It is obvious from the outset that the main factors preventing the delivery of goods and supplies are administrative formalities. They are all the more feared by the associations where their field of work requires them to take urgent action.

Secondly, a finding which supports that which we have set out in the pie chart above, is that



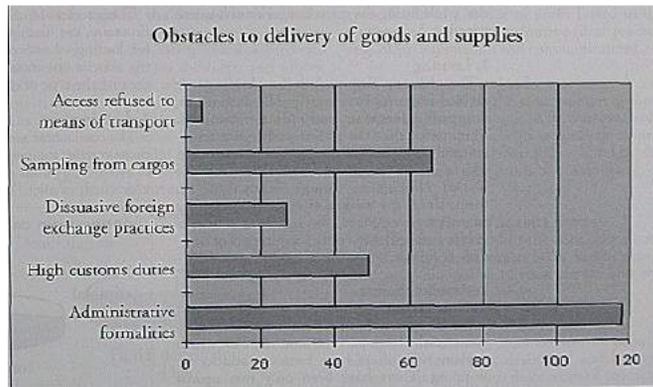
"taxation", i.e. a request for payment or sampling from lorry loads, is also one of the major bug-bears complicating associations' actions on the ground.

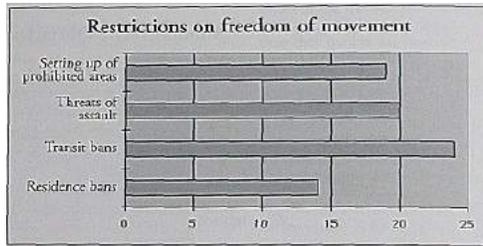
d) Restrictions on freedom of movement
 These restrictions are not a prime concern.

where the withholding of residence permits is concerned, which ultimately is less widespread than the other difficulties. The important position occupied by threats or assaults will be noted. They stress, should it be necessary, the breadth of risks run by the organisations and their personnel. Finally, a third source of restrictions is the establishing of forbidden areas which, as we know, may be imposed as often by

121

They are spread fairly uniformly amongst the various categories of obstacle, with a low point





national and local authorities as factions controlling a region.

B) Violence directed against property

A distinction can be drawn between violence against convoys and violence against premises.

a) Against convoys

A distinction must be made between looting strictly speaking and armed attack against vehicles, while listing the main categories of loss sustained.

1. Looting

The persons responsible for looting are divided uniformly amongst public authorities, insurgent movements, and ordinary criminals. This means that the public authorities represent only one third of the sources of insecurity, which makes it far more difficult for the United Nations to impose injunctions on them, since, the weaker or more delinquent a country's government, the harder it is for its public authorities to control insurgents or ordinary criminals.

2. Attacks against the association's vehicles

We know that non-governmental organisations for the most part use land vehicles, which explains why there have been no attacks on shipping. There have been only two against helicopters and two against aircraft. This dif-

ference and the rest of the results call for no comment.

3. Type of losses sustained by convoys

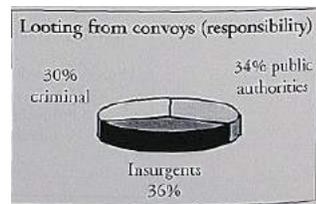
The distribution of losses in relation to the degree of harm done similarly provides information which is self-explanatory. The substantial proportion of total destruction (28%) compared with partial destruction (43%) is noteworthy.

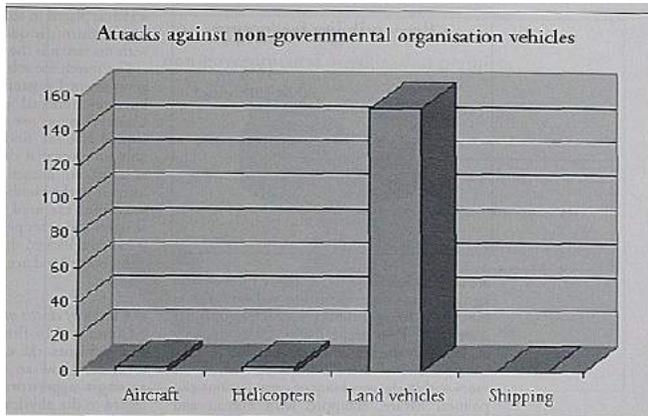
b) Against premises

Three series of questions were put in the questionnaire, the first concerning those responsible for looting, the second concerning attacks on the associations installations, and the third concerning the type of damage sustained.

1. Looting

The results here are appreciably different from those concerning persons responsible for tax on convoys. The public authorities' share in them is very much smaller (19% as against 34%). That

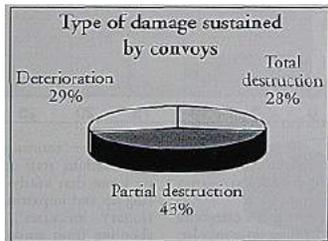




of insurgents altogether higher (50% as against 36%).

2. Attacks against the association's installations

The points of the survey reveal a predominance of attacks against dwellings and offices. Having regard to the wide variety of activities undertaken by the non-governmental organisations questioned, it is going too far to say that the attackers' objectives were altogether more political than self-seeking or inspired by gain.



But it is by no means impossible, either, that the target was selected both as a centre of decision-making and representing the association concerned, and as a source of profit linked to the presence of expensive equipment (data processing, office automation and communication).

3. Type of loss sustained

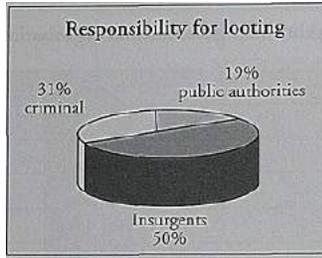
The replies provide the same pointers as those concerning damage sustained by convoys, within 2% or 3% almost. This is perfectly understandable insofar as vulnerability is much the same, whether the goods are stationary or mobile.

C. Violence directed against person

The questionnaire asked the associations consulted to provide information on arrests, detention and kidnapping, physical attack, and the reasons for death and injury.

a) Arrest - detention - kidnapping

Replies concerning identification of persons responsible for arrests, detentions and kidnapping are out of line with those received concerning convoys and premises. Ordinary criminals



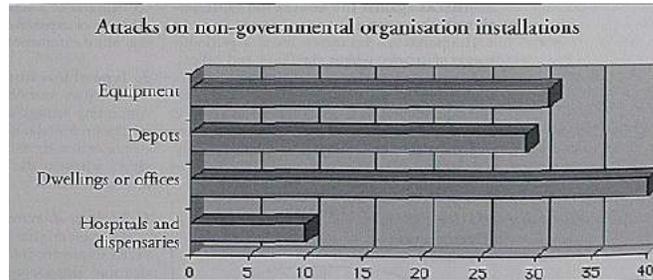
are twice as less likely to undertake these actions against persons, government authorities and insurgents being held equally responsible, at 43% and 45% respectively. This is easily explained by the methods, the purposes and the consequences of these kidnappings, which are more within the capability of organisations of a political nature, equipped with human and institutional resources but endowed with a minimum of structural power.

which is placed in second position after degrading treatment, is quite common and, together with the latter, is the main purpose of attacks.

The search for solutions on the part of non-governmental organisations echoes that of the inter-governmental organisations, namely the United Nations⁴ or the European Union. The United Nations' findings can be transposed to non-governmental organisations. "The erosion of respect for humanitarian values has led to an increase in the number of civilian victims; it has intensified the need for protection and aid for refugees and other persons affected by a conflict; it has complicated the provision of humanitarian assistance and aggravated the risks facing aid workers."

c) Causes of death or injury

Dominated by fire from automatic weapons and accidents, the causes of death and injury seem to follow an almost equal distribution amongst aggressors and the victims with regard to the physical assault sustained. Such a conclusion would be hasty and incorrect. In fact, although the share of accidents could indisputably be reduced by better preparation



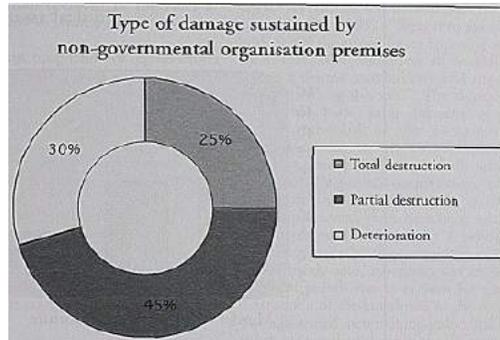
4. Cf. Report by the Secretary-General on protection for humanitarian aid activities for refugees and other persons affected by a conflict, S/1998/883 of 22 September 1998.

b) Physical injury

Physical injury is naturally the most serious risk, and that giving rise to the deepest worries regarding security on the ground.

The proportions as between the five categories adopted are all the more alarming since murder,

and better training of non-governmental organisations' staff deployed in the field (and we know that nearly all of them work on setting up and imparting preventive and precautionary measures⁵), one should add to shooting from automatic weapons bombard-



ment, anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines and "miscellaneous weapons" a common factor of which is that they are used or deployed by one and the same category of protagonists: the combatants.

III. Your assessment of protection at the present state of international law

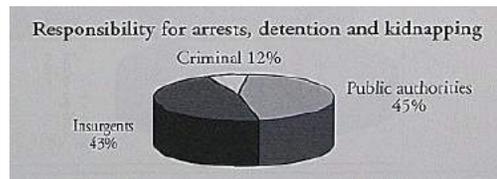
The associations seem to expect a great deal from international law since, obviously, the survey reveals a broadly shared desire to see the legal rules promulgated by the Community of States modified so as to strengthen protection.

A) Do you feel satisfied with your present status as a non-governmental organisation with regard to security?

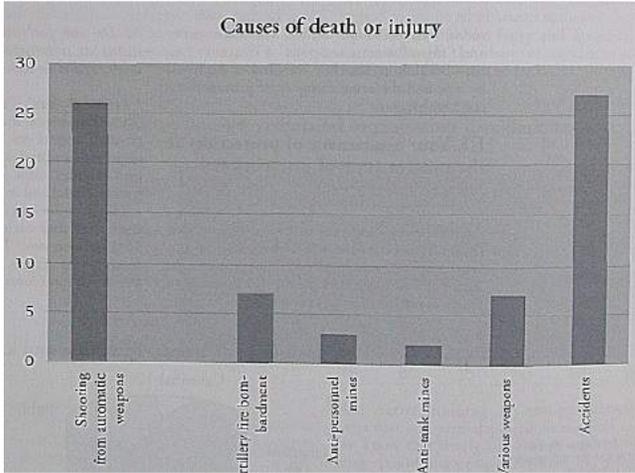
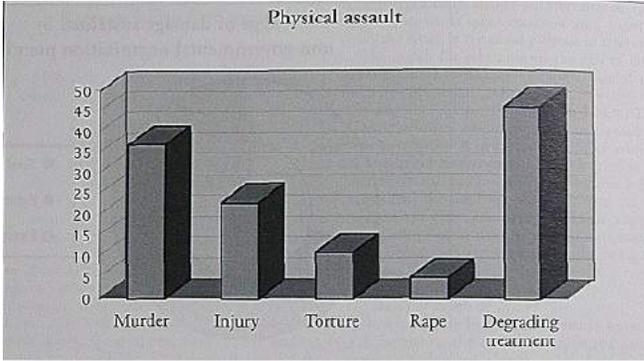
Practically half of the associations that replied (48%) considered their status to be unsatisfactory with regard to security. This is relatively important and appears to indicate that the question requires some thought both at UIA and governmental and inter-governmental levels.

This is more especially so since only 42% of them feel that their status is satisfactory and 10% have no view. This observation is strengthened by the replies to the following question, put in the questionnaire.

125



5. Cf. Security in the Field. Information for staff members of the UN system, United Nations, New York, 1998, 66pp.



B. Should an improvement in the rules of international law be aimed at:...

In effect, a large proportion of replies shows that it is in fact with regard to the international status of non-governmental organisations that requests for legal reform are most frequently heard. Within their status, it is hardly surprising to see the list of concerns headed by protection for the individual, followed by protection of property and lastly that of transport.

Pending solutions in international legislation that could effectively be implemented, empirical solutions are likely to remain the chief conceivable measures for a long time to come. Their nature remains to be decided. Some could be consensual; others could rely on various kinds of force.

C. Have you arrived at understandings, an agreement or arrangements with local authorities with a view to protection?

The first, pragmatic method has consisted fairly frequently of negotiating with the authorities on the spot and finding some accommodation, rapprochement or conciliation.

D. Have you had recourse to private security-men for protection purposes?

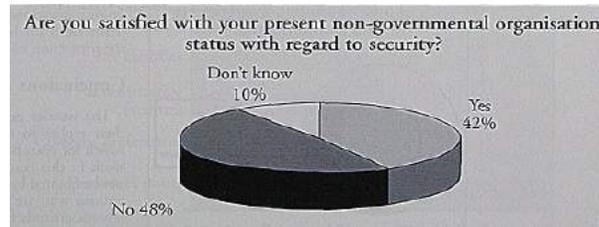
The general principle is against this. Private humanitarian organisations reject any cooperation with the armed forces of any party whatever. A

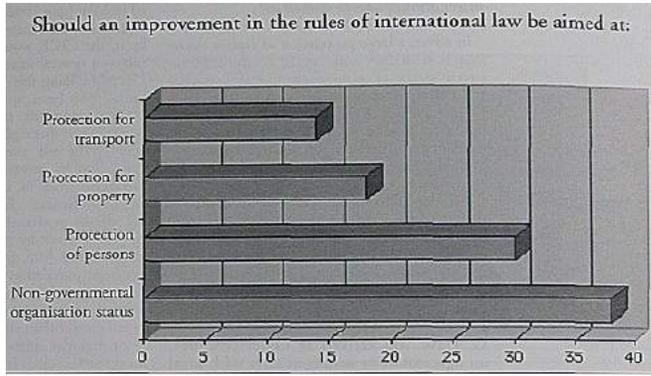
lawyer specialising in humanitarian law reiterated in May-June 1992: "Were it to associate itself with one of the armed forces opposing or covered by it, the CICR would lose all credibility in its role as a neutral intermediary and any opportunity of fulfilling this role."⁶ The situation, as we know, has been quite different in practice. Nearly one-third of the non-governmental organisations that replied (16% sometimes + 30% yes) confirmed they have had recourse to protection by private security-men. One must remember that in circles close to the UNO Secretary-General, there have been worries as to the effects produced by such a practice (large payments made by the humanitarian agency to armed bands who, moreover, had been holding the local population to ransom for some time; destruction of the last shreds of the social fabric through armed men making individual demands much greater than those of the country's national or regional rulers; indirect financing of the arms market, etc.). It therefore seems difficult to regard such a practice as desirable, the more so since sampling shows that a large majority (71%) of the associations questioned undertaking hazardous duties have never contemplated this step.

E. In what areas do you consider it necessary for the international community to take the initiative to improve protection for non-governmental organisations and that for its own members?

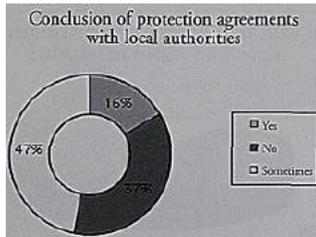
Fully in line with the replies to the previous questions, it is clear that the associations want to

6. SANDOZ (Yves) "Droit ou devoir d'ingérence, droit à l'assistance: de quoi parle-t-on?" Red Cross International Review, No. 795, May-June 1992, p. 231.





see action from the international community towards improving the status of their personnel. It remains to be seen as the groups work continues what types of immunity or privilege should be introduced and within what limits steps that are acceptable to all parties to conflicts and crisis situations causing insecurity to the operators of these organisations could be envisaged.

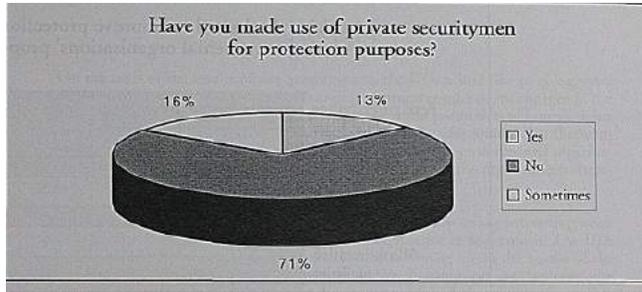


F. In what areas do you consider it necessary for the international community to take initiatives towards improving protection for your association's property?

One of the options under question "F" should logically have been placed under question "E". In fact, following an input error, F4 "Integrity of the person" appears under the heading of protection of property and not protection of persons. However, this slip has no effect on the result of the questionnaire. The replies clearly show that, as can only be expected, the organisations questioned attach their priorities to a desire both for integrity of the person and for the protection of property.

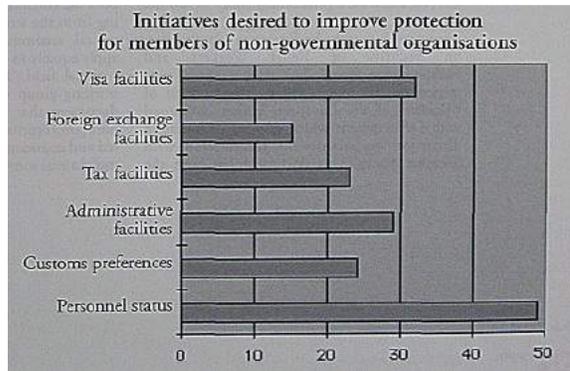
Conclusions

The worries expressed by the associations in their replies to the questionnaire - like those which for years have exercised the CICR, whose work in this connection is important - should not be ignored by the inter-governmental organisations who are now adopting a far more systematic attitude than in the past to questions of protection and security.

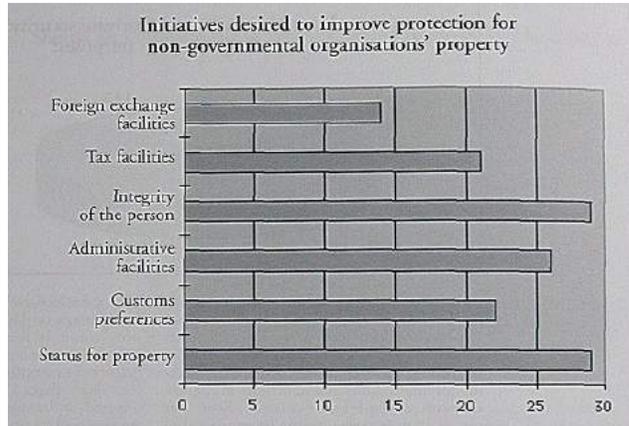


However, the work has been done relatively piecemeal or scattered in conjunction with the activities pursued by the UN or the European Union in another sector, connected sometimes with non-governmental organisations undertaking hazardous duties and sometimes in connection with security for their own staff. Some, but not all, of their comments can be transposed to the questions under consideration by the IAU. In fact, a report by the Secretary-General on Security of Personnel of the Organisation has

been submitted at the United Nations to the Commission on Human Rights in connection with item 8 on the agenda concerning human rights for all persons subjected to some form of detention or imprisonment.⁷ We have in fact seen above (pages 61-62) that detention may be imposed by insurgents as well as government authorities. This report confirms the relevance of the recommendations made by Mrs Bautista, the Special Rapporteur of the sub-committee fighting against discriminatory measures and for the



7. E/CN.4/1998/33 27
February 1998



protection of minorities, with regard to United Nations personnel⁸. At European level, ECHO has embarked on a preliminary study to test the water with various non-governmental organisations working with the European Commission on Security of Relief Workers and Humanitarian Space⁹. This document was submitted on 18 May 1998 to the Council of Ministers of the European Union concerned with Development which decided to initiate a discussion on security in consultation with Member States. This document has been the

subject of various comments by non-governmental organisations. It would be interesting to pool the conclusions obtained with those resulting from the work of the UN Sub-Committee, several recommendations of which seem to apply equally in the non-governmental or transnational field. The UIA intends to entrust a working group with the preparation of a draft document that will take account both of the non-governmental organisations' replies submitted and commented on above and of the various multilateral sources.

8. E/CN.4 Sub.2/1992/19.

9. ECHO working paper, Draft 8.2-19.2.98

POSTFACE

On the basis of the results of the questionnaire, the UIA would like to give greater thought to the security of personnel of non-governmental organisations engaged in the field - whether in humanitarian action, the protection and promotion of human rights or development projects - with a view to earmarking points for joint action (between non-governmental organisations and between them and inter-governmental organisations) that could be undertaken to strengthen protection for the organisations themselves and their staffs.

The UIA is launching an appeal to readers to let them know of any interesting work in this connection and to pass on their personal experience or suggestions. The UIA will take contributions received into account when following up on the results of the questionnaire. Besides, the UIA has opened a heading on its Internet site (www.uia.org/surveys/index.htm) where the report published above appears together with contributions of a general nature made by the non-governmental organisations, which will assist with the opinion-taking process embarked upon by the UIA,

Communications can be sent by post, by fax or by e-mail to the address mentioned above.

Interaction between NGOs and the UN System

On 5 May 1999 the Conference of NGOs organized an open meeting at the United Nations for discussion of the Secretary-General's draft report on interaction with Non-Governmental Organizations. ("Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-Governmental Organizations in all Activities of the United Nations System" - UN document A/53/170). In response to a request by the General Assembly to the Secretariat to launch a process of consultation on the Report with NGOs and others, Assistant Secretary-General Gillian Sorenson recently sent the report to all 1600 NGOs in consultative status, with an invitation to send comments to her office no later than June 7, 1999. The purpose of the May 5 meeting was for NGOs themselves to discuss points in the report, after which they might better, individually or collectively, make their views known to the Secretariat.

CONGO agreed to receive comments from NGOs on the draft report and to hold a subsequent meeting to discuss a position paper, which individual NGOs would be able to sign. The deadline for receipt of comments was Friday, 21 May. A meeting was being set for the following week so that CONGO would have time to consult and prepare a document with NGO signatures by the June 7 submission date of the Secretariat. After revision by the Secretariat, the report will be distributed and placed on the fall agenda of the General Assembly.

As participants did not have the draft statement until the end of the meeting, comments were not directed to specific parts of either the statement or the Secretary-General's report. Participants stated that they would get back to CONGO after careful

review. It was noted that the report enriched understanding of the breadth of participation by NGOs in the life of the United Nations, at levels that had never before been enumerated.

The main points of the 5 May discussion centered on:

1. NGOs contribution of the Report;
2. Building support for NGOs in the Secretariat and among governments;
3. Need for evaluation of UN/NGO relationships;
4. NGO access to the UN at headquarters;
5. Security;
6. The for-profit sector;
7. The term "civil society";
8. NGO access to documentation;
9. NGO self-criticism, conduct and accountability;
10. Consultative relationship with the General Assembly;
11. NGO Representation from the South.

The documents appearing hereafter are:

1. the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-Governmental Organizations in all Activities of the United Nations System";
2. CONGO'S response to the UN Secretary-General's Report;
3. The statement by the Council of the Union of International Associations on relations between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.

Arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Introduction

Following the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of its decision 1996/297, by which the Council recommended that the General Assembly examine the question of participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in all areas of the United Nations, the General Assembly, by its decision 52/453 of 19 December 1997, requested the Secretary-General to prepare and circulate for consideration at its fifty-third session a report on:

- (a) Existing arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations system;
- (b) The legal and financial implications of modifications in the current arrangements for participation of non-governmental organizations with a view to enhancing their participation in all areas of the United Nations system;
- (c) The question of the participation of non-governmental organizations from all regions, in particular from the developing countries.

The present report is submitted pursuant to the request contained in that decision. It is based on the information conveyed to the Secretary-General by departments, agencies, funds and programmes for this specific purpose.

The General Assembly's increased interest in the issue of NGOs and their relation to the United Nations reflects the striking changes which have marked these relations in the last two decades. From the 41 NGOs granted consultative status by the Economic and Social Council in 1948, and 377 in 1968, the number of NGOs in consultative status has now expanded to over 1,350. There were 200 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information in 1968; there are now 1,550. Approximately 1,800 representatives of 637 organizations from 61 countries attended last year's Department of Public Information/NGO Conference. In terms of net transfers, non-governmental organizations collectively constitute the second largest source of development assis-

tance. In December 1997, the Nobel Academy recognized the role of NGOs in the Ottawa process which led to the adoption of the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines. These facts vividly illustrate the universal movement towards greater citizen action, sometimes described as the "global associational revolution", which has characterized the past few years. Other examples abound of the dramatic rise in people's capacity to organize themselves and in the influence exerted by social movements in virtually all areas of concern and at all levels of governance.

The activity of non-State actors has become an essential dimension of public life in all parts of the world. Reform and restructuring of the United Nations thus coincide with the emergence of a new participatory international system responding to the forces of globalization sweeping our world. The growing influence and role of non-State actors has been both a hallmark and a cause of our changing international environment. NGOs are the clearest manifestation of what is referred to as "civil society", that is, the sphere in which social movements organize themselves around objectives, constituencies and thematic interests. Other actors, however, have also taken on an increasingly important role in shaping national and international agendas and policy dialogues. They include local authorities, mass media, business and industry leaders and the research community, including academia and think-tanks. With lesser bureaucratic and institutional restraints, all have embraced and benefited from the profound impact brought about by the information and communication revolution. NGOs have been particularly effective in utilizing the instant access to information made possible by new technologies, and have themselves become primary sources and disseminators of information.

To varying degrees and with varying rates of success, the United Nations has attempted to adapt to this phenomenon and to open its doors

* General Assembly
Fifty-third session
Item 58 of the provisional
agenda (A/53/150)
Strengthening of the United
Nations system

to civil society. This has been most visible in the series of world summits and conferences held in the first half of the 1990s. In their aftermath, measures to strengthen cooperation with NGOs are being taken across the entire United Nations system and in virtually all areas of its activity. The present report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the present institutional arrangements which frame the relations between the United Nations and NGOs, while also depicting the multiple forms which these relations have taken in practice. It also attempts to answer a number of important questions which have arisen in this regard, such as the need for the United Nations to ensure a balanced geographical representation among its partners in civil society, or ways in which it can respond to the growing demands of NGOs for of access to information and increased participation.

Institutional arrangements

The relationship between the United Nations and NGOs is not a new phenomenon. The United Nations as a whole derives its mandate to work with civil society from the Charter itself and its opening words "We, the peoples...". Article 71 provides that the Economic and Social Council may make "suitable arrangements for consultation" with NGOs. For nearly three decades, arrangements for consultation of the Economic and Social Council with NGOs were governed by resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968. In 1996, after a thorough review, the Council adopted resolution 1996/31 which established three categories of status for NGOs. General consultative status is for large, international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the Council's agenda. Special consultative status is for NGOs that have special competence in a few fields of the Council's activity. The third category, which is inclusion on the Roster, is for NGOs whose competence enables them to make occasional and useful contributions to the work of the United Nations and who are available for consultation upon request. NGOs on the Roster may also include organizations in consultative status with a specialized agency or other United Nations body.

Those NGOs which are granted consultative status acquire certain rights and responsibilities. The provisional agenda of the Council is communicated to all of them and NGOs with general status have the right to place items on this agenda and that of the Council's subsidiary bodies. Organizations with general and special status may designate authorized representatives to sit as observers at public meetings of the Economic and Social Council and subsidiary bodies. NGOs on the Roster may have representatives at such meetings concerned with matters within their field of competence. Organizations in general and special status may submit brief written statements which can be published as United Nations documents and circulated to members of the Council or subsidiary bodies. Organizations on the Roster may also be invited to submit written statements. Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 makes provision for oral presentations by organizations in general or special consultative status during certain meetings of the Council. NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council must report every four years on their activities.

The Secretary-General is authorized to offer facilities to NGOs in consultative status, including:

- Prompt and efficient distribution of documents of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies as appropriate;
- Access to United Nations press documentation services;
- Arrangement of informal discussions on matters of special interest to groups or organizations;
- Appropriate seating arrangements and facilities for obtaining documents during public meetings of the General Assembly that deal with matters in the economic, social and related fields.

NGOs have been particularly involved in the work of some of the Council's subsidiary bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. For instance, NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council participate in the Commission on Human Rights and the

Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, to which they may make oral or written statements. In accordance with procedures established by the Council and the Commission, NGOs, whether in consultative status or not, may submit information regarding allegations of human rights violations. The Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission, attended by nearly 1,000 NGOs annually, has instituted the practice of accepting statements from NGOs, mainly indigenous ones, few of which have consultative status. As required by Agenda 21, adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development has included representatives of "major groups", 1/ including NGOs, in its deliberations. The Commission has also adopted new modalities, such as including NGO representatives on United Nations panel discussions.

Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council remains at the core of the formal relationship between the United Nations and NGOs. While no such arrangement has been established by the General Assembly, practice has already evolved to allow a certain degree of informal participation by NGOs in the work of the Assembly's Main Committees and several of its subsidiary bodies. NGOs participate in the work of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in their capacity as petitioners. In all instances, NGOs have requested permission to petition the Committee and it is in that capacity that they have addressed the Committee or participated in its work. In a similar manner, NGOs participate in the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

NGOs have also participated very actively in special sessions of the General Assembly. NGO representatives addressed the General Assembly at the plenary meetings of its nineteenth special session, held in June 1997, to review the implementation of Agenda 21. Some 1,000 organizations were accredited on that occasion. At the

twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in June 1998, accreditation was granted to all NGOs with a serious interest in the questions of drug abuse and illicit trafficking, including many which neither held consultative status with the Economic and Social Council nor were associated with the Department of Public Information, but which had enjoyed a working relationship with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme or were listed in the Programme's directory of NGOs. NGOs were invited to make an input into the draft guiding principles of drug demand reduction adopted by the General Assembly at the special session.

The United Nations Secretariat's relationship with NGOs is manifold. The functions of facilitating the consultative process with and disseminating information to the non-governmental community are the responsibility of two offices of the Secretariat, namely, the NGO Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information. The main function of the former is to serve as the substantive secretariat of the Economic and Social Council Committee on NGOs, composed of 24 Member States, which reviews NGO applications for consultative status and makes recommendations thereon to the Council. This servicing involves the screening and processing by the Section of all applications submitted to the NGO Committee, a task that is becoming increasingly demanding as the yearly number of applications continues to rise. The Section also receives and processes the quadrennial reports submitted by the NGOs for the Committees review. It provides accreditation to representatives of NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and maintains close contact with the Conference of non-governmental organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, an NGO Liaison Office carries out accreditation procedures and provides other types of logistical or substantive assistance to NGOs in consultative status.

The relationship between NGOs and the Department of Public Information is based on General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13

February 1946, by which the Assembly decided that the Department and its branch offices should actively assist and encourage national information services, educational institutions and other governmental and interested groups in spreading information about the United Nations. Formal association with the Department was given legislative authority by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1297 (XLIV). In cooperation with United Nations information centres and other United Nations offices worldwide, the Department's NGO Section evaluates applications from NGOs wishing to enter into formal association with the Department. A Department of Public Information Committee examines the applications and takes decisions on whether or not to include NGOs in the annual Department of Public Information/NGO Directory. The NGO/Department of Public Information Executive Committee, composed of 18 members elected by NGOs in association with the Department of Public Information, serves as the liaison between NGOs and the Department. Services offered by the Department to NGOs are described in section IV of the present report. Over the years, most substantive departments have appointed one or several NGO liaison officers to facilitate access by NGOs to the United Nations and improve communications between officials in these departments and NGO experts in the relevant fields. These relations vary greatly from department to department and according to the issue at hand. The relations established between the Department for Disarmament Affairs and NGOs are briefly described here as an example. The Department for Disarmament Affairs works mainly with those peace and disarmament-related NGO members of the NGO Committee on Disarmament (a subsidiary body of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations based in New York and comprising 56 organizations) and the Special NGO Committee on Disarmament (another Committee of the Conference based in Geneva, and comprising 42 organizations). Collaboration with NGOs focuses on two main areas, namely, (a) implementation of the United Nations Disarmament

Information programme in New York, Geneva and in various regions of the world and (b) coordination of NGO participation in disarmament-related meetings and conferences.

Reference is made to the United Nations Disarmament Information campaign in section IV below. As for NGO participation in meetings, the Department coordinates the participation of NGOs in intergovernmental conferences and meetings (under United Nations auspices or related to the review of international treaties) to the fullest extent permitted by the relevant rules of procedure. In the case of treaty review conferences, when serving as secretariat, the Department makes recommendations to the States parties on the accreditation of NGOs, also in accordance with the rules of procedures established for such bodies. Arrangements for NGOs include allowing access to premises and meeting rooms, the receipt and presentation of documentation, the provision of office space and supplies and the setting up of briefings by officers and other delegations participating in the meeting.

In his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950), presented to the Assembly in 1997, the Secretary-General called for all departments that had not yet done so to designate a NGO liaison officer. In an effort to coordinate better the activities of all these focal points, and to ensure consistency in the Secretariats dealings with NGOs, an Inter-Departmental Working Group on NGOs was revived three years ago and is currently chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations. A similar group meets at the United Nations Office at Geneva and is chaired by a representative of the Director-General. The main objective of the working groups is to develop common guidelines and exchange information, without curtailing the necessary flexibility that should govern each department's dealings with specific NGOs. They are a useful device for fostering contacts among officials working with NGOs and channelling information to the Office of the Secretary-General.

The majority of funds, agencies and programmes of the United Nations system have also received a clear mandate from their governing

bodies to work with NGOs, and have developed a wide range of mechanisms to do so. Many of their own procedures and arrangements in this field reflect those of the Economic and Social Council consultative status. Most involve the granting of a formal status for consultation and many include annual consultation between United Nations officials and their main partners in the non-governmental community. While formal responsibility for cooperation with NGOs often resides in external relations services, or their equivalent, staff in the other units of the secretariats maintain informal contacts with NGOs, maintaining liaison and collaborating on technical and operational matters.

Arrangements for the participation of NGOs in the intergovernmental activities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for instance, are governed by the rules of procedure and the decisions of the Trade and Development Board. Those organizations which exercise functions and have a basic interest in most of the activities of the Board are placed in the general category, while those with special competence in specific activities fall into the special category. National NGOs of recognized standing deemed to have a significant contribution to make to the work of UNCTAD are placed on the Register after consultation with the Member State concerned. There are currently 177 NGOs in status with UNCTAD, 95 in the general category and 82 in the special category. NGOs in status receive notifications of and documents for conferences and meetings convened by UNCTAD. Their representatives are entitled to participate as observers, without the right to vote, in the public meetings of the intergovernmental bodies.

As early as 1950, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was specifically called upon by the General Assembly to "obtain from ... non-governmental organizations having a special interest in child and family welfare the advice and technical assistance which it may require for the implementation of its programmes" (resolution 417 (V) of 1 December 1950). Accordingly, UNICEF has granted consultative status to those international development organizations which already hold consultative status with the Economic and

Social Council, engage in child-related activities and wish to formalize their relationship with UNICEF. This allows them to be represented as observers at meetings of the Executive Board, and, with the agreement of the Board's Chairperson, to take the floor and circulate statements if they express a particular interest in the agenda items under discussion. Currently, 191 NGOs hold consultative status with UNICEF.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) does not have formal accreditation procedures for NGOs, but draws up memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements for specific areas of cooperation with individual NGOs, as needed. UNDP's relationship with what it refers to as civil society organizations are now guided by a policy statement issued in June 1997. In June 1997, the UNDP/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Board also adopted rules of procedure allowing it to invite, when it considers appropriate, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to participate in its deliberations for questions that relate to their activities. At Headquarters, the UNDP Civil Society and Participation Programme is responsible for strengthening UNDP policy and operational methods to collaborate effectively with civil society organizations. The UNDP Division of Public Affairs works to advance UNDP relations with civil society organizations in advocacy and public information. In response to proposals from its civil society organization/NGO partners, UNDP is currently working to create a civil society organization/NGO Committee which could facilitate relations between UNDP and NGOs on operational, policy and advocacy matters.

Since its inception, UNFPA has maintained close operational relationships with NGOs. In 1995, UNFPA established an NGO Advisory Committee at the international level to advise it on policy and programming matters and to promote a more active involvement of NGOs in its work, especially in its advocacy activities. The Advisory Committee, which meets annually, is composed of from 25 to 30 representatives of community-based, national, regional and inter-

national NGOs. A Working Group on NGO accreditation reviews applications by NGOs seeking a collaborative relationship with UNFPA. NGOs which meet certain criteria are recommended by the Working Group to the Policy and Planning Committee for approval. UNFPA has also recently established the NGO/Civil Society Theme Group to formulate, recommend and implement strategies, procedures and activities that will promote, strengthen and facilitate UNFPA interaction and collaboration with civil society. Both UNFPA staff at Headquarters and in the field participate in the work of the Theme Group.

The World Food Programme (WFP) also invites NGOs to attend its Executive Board meetings as observers and, as such, they are allowed to take the floor, upon request. In addition, WFP conducts a regular policy dialogue with its major operational partners through an annual "WFP -NGO Consultation" which is jointly managed and organized by the NGOs and WFP. The agenda and membership of the Consultation are proposed by the NGOs themselves. Likewise, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) allows NGOs to participate as observers in both its Executive and Standing Committees. A UNHCR/NGO Consultation precedes the Executive Committee meeting.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) does not give formal or consultative status to NGOs. However, subject to formal approval by the Executive Board, NGOs may participate as observers in meetings of the IFAD Governing Council. The annual consultation which IFAD has also been holding with selected NGO partners since 1990 provides a forum for dialogue between the Fund and representatives of the NGO community on past, ongoing and future cooperation. The consultation always reviews a range of issues arising from IFAD/NGO cooperation as well as some specific themes. An Advisory Group of NGOs was formed to choose these themes, select the participants, and provide ongoing advice on ways to strengthen IFAD/NGO collaboration.

Many specialized agencies of the United Nations system grant consultative status to NGOs whose goals and activities are directly

related to these agencies' mandate, and from which they can obtain information or expert advice. For instance, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) grants consultative status to NGOs whose activities are directly related to its purposes. These NGOs (54 at present) are invited to be represented by observers at sessions of the governing bodies of IMO and its committees and their subsidiary bodies. The IMO Rules require reciprocal privileges to be accorded to IMO by the NGOs to which consultative status has been granted. Those organizations have also undertaken to support the activities of IMO and to promote the dissemination of its principles and work.

The Basic Texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) also provide for formal arrangements for consultation, cooperation and liaison with NGOs. Three kinds of formal relations are granted, namely, consultative status, special consultative status and liaison status. At present, 190 international NGOs have formal relations with FAO. They can be invited to send observers to the sessions of the FAO Council and Conference and to participate in experts' meetings and technical conferences and seminars. A Unit for Cooperation with the Private Sector and NGOs has been established to review and strengthen cooperation with civil society.

Initial provisions for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) relations with NGOs were set out in UNESCO's constitution. These provisions were completed in 1960 by a set of Directives adopted by the General Conference. Guided by these Directives, UNESCO established formal relations, at three different levels or categories with some 580 international NGOs. The new Directives adopted in 1995 did away with the "hierarchy" inherent in the previous ones and placed greater emphasis on operationality, direct action in the field and closer contact with grass-roots organizations. However, the new Directives still draw a distinction between national and international or regional NGOs. While they provide for the continuation of close relations with a small group of international NGOs, they also introduce a new, more flexible, set of arrangements. Thus, UNESCO can coop-

erate with NGOs at all levels (international, regional, subregional, national, local and grass-roots) under what are termed "operational relations", with the purpose of helping the organization amplify its concrete action in the field. Provisions are also made for regular meetings with representatives of NGOs having a formal relation with UNESCO, both at the global level and through regional consultations.

Article 71 of the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) stipulates that WHO may "on matters within its competence make suitable arrangements for consultation and cooperation with non-governmental international organizations and, with the consent of the Government concerned, with national organizations, governmental or non-governmental". Unlike the Economic and Social Council, WHO has only one category of formal relations, and in principle, only international NGOs are eligible. The Executive Board decides whether an NGO is to be admitted into what it refers to as "official relations with WHO". Each NGO in official relations is appointed a designated technical officer who is responsible for the development and maintenance of joint collaboration. NGOs in official relations have the right to participate, but not to vote, in WHO's meetings or in those of the committees and conferences convened under its authority. All other contacts with NGOs, including working relations, are considered to be of an informal character. With the exception of administrative programmes, most WHO programmes have some type of formal or informal interaction with NGOs. In fact, official relations normally result when contacts and joint activities develop over the years into mutually agreed programmes of work in international health or health-related activities. There are more than 180 NGOs enjoying official relations with WHO. WHO regional offices can establish working relations with national and regional organizations.

Article 19 of the Constitution of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) provides that the Director-General can establish appropriate relations with non-governmental and other organizations the work of which is related to that of the Organization. When establishing relations with national

NGOs, the Director-General must consult with the Governments concerned. At present, more than 100 NGOs enjoy consultative status with UNIDO, which is granted by the Industrial Development Board and which enables them to participate in the meetings of the Industrial Development Board, the General Conference and in other activities. Within the office of the Director-General, it is the task of the External Relations Service to coordinate UNIDO activities with NGOs.

Since the early 1980s, the World Bank dialogue with NGOs has been guided primarily through the NGO-World Bank Committee, which was formed in 1982 to provide an avenue of exchange between NGOs and Bank management. The Committee's meetings provide a formal, international arena for policy discussions among senior bank managers and 26 NGO leaders from around the world. The NGOs determine the membership through a staggered election process, which allows for annual rotation and diversity of NGO representation. The Committee is currently in the process of being decentralized to the regions, where it is envisioned that its work will have greater focus on regional and country-specific issues. In the Bank, the NGO Unit, housed in the Social Development Department, works with Resident Missions and headquarters offices on issues related to NGOs and broader civil society participation in the Bank's activities. There are now staff in 63 Resident Missions with full or partial responsibility for NGO matters. An NGO thematic group brings together representatives from each region and the central vice presidency to facilitate discussion of matters related to both operational and policy work with NGOs.

Owing to the nature of their activities, a number of United Nations agencies have established very specific relations with non-governmental entities. Among them, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has a long-standing tradition of private sector participation, which has intensified in recent years. Its partners in civil society, which include recognized operating agencies, scientific or industrial organizations and financial or development institutions, are referred to as "sector members". Sector members have the right to participate in and submit

written contributions to ITU Conferences (other than those empowered to conclude legal instruments having treaty status), assemblies and meetings.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the only tripartite institution within the United Nations family. Its constituents are Governments, employers' and workers' organizations, the latter two being represented in national delegations on equal footing with Governments. Representatives of employers and organized labour are thus full-fledged members of the organization's decision-making bodies, such as the International Labour Conference and the ILO Governing Body, and participate equally in regional and sectoral meetings. In addition, the Constitution of ILO provides for consultative relationships with "recognized non-governmental international organizations, including international organizations of employers, workers, agriculturists and cooperatives". This provision has been put into effect with the establishment of three different categories of NGOs, the first of which applies to international NGOs with an important interest in a wide range of activities of the Organization that are granted general consultative or regional status. Standing arrangements have been made for the participation of those enjoying general consultative status in all ILO meetings, and in regional meetings for those with regional consultative status. Those NGOs which demonstrate an evident interest in at least one area of the work of the ILO and adhere to established procedures may be admitted to the second category, namely, ILOs Special List of NGOs. Finally, the ILO Governing Body extends an invitation to international NGOs which meet certain established criteria to attend the different ILO meetings for which they have demonstrated a particular interest.

Worthy of mention is the unique example of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the first programme of the United Nations system to include NGO representatives on its governing body as full participants, rather than observers. The Programme Coordinating Board is comprised of representatives of 22 Member States (including both donor and recipient countries), the programmes

six co-sponsors (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank), NGOs and people with HIV/AIDS.

Thus, over the last decade, arrangements for consultation with NGOs have been revised, improved and extended across the United Nations system, allowing NGOs to shape in significant ways the international development and political debates. The advantages of this increased NGO participation cannot be overestimated. NGOs have introduced additional knowledge and information into the decision-making process; they have raised new issues and concerns which were subsequently addressed by the United Nations; they have provided expert advice in areas where they were the main actors; and they have contributed greatly to a broad consensus-building process in many areas which ensured commitment by all actors to a global agenda. This participation has proven to be a very useful addition to the regular intergovernmental work of the Organization. It should also be noted that, throughout the years, and despite their numbers, very few incidents of a disruptive nature involving NGOs have occurred.

A growing operational partnership

Practical cooperation in operational matters between the United Nations and NGOs has also undergone vast qualitative and quantitative changes in recent years. For a long time, and with the notable exception of relief work, there was little functional interaction between the United Nations system and NGOs in the field. However, as the comparative strengths of NGOs and the potential for their complementarity with the United Nations grew more evident, they have become indispensable partners, not only in development and relief operations, but also in public information and advocacy. Often, these close partners do not hold any formal status of association or consultation with the United Nations, in fact, formal relations are rarely a prerequisite for cooperation. Nevertheless, as their role as implementing partners, clients, advocates or funding sources for United Nations programmes increases, the need arises to provide flexible but clear guidelines to

those United Nations officials dealing with NGOs.

The comparative advantages of NGOs in operational matters, as clearly summarized by UNIDO in a 1997 working paper entitled "UNIDO's approach to Non-Governmental Organizations", "lie in the proximity to their members or clients, their flexibility and the high degree of peoples involvement and participation in their activities, which leads to strong commitments, appropriateness of solutions and high acceptance of decisions implemented". Most agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system would agree to the following list, drawn up by UNIDO, of the assets provided by NGOs:

- Local accountability;
- Independent assessment of issues and problems;
- Expertise and advice;
- Important constituencies;
- Provision and dissemination of information;
- Awareness-raising.

There also exist a number of constraints or potential difficulties which limit the scope of United Nations collaboration with NGOs. They lie principally in the sheer number of organizations and their diversity, their occasional organizational weaknesses, the fragility of certain grass-roots organizations and the sometimes divergent positions among NGOs and between NGOs and Governments. Furthermore, over-dependence on external financing can sometimes undermine the sustainability and even independence of NGOs. Nonetheless, the balance remains overwhelmingly favourable to a strengthened cooperation between the United Nations system and NGOs in operational matters, at Headquarters and in the field.

Within the Secretariat, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has established strong mechanisms of cooperation with NGOs. In the six years since the General Assembly called for a coordinated system of humanitarian response to crises (resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991), much progress has been made in mobilizing the collective efforts of the international community, including NGOs, to deliver assistance in a coherent and timely manner. NGOs are often the first to

alert the international community to impending humanitarian crises, and are inevitably in the forefront of any response.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is the central humanitarian policy-making body in the United Nations system. It is unique in that its composition comprises not only the heads of United Nations agencies engaged in humanitarian action (such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), but also the heads of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and three NGO consortiums, namely, InterAction (a coalition of over 150 private non-profit agencies involved in development and relief assistance worldwide), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (a consortium of some 100 private relief and development organizations based in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America) and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (an alliance of major NGOs involved in relief operations). The NGO consortiums thus fully participate in formulating system-wide responses to specific emergencies and in determining priorities and aims in support of the work carried out in the field.

Other mechanisms for consultation and exchange of information on humanitarian matters between the United Nations and NGOs at Headquarters include monthly meetings between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and InterAction, which are co-chaired. At the field level, NGOs provide expertise and advice for United Nations activities related both to natural and man-made disasters. There are NGO liaison officers assigned to all of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs's coordination structures in the field. Since NGOs are frequently the implementing partners for many United Nations operational humanitarian agencies, they are increasingly involved in the consolidated appeal process, through their participation in assessment missions and in formulating programmes in their specific areas of competence and their activities and projects are often reflect-

ed in the United Nations consolidated appeal documents presented to potential donors. Their involvement in the process benefits populations in need by promoting closer coordination and encouraging better use of finite resources and providing potential donors with a more complete picture of requirements and actors in emergency situations. It is also worth mentioning that the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response has developed a code of conduct for NGOs active in this field. Thus far, 144 NGOs have adhered to the code.

All United Nations offices directly involved in humanitarian and relief operations, but also those working in the field of development, have established very strong operational relations with NGOs. UNHCR has a direct operational partnership with some 400 to 500 NGOs and, in 1997, funded 443 NGOs in 131 countries, in order to implement 931 projects at a cost of US\$ 272 million. A Plan of Action for "Partnership in Action" was adopted by UNHCR and some 500 NGOs from all continents at a major conference held in Oslo in 1994. A tangible step in that process is the agreement by UNHCR and NGOs on the concept of and the need for an operational partnership agreement. This agreement, to be signed between UNHCR and NGOs, is intended to assist all concerned in setting out a basic common understanding on standards of conduct, field coordination, the technical and assistance standard at which both partners aim, and the guidelines which will be used in planning and implementation of refugee operations. In addition, both the Emergency and Technical Sections of UNHCR have a number of formal stand-by arrangements with NGOs for the provision of staff in the early days of an emergency.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has an operational collaboration with about 1,200 NGOs worldwide that covers a broad range of activities, which include data collection, exchange of information, identification and formulation of projects, needs assessment, nutritional survey, secondary transportation from storage point to final distribution site, distribution of food, reporting, monitoring or impact assessment. In emergency situations, the main areas of cooperation relate to food distribution

and monitoring. In recent years, WFP has negotiated a "Memorandum of Understanding on collaborative working arrangements" with its major partners at the Headquarters level. These agreements aim at establishing a clear division of tasks and responsibilities between WFP and its NGO partners, thus building on the comparative advantages of both organizations and maximizing the effectiveness of the operations. The memorandum of understanding also makes reference to qualitative and socio-economic considerations, such as involvement of women in the planning and management of food aid operations, sustainability and environment issues. Memorandums of understanding on stand-by arrangements have also been concluded with a number of NGOs with a view to increasing WFP's preparedness capacity.

As stated above (para. 17), UNICEF has collaborated with NGOs ever since it was founded. Over the years, NGOs and community-based organizations have become a central element in the implementation of programmes and projects at the country level. Traditional areas of NGO involvement include child health, nutrition and development, basic education and water and environmental sanitation. In addition, since the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, annex), UNICEF has worked with NGOs in the area of child protection, child labour, children in armed conflicts and disabled children, early childhood care and development and youth health and development.

Cooperation between IFAD and NGOs effectively began in 1980 with the Fund's support to the Small Farmer Agricultural Credit Project in Bangladesh. An initial IFAD loan, along with a subsequent one in 1984, helped an NGO - - the now well-known Grameen Bank - - to expand its operations of credit delivery to the rural poor. Since then, IFAD, in recognition of the vital role of NGOs in micro-development, has established a special IFAD/NGO Fund and an Extended Cooperation Programme, with an individual grant ceiling of US\$ 75,000, for direct grant financing to NGOs. The aim of the Programme is to lay the groundwork for future IFAD investments, or to back up ongoing pro-

jects. To date, 107 grants have been extended and 228 NGOs have been involved since 1977 in the implementation of IFAD projects. The activities in which NGOs are involved include implementation of rural credit programmes, water resources development, crop production, small-scale enterprises and marketing support and institution-building. One third of cooperating NGOs are involved in credit delivery, tied with savings mobilization.

In 1997, UNDP formalized guidelines for the execution of projects by NGOs. Such arrangements must be approved by the Government concerned and must meet UNDP requirements for execution and legal status. Global, regional, interregional and country projects may be executed by NGOs. The procedures determine the role of NGOs as executing agents, project appraisal and approval criteria, implementation standards, and financial management, accounting and reporting. Last November, the Administrator urged all resident representatives to organize consultations and policy dialogue with civil society organizations and to secure their involvement in the formulation, design and evaluation of UNDP programmes and projects. He also called on them to increase NGO execution in line with the new procedures mentioned above.

The World Bank also recognizes that achievement of its overarching goal of reducing poverty in its client countries requires the active and substantive involvement of a broad range of actors, NGOs prominent among them. NGO involvement in the portfolio of projects approved each fiscal year has risen from an average of 12 per cent in the 1980s, to nearly 50 per cent in the past several years. In 1997, 47 per cent of projects approved anticipated some degree of involvement by NGOs. While historically, NGO involvement has been most prevalent during project implementation, there is also a growing trend to increase upstream involvement of NGOs in project preparation.

The main goal of UNFPA's operational collaboration with NGOs is to supplement and strengthen the national capacity to implement programmes in the sectoral areas within the Fund's mandate. UNFPA has been steadily increasing the amount of programme resources

allocated to NGO-executed projects, both in absolute terms and in the percentage of total programme expenditures. By 1997, NGO-executed project expenditures had increased to almost 15 per cent of total UNFPA programme expenditures. In general, at the country and regional levels, funding assistance for NGO-executed projects was primarily for reproductive health activities. At the interregional level, such assistance was primarily for population and development activities, although support was also provided for NGO-executed reproductive health and advocacy projects. Likewise, many NGOs are involved in the operational activities of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the majority of them in the field of drugs demand reduction. A number of NGOs have also executed major projects aimed at supply reduction (alternative development projects to reduce the economic dependence of peasant farming communities on illicit narcotic crops). Furthermore, UNDCP has established a special fund to provide grants to grass-roots organizations in developing countries and countries in transition. NGOs acting as executing agencies must have proper accounting procedures and be able to make accounts available for audit. They must be recognized by both their national Government and the host Government. All organizations, whether acting as executing agencies or in receipt of grants, must have the necessary managerial and technical capacity to undertake projects, with a demonstrated track record. NGOs acting as project executing agencies sign an executing agency agreement and a project document, and are subject to the same reporting procedure as any other executing agency.

Thus, NGOs are actively involved in United Nations operational activities, either as executing agencies of United Nations-led projects or as beneficiaries (or "clients") of projects or grants. Over the last few years, this involvement has increased and moved "upstream" as NGOs participate more and more commonly in the design of projects. Many United Nations agencies, programmes and funds have established or updated frameworks, guidelines or procedures, which sometimes include the signing with NGO partners of memorandums of understanding or con-

tracts, to provide coherence and direction to their operational dealings with NGOs, and to balance the need for accountability to Governments and donors with the required programmatic flexibility at the country level.

NGOs are not only recipients of United Nations assistance. They have also become important sources of funding for some United Nations programmes and funds. UNICEF National Committees thus contribute roughly one third of UNICEF's overall income. Service-club organizations such as Rotary International (so far Rotary International has contributed US\$ 240 million towards the Polio Eradication Campaign, of which US\$ 105 million went to UNICEF) and Kiwanis International (which has pledged over US\$ 25 million towards the Elimination of Iodine - deficiency Disorders) contribute considerably to the successful outcome of such broad-based programmatic efforts. Other examples include a number of projects led by UNDCP which have also benefited from funds raised by NGOs ranging from the Norwegian Church Aid to the Drug Abuse Prevention Centre of Tokyo.

Building bridges between civil society and the United Nations

The range of operational collaboration with NGOs actually goes much beyond fund-raising and programme delivery, to cover activities such as research and information outreach, policy dialogue and advocacy. Through the latter, NGOs have played a very significant and helpful role by establishing bridges between the United Nations and civil society at large. They have effectively disseminated information related to United Nations goals and programmes, publicized and gathered support for major campaigns carried out by the Organization, while at the same time transmitting the concerns and the views of various sectors of civil society to United Nations forums.

Over the years, the association of NGOs with the Department of Public Information has proved to be a very useful tool and a central feature of NGOs relations with the United Nations system. The main criteria for association with

the Department is that NGOs have a demonstrated interest in United Nations issues and a proven ability to reach large or specialized audiences, including the general public, educators, media representatives, policy makers, and the business community. These NGOs must have the commitment and means to conduct effective information programmes focusing on issues of concern to the United Nations through their own publications, Web sites, radio and television programmes, or during their conferences, seminars, or round tables. The NGO Section of the Department of Public Information serves the NGOs associated with the Department in a number of ways. It organizes an annual three-day conference, held at United Nations Headquarters in September. The conference, attended most recently by some 1,800 NGO representatives, has become a major event, which provides a significant platform for the dissemination of information to active NGOs and for genuine in-depth dialogue between them, United Nations officials and representatives of Member States. The Section has successfully encouraged United Nations information centres to organize parallel NGO conferences at the national and regional levels, so that NGOs unable to attend the Headquarters conference can network and exchange information with other national NGOs working on United Nations-related issues. Over the years, the network of United Nations information centres and services has developed close working relationships with national and regional NGOs, thereby increasing the Departments information outreach to many hundreds of organizations.

The Section also organizes weekly briefings for NGO representatives at United Nations Headquarters, highlighting a different issue of priority concern to the Organization each week. An average of 200 NGO representatives participate in this direct exchange of information on United Nations activities between United Nations experts, representatives of Member States and representatives of NGOs. The Section produces a weekly "DPI/NGO Link" with selected news and information on recent material available at the Department of Public Information/NGO Resource Centre. The

Resource Centre, located at Headquarters and serviced by the NGO Section, provides current information materials from the Secretariat and many agencies, funds and programmes.

Another crucial link to the non-governmental community has been established in the last three years by the Department of Public Information through the creation of the United Nations Web site. Although the Web site is not specifically geared to NGOs, their knowledge of modern information technologies and frequent use of the Internet make them primary beneficiaries of United Nations efforts in this field. The United Nations Web site has witnessed phenomenal growth in the years since its creation, both in terms of the number of accesses and the scope of information material it contains. The number of accesses to the site reached 42.7 million in 1997 and continues to increase rapidly, averaging 141 access every minute in the first quarter of 1998. These accesses are from individuals or organizations located in 132 countries. The Web site (with related gopher sites) contains a wealth of information on United Nations activities and official documentation, which is now available in all countries to computer users with access to the Internet. The NGO Section maintains a United Nations/NGO link page on the site. The Department of Public Information is now engaged in a major redesign of the United Nations home page through which it hopes to target more specific audiences, and which should further facilitate NGOs' access to United Nations-related information. Twelve United Nations information centres have developed their own Web sites.

A very important mechanism for the dissemination of information and the fostering of a greater understanding and dialogue between the United Nations and NGOs was created in 1975, when several United Nations agencies established a joint project known as the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service. The Service reports annually to the Joint United Nations Information Committee, its governing body, and through the Committee, to the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The Service works with Secretariat departments, United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, Convention secretariats and other bodies

and organizations of the United Nations system working in areas of economic and social development, sustainable development, humanitarian emergencies and human rights. It brings important United Nations policies, issues and activities in these fields to the attention of NGOs through publications and meetings. It publishes, in particular, a bi-monthly newsletter, "Go-Between", which provides news and information on the United Nations system and on United Nations cooperation with NGOs. The Service also produces Roundup Reports on major United Nations events and conferences, as well as manuals, handbooks and directories designed to provide the NGO community with United Nations contacts and entry points, as well as information and guidance on the rules, procedures and scope for collaboration with the United Nations system. Most of the Service's publications are distributed to the 6,000 NGOs featured on its databases, and are uploaded onto electronic mail networks. Furthermore, as a trusted interlocutor between the United Nations system and NGOs, and to facilitate direct communication, interaction and dialogue, the Service organizes, or helps to organize, from time to time, consultations between United Nations agencies and NGOs on specific sectoral issues. It also organized two inter-agency consultations in 1997 to discuss cooperation with civil society, one entitled "Working with Civil Society: Issues and Challenges" and the other focusing on operational collaboration with NGOs.

Many substantive departments of the Secretariat, as well as agencies and funds of the United Nations system publish regular newsletters on their activities. NGOs, who are normally the primary recipients of these publications, disseminate the information received to their constituencies through their own publications or during their meetings. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for instance, maintains a large mailing list of NGOs accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women (2,500 organizations) and other NGOs and individuals, totalling about 10,000 for some of its regular publications.

Some departments have also been specifically mandated to cooperate with NGOs to strength-

en information efforts on important topics. For instance, NGOs are actively involved in the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme, which was launched at the first meeting of the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1982. NGOs receive, develop and disseminate information and education materials produced by the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Department also works closely with NGOs on special events, such as the celebration of Disarmament week, starting on 24 October every year. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs convenes a biennial World Youth Forum attended by hundreds of non-governmental youth organizations, through which the Forums have built important bridges between the United Nations system and youth groups worldwide.

Owing to the unique capacity of NGOs to gather public support for and raise general awareness on a number of important subjects, joint advocacy campaigns with NGOs, at the international and national levels, have often met with considerable success. The Ottawa process, which led to the adoption, in December 1997, of the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines was a landmark in this regard, and is a striking example of effective partnership between intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental actors. The process and the role played in it by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, an umbrella group of NGOs active in this field, have shown that determined, knowledgeable and well-organized NGOs that are willing to form caucuses and alliances can achieve successes in advocacy and lend tremendous weight to International and United Nations-led campaigns. Other examples include UNICEF's strong reliance on NGOs in its advocacy campaigns, such as those on the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations report on the impact of armed conflicts on children, the "Child-friendly city initiative" or the subject of the sexual exploitation of children. NGOs' involvement in the latter was particularly important. The Conference on Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996, was co-sponsored and

organized on an equal footing by the Government of Sweden, UNICEF and the NGO called End Child Prostitution and Trafficking.

Although NGOs neither hosted nor organized the global conferences of this decade, their involvement in the process of collective analysis of the economic and social fields by the United Nations through these conferences reached unprecedented levels and led to an important breakthrough in the perception by United Nations officials and Member States alike of the role of NGOs. The latter are no longer seen only as disseminators of information, but as shapers of policy and indispensable bridges between the general public and the intergovernmental processes. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio in 1992, United Nations world conferences have aimed to encourage the increased participation of international and national NGOs from developed and developing countries, grassroots and community-based organizations and regional and international networks. Indeed, the degree to which a world conference mobilizes the attention of NGOs and other organizations of civil society has become an important criterion for judging its success. The massive presence of NGOs in the conferences increased public awareness of the conferences and the issues they dealt with and, ultimately, of the United Nations, and was a driving force for the setting of international norms and standards. NGOs participating in the conferences also provided:

- Technical input and expertise on the issues under consideration;
 - A linkage between the national and international deliberations on the issues, thereby enlarging the transparency of the process and the accountability of actors involved;
 - An interested and informed constituency, at both the international and national level, for the implementation and monitoring of the results of the conferences;
- NGOs have also worked with national Governments towards the implementation of the agreements reached and decisions taken at the conferences.

NGOs benefited in different ways from their participation in the conferences. They were

encouraged, in particular, to organize themselves into regional or thematic caucuses, which enabled them to manage better their participation in the international policy dialogue and mobilize themselves into effective forces for advocacy work by facilitating the development of shared perspectives and approaches. By forming alliances, networks and caucuses, NGOs also demonstrated that their fast-growing numbers do not necessarily lead to increased logistical or political difficulties for the organizers of United Nations conferences. In addition, the global conferences led to innovative forms of NGO participation, some formal and some informal. On a significant number of occasions, NGOs participated in intergovernmental working groups, informal sessions and even "informal informal" discussions. In some of these, and always at the discretion of the Chairman, NGO representatives were permitted to comment. Finally, the positive experience of the involvement by NGOs in the global conferences also gave impetus to the Economic and Social Council to review and update its arrangements for consultation with NGOs (as described in section II above), in the course of which the Council established arrangements for their participation in future conferences, which had hitherto been determined on a case-by-case basis for each conference.

NGO attendance and involvement in all major conferences from United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to Habitat II has demonstrated the existence of a worldwide constituency for United Nations activities and has allowed the Organization to build new bridges with civil society at large.

Participation of non-governmental organizations from all regions

The collaboration between NGOs and United Nations agencies and programmes, in particular in operational matters, involves a great number of organizations based in developing countries. These NGOs participate in the activities of the United Nations, either as beneficiaries of projects or as full partners. As the United Nations continues to decentralize its activities, and as

efforts by programmes, funds and agencies are increasingly defined at the country level, the participation of local and national NGOs is likely to expand further in the years to come.

UNDP encourages participation of NGOs from programme countries on a widespread basis through project execution and other cooperative mechanisms. Examples also abound of participation by local NGOs in the implementation of UNICEF's country programmes. IFAD has also cooperated mainly with southern partners in implementing projects. Of the 319 NGOs with which it has worked, 255 (or 80 per cent) were from developing countries. Of the 1,200 NGOs collaborating with WFP worldwide, 200 are "international" organizations based in industrialized countries, which are important partners in emergency food aid operations. The others are all national southern organizations, more frequently involved in protracted refugee operations or development projects.

Similarly, the policy of UNHCR is to work with national NGOs whenever possible. While the primary objective of its strategy in support of national organizations is to ensure appropriate local capacity to meet the humanitarian assistance needs of refugee operations in the most effective manner, a secondary aim is to build the capacity of national organizations to work beyond the needs of a UNHCR operation and to contribute, in the longer term, to rehabilitation and development. UNHCR supports national NGOs through the identification and assessment of their capacities followed by training and capacity-building programmes. UNHCR also encourages international NGOs to work directly with national NGOs, with a view to handing over activities when feasible. Similarly, in order to promote local NGO participation and ensure long-term benefits of food aid assistance, WFP requests international NGOs to involve local partners in their activities. In some cases, this request has been included in the contract determining the modalities of collaboration with the international NGO.

Efforts to promote the role and participation of NGOs from developing countries in United Nations activities must first concentrate on facilitating the emergence of such organizations

and on building their capacity to work effectively with the United Nations. The policy environment for NGOs and civil society varies enormously from country to country, which is a powerful determinant in influencing both the contribution and growth of the NGO sector. In particular, there is a great variation in the legal framework relating to NGOs in each country. In response to this situation, the World Bank, through its NGO Unit, has developed a programme to give best practice advice on NGO Law. The Unit has been working with the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law since 1995 to analyse existing NGO laws in 100 countries. The result has been the publication, in draft form, of a "Handbook on Good Practices for Laws Relating to NGOs". Together with the Centre and other experts, the Bank is working in many countries to assist Governments and other parties to analyse the weaknesses of existing laws in this field and to draft more appropriate ones.

Other United Nations programmes engaged in capacity-building for national NGOs include the United Nations Drug Control Programme, which provides technical assistance to strengthen technical, legal, training and managerial capacities of NGOs involved in reducing the illegal production, cultivation, manufacture, sale, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs. In fact, the Programme endeavours to include capacity development in all its activities in order to ensure their sustainability. Capacity-building of civil society organizations is, therefore, almost inherent to its technical cooperation activities.

Southern NGOs are particularly important partners of FAO, because of their knowledge of local situations and the services they provide to needy farmers and rural communities. FAO has learned that a key form of cooperation with NGOs in developing countries is through capacity-building programmes, designed specifically to strengthen the effectiveness of southern NGOs in areas of work which fall within its technical mandate. Such actions, however, are limited, as FAO does not have any sizeable resources earmarked specifically for NGOs. Its normative or operational activities in favour of

NGOs have to be funded mainly through extra-budgetary resources.

Lack of financial means and inadequate access to relevant information have also prevented southern NGOs from contributing as much as other NGOs, based in the north, to the policy dialogue conducted in United Nations forums. It is striking, in this regard, that of the 1,550 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information, only 251 are based in developing countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also notes that only 25 per cent of organizations formally associated with it are southern NGOs, and that they rarely participate in the Trade and Development Board and Commission meetings because of financial constraints.

By allowing national, regional and subregional NGOs to apply for consultative status, Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31, adopted at the conclusion of the review by the Council of existing arrangements for consultation, should ensure a greater contribution by organizations from developing countries to the policy-making process in the economic and social fields. National NGOs now account for the majority of applications for consultative status. The need will soon arise, as an increasing number of organizations from developing countries seek consultative status with the Council and other United Nations bodies, for specific arrangements and mechanisms to assist them in making proper use of this status. This assistance will be manifold and, to be most effective, should be provided at the national level through United Nations field offices.

Efforts are already being undertaken by United Nations programmes, a number of Member States as well as large international NGOs to provide financial and other assistance to organizations based in developing countries and to facilitate their participation in United Nations policy discussions. With modest levels of financial support from donor Governments, the United Nations Non-governmental Liaison Service, for instance, has established an effective and credible system for identifying and financing participation by representatives of develop-

ing country NGOs in United Nations conferences and forums such as meetings of the Commissions of the Economic and Social Council. Thus, since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the Service has raised funds to finance and facilitate the participation in United Nations meetings or conferences of over 700 NGO representatives, almost entirely from developing nations.

As a result of such and other efforts, the global conferences of the 1990s were marked by a sharply improved regional balance among NGOs, as compared with previous large conferences held by the United Nations. These global conferences and the parallel civil society forums have also allowed national and regional non-governmental organizations from the south to establish useful links and networks with counterparts in the north.

Often, NGOs themselves provide resources to ensure a more balanced geographical representation among their representatives. Examples include the financing by NGO committees on Disarmament in Geneva or New York of travel and accommodation expenses for selected organizations to participate in their sessions or special events. The Department of Public Information/NGO Executive Committee, for its part, has in the last few years appealed to all NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information for funds to assist representatives of NGOs in developing countries to attend and speak at the Annual Department of Public Information/NGO Conference. The United Nations also encourages NGOs to form regional specialized committees away from Headquarters to allow easier participation by local organizations in substantive discussions. The United Nations Drug Control Programme, for instance, which has long worked with the Vienna NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs and the New York NGO Committee on Narcotics and Substance Abuse, recently assisted Asian NGOs to form a similar Committee in Bangkok. Finally, Member States sometimes provide funds to finance participation by NGOs from developing countries in meetings organized by the United Nations, as is the case for UNCTADs annual NGO/Trade Union consultations.

Enhancing the participation of non-governmental organizations in all areas of the United Nations system

In his report on "Renewing the United Nations: a Programme for Reform" (A/51/950), the Secretary-General stressed how the increasing role and influence of civil society, and of NGOs in particular, is contributing to a process of enlargement of international cooperation and spurring the United Nations system and other intergovernmental structures towards greater transparency and accountability and closer linkages between national and international levels of decision-making and implementation. This is a positive process which the Secretary-General welcomes and encourages. At the same time, a number of questions have arisen with regard to the participation of NGOs in United Nations activities, linked both to the financial and legal constraints within which the Organization operates and to the fast-growing number and diversity of NGOs engaged in collaboration with the United Nations. The NGO sector constitutes a very diverse institutional category with significant variations with respect to size, resources, impact, methodology, objectives and approach to international organizations. In order for the United Nations to interact better with NGOs and to continue to cooperate with them in a mutually beneficial relationship, it needs to learn more about this complex and expanding universe. The great majority of departments, funds, programmes and agencies which have established consultative and/or operational relations with NGOs have set up computerized databases allowing them to organize the information they hold in terms of contact points for these organizations, activities and/or fields of interest. While efforts have been made in recent years to integrate some of the databases within the same department or agency, the creation of a single database encompassing all NGOs working with the United Nations system would neither be feasible nor necessarily useful. However, efforts must be made to harmonize existing databases so as to facilitate the exchange and compilation of information on NGOs across the system. As a first step, and if necessary resources can be iden-

tified, the Secretary -General will entrust the United Nations Non -governmental Liaison Service with carrying out a survey of all NGO databases that currently exist in the United Nations system.

The United Nations must attempt not only to draw a composite picture of the NGO community but also to provide its staff with the tools to deal with their fast -growing number. NGO sections or liaison offices are frequently understaffed and sometimes ill -equipped to service large groups of NGOs. The Secretary -General will encourage all departments, programmes and funds of the system to ensure that these sections are appropriately staffed and are, to the extent possible, allocated the necessary logistical and financial resources. In this regard, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has reallocated additional staff and resources to its NGO Unit in 1998 to allow it to cope with its tremendous caseload. The staff assigned to work with NGOs must be the primary recipients of any training programmes specifically dedicated to cooperation with civil society.

Within the Secretariat, procedures and policies governing relations with NGOs are set out in the Secretary -General's bulletin ST/SGB/209 of 21 December 1984. The Secretary -General will instruct the Department of Management, in collaboration with the Office of Legal Affairs, to study and update the Bulletin to ensure that it reflects not only the present practices in this field but also the new arrangements set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31. A new Bulletin will also serve to improve consistency in the Secretariats relations with NGOs and increase awareness among Secretariat officials of the mandates given to them in this field by the governing bodies of the Organization.

In the broader context of the United Nations system, relations with NGOs vary widely in nature and scope from programme to programme, as described in previous sections. While these relations are governed by the specific goals and regulations of each organization of the system, it is imperative that all officials concerned share their experiences and best practices so as to promote coherence and efficiency in our dealings with civil society while ensuring a prop-

er implementation of existing mandates and rules in this field. The Inter -Departmental Working Group on NGOs mentioned above (para. 14) is a useful tool in this regard, and the Secretary -General will encourage all relevant departments that have not yet done so to designate representatives to attend its regular meetings, in New York and Geneva. All programmes, funds and specialized agencies are also invited to send representatives to the meetings, as many already do. The Secretary -General also welcomes initiatives such as the one taken last year by the Consultative Committee on Programme on Operational Questions in collaboration with the United Nations Non -governmental Liaison Service to organize an inter -agency consultation on operational collaboration with NGOs. Participants in the consultation, held in Geneva in November 1997, established a number of groups tasked with the elaboration of general principles to underpin operational collaboration with NGOs, updating guidelines to Resident Coordinators in this field and undertaking a system -wide survey of experiences and best practices in NGO capacity -building.

If NGOs are to continue making a meaningful contribution to the work of the United Nations, it is crucial that their access to information and documentation be secured in a timely and appropriate manner. United Nations efforts in this regard are described in section IV of the present report. The Secretary -General will pursue and expand these efforts, in particular those related to the United Nations Web sites. In order that NGOs, in particular those based in developing countries, benefit from information exchanges and discussions on matters of interest to them, the Secretary -General will also encourage departments that have the technical ability to do so to conduct electronic conferences on the Internet through the World Wide Web as was done recently by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

Due to the financial and legal constraints of the Organization, however, NGO demands for prompt and comprehensive information cannot always be adequately satisfied. Member States may wish to consider a number of measures

which could remedy, at least partially, this situation. For instance, allowing representatives of organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to occupy, on an as available basis, a number of seats in an appropriately designated area of the General Assembly Hall during public debates on items in the social or economic fields, could facilitate their access to the Assembly's official documentation without any additional financial expense on the part of the Secretariat. Currently, NGO representatives can only sit in the public balcony from which they cannot access document distribution counters and where acoustic and technical problems sometimes impede them from following important debates on matters of direct relevance to their work with the United Nations.

Another topic frequently brought up by representatives of NGOs interested and involved in United Nations activities is that of the access to the Organization's Optical Disk System (ODS). ODS was originally developed as a storage and archival system for the use of the United Nations Secretariat and the Permanent Missions of its Member States. Later, in 1996, access to ODS via the Internet was developed. Any expansion of the system to accommodate additional users requires funds to improve the technical infrastructure, as otherwise it would impede access by the current users. Member States have specifically requested the Secretariat to ensure that their access be maintained without limitations. Expansion of ODS to allow access by NGOs can thus only be done by instituting a charge -back fee which is used to enhance the infrastructure. Smaller NGOs, in particular those based in developing countries, may not be able to afford this fee and to benefit from this service. While a great number of documents are now posted on the United Nations Web site, ODS offers a much wider access to United Nations documents in all official languages, including complete United Nations parliamentary documentation since 1993, resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic

and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council since 1946, certain official records of those four bodies since 1946 and administrative issuances of the Secretariat. Member States may, therefore, wish to review funding for ODS, in order to allow for wider dissemination of its products.

Member States may also wish to consider the establishment of a trust fund for the purpose of facilitating the participation of NGOs from developing and least developed countries, and countries in transition, in activities of the Organization. This fund could serve to provide such NGOs with the means of retrieving important information from United Nations sources as well as attending important meetings or conferences of relevance to their work.

In the aftermath of the global conferences and with the emergence of a new international environment characterized by unrestricted flows of information, the United Nations has entered a new era in its relations with NGOs and other civil society actors. The Economic and Social Council recognized this changed relationship when it adopted resolution 1996/31. Many agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system have followed suit. The Secretariat, for its part, has tried to adapt to this new situation in creative and innovative ways and will pursue its efforts in this field. The United Nations is committed to seek the participation and contribution of NGOs in its work. New approaches, attitudes, methods and responses are required throughout the United Nations system if we are to meet this challenge effectively.

Note

1/ In section III of Agenda 21, the following nine "major groups" were identified: women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers.

10 July 1998

A response of the CONGO to the UN Secretary-General's draft report on interaction with NGOs

Comments by the Conference of Non-governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations on the Report of the Secretary-General "Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-governmental Organizations in All Activities of the United Nations System" (A/53/170)¹

Introduction

This report (A/53/170) is an important attempt to document how the UN system — from global policymaking at UN headquarters to individual agencies and UN entities operating at national levels — works with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With these aspects compiled in one place for the first time, the report should help all concerned with the UN/NGO relationship take stock and consider how this interaction can be made more effective in the future. Historically, NGOs have been understood to be a voice of the people and thus should be given fullest access to the work of the United Nations.

The report includes many of the basic elements of the UN-NGO relationship, such as the relevant ECOSOC resolutions and descriptions of NGO relations with many parts of the system, including those with subsidiary organs, specialized agencies and related organizations. But, the report also is either too reserved about or lacking with regard to several other important elements.

First, it describes but does not systematically evaluate how the various existing arrangements with NGOs are functioning. For example, it does not examine where the inefficiencies, duplications of effort or lack of financial resources exist which inhibit the interaction of NGOs with the UN system. The report does not, for instance, consider ways in which NGO relationships throughout the system might be rationalized in order to do away with a plethora of arrangements which can be confusing for or misunderstood by member states or NGOs alike. While the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has looked at the NGO relationship generally in recent years, the JIU or another unit could examine the specific ways in which the Secretariat is or is not achieving that which is

outlined in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

Second, the report does not identify institutional barriers to increased NGO participation or suggest innovative ways to overcome them. These include the legal, regulatory and administrative limits which exist de jure or de facto. For example, such obstacles have had the effect of inhibiting best practices from time to time.

In addition, while many NGOs believe there is a need to build support for NGOs among governments and within the Secretariat, notwithstanding supportive statements by the Secretary-General — for example that NGOs are essential to the process of policy formation and in the execution of policies — the report does not offer many specific suggestions with respect to how this is or might be achieved. The report does not acknowledge the often complementary role NGOs can and have served to act and speak on occasions when the UN system cannot or will not. One example is the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid in areas where one or more parties to a conflict will not permit a UN presence. Another is the ability of NGOs to bring governments and insurgencies together in the same location to explore or even achieve conflict resolution. In some instances NGOs have begun peace processes which the UN has later been able to assume once enough confidence has been established between the parties that they will officially recognize one another and agree to UN-sponsored mediation. A third example is when NGOs draw attention to gross violations of human rights which member states might be reluctant to raise. The next version of the report should seek to build that support and provide many more specific examples of NGO best practices at all levels.

While the report takes note of some of the use of information and communications technology in support of arrangements for consultation

1. References in these comments to particular paragraphs in the Report utilize the numbering of the paragraphs in the printed version of the document.

with NGOs, the report fails to recognize either the magnitude and implications of the ways that the use of these technologies is transforming consultative arrangements or the extent to which such arrangements have involved partnership and cooperation between NGOs and the UN - often with NGOs playing a leadership role.

While the initial report regrettably had no formal input from NGOs or NGO representatives, the decision of the General Assembly in late 1998 to seek the views of NGOs, governments and intergovernmental bodies is welcome. This set of comments is one response to that decision.

Institutional arrangements

While noting in paragraph 7 the facilities the Secretariat is to provide to NGOs in consultative status, this chapter fails to describe fully the best practices which have evolved over the years between NGOs and many parts of the UN system years with specific regard to access. One example is the access which NGOs have had within the UN facility in New York. In the past, a limited number of bearer passes for access to the floor of the General Assembly Hall were issued to NGOs as well as a number of passes for access to the second floor. In the past two years no passes for the General Assembly Hall were issued and, according to the latest security regulations, access to the second floor is to remain restricted throughout the year. Current

arrangements for seating in the General Assembly Plenary are inadequate, particularly as they do not provide for timely access to documentation or texts of speeches. Regrettably, the report addresses the matter of seating arrangements in the General Assembly Hall only from a rather limited financial and legal point of view (section VI, paragraph 77). In practice, while it has not been mandated, NGOs in consultative status have been given access, for the most part, to the meeting places of the Main Committees of the General Assembly by chairpersons of these bodies.

In the past NGOs have also had access to the second floor hallways outside the Security

Council, the Trusteeship Council, the ECOSOC chambers, and the Delegates' Lounge. New restrictions have been imposed on some of these areas. In some instances access to the meeting places stipulated in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 should not require further consultation with governments (see also paragraph

In sum, these increased restrictions severely curtail the activities of NGO representatives.

In a related vein, the report does not address issues relating to security which have, in practice, been the rationale for progressive curbs on the access which NGOs have had to particular places in UN headquarters in New York. It is our observation that security procedures should be instituted on a universal, non-discriminatory basis for all persons entering UN facilities, whether they are diplomats, secretariat staff, the media, NGO representatives or visitors. Such procedures exist in other places — most notably at the United Nations Office at Geneva — and are understood by all as necessary. NGOs reject the implication — made manifest by special security procedures for their representatives — that they constitute a greater security threat than any other person entering UN premises. Some NGOs are concerned that security pretenses by the Secretariat are used to please some member states which wish to insulate themselves as much as possible from interaction with NGOs despite public statements otherwise.

Bearing these trends in mind, many NGOs have commented about the contrast between statements by high-level UN officials as to how indispensable NGOs are in fostering the work of the United Nations, while NGOs face significant set-backs in their ability to fully participate in the consultative process. An unrecognized contradiction is the effort to increase NGO participation while simultaneously other steps are taken to restrict it.

The report does not include an evaluation of whether and how the Secretariat has taken concrete steps to ensure that these facilities are indeed provided. It should systematically review, in particular, whether documentation is distributed efficiently and whether seating arrangements and other facilities during public

meetings of the General Assembly that deal with economic, social and related subjects are adequate. For example, some NGOs find the new practice of making documents available at locations other than the respective windows in the conference room cumbersome and often disorganized. Instead, they could be made available at the conference room windows, eliminating a second distribution point. An evaluation of all of these facilities should be conducted in consultation with NGOs.

Perhaps not surprisingly the report does not raise questions concerning the way in which the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs has granted consultative status to some organizations in recent years, particularly since the adoption of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. For example, the Committee has granted status to organizations which would not appear to fit the definition of a non-governmental organization. Some of these entities are perceived to be "government-organized NGOs", which has the effect of undermining the essential character of legitimate NGOs.

The report does not evaluate in a critical way the Secretariat's methods in dealing with NGOs which do not respect the decorum of the United Nations. Given the fact that some member states, through the Committee on NGOs, have shown interest in developing a "code of conduct" for NGOs, the report does not evaluate what has or has not been done to instill an climate of proper conduct among NGOs or how the relevant units in the Secretariat have handled breaches of appropriate behavior with administrative measures. The result has been member state pressure to propose more onerous rules for the entire class of NGOs, rather than the Secretariat exercising its prerogative to take disciplinary action against those very few NGOs which do not conduct themselves properly. If the Secretariat was more pro-active in this area, member states would be less inclined to take matters into their own hands as some have suggested they may do via the Committee on NGOs.

The report does not lift up another issue of increasing concern to NGOs, namely the politicization of NGO accreditation due to challenges

which NGOs present with respect to the policies of member states in ECOSOC fora such as the Commission on Human Rights. The Secretariat could do more to appeal to member states not to seek retribution (such as efforts to demote, suspend or revoke consultative status) against NGOs for statements with which the member states do not agree. NGOs consider their prerogative to comment on human rights matters to be consistent with the purposes and principles in the UN Charter.

After the reference to the Conference of NGOs in the penultimate sentence of paragraph 11, it would be important to add that the Conference is "an independent organization that facilitates participation by NGOs in United Nations discussions, inter alia through substantive NGO committees".

Paragraph 14 prompts the question of whether it is the work of the Secretariat to orchestrate or to facilitate the work of NGOs. It is the view of many NGOs that the Inter-Departmental Working Group on NGOs has not yet yielded concrete, visible benefits for NGOs and that the basic responsibility for dealing with NGOs needs to be given higher profile within the UN system.

Paragraphs 15-30 are valuable contributions to an understanding of the kinds of relationships which UN specialized agencies, subsidiary bodies and related organizations have with NGOs.

Given the degree to which NGO access is now being restricted — ostensibly for security reasons — the final sentence in paragraph 31 needs strengthening regarding NGOs being the source of very few disruptive incidents.

The report fails to draw a distinction between NGOs in the non-profit sector and those in the for-profit sector. In an effort to promote transparency, the report should make explicit what has only recently been brought to our attention, i.e. that responsibility for UN relations with the business sector lies with the Deputy Secretary-General, while those with non-profit NGOs are handled by the Assistant-Secretary-General for External Relations.

The report sometimes treats NGOs in consultative status in the same way as NGOs without

such status and the business community. Consultative NGOs consider themselves "with-in the family" since the beginning of the UN in 1945, as stated in Article 71 of the Charter.

In addition, the access needs of NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information should be acknowledged in view of their important function to disseminate UN information among their constituencies.

The report offers no guidance to member states with regard to the possibility of establishing a set of "rules" on a par with ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 for businesses and business-related groups. Since there is increased cooperation by the Secretariat with the "for-profit" sector at a variety of levels — procurement and the annual Davos Summit being two of the more obvious examples — member states should, in the interest of greater transparency, give consideration to codifying, with an ECOSOC resolution, appropriate arrangements for the "for-profit" sector.

Bearing in mind the diverse arrangements with various parts of the UN system outlined in paragraphs 12-30, consideration should be given to the development of uniform, flexible, but clear, guidelines for accreditation throughout the system and include streamlined procedures for NGOs already in consultative status with ECOSOC.

At the same time, some NGOs have found the practice of making joint oral or written statements, when possible, by recognized consultative NGOs, both efficient and sometimes more effective than individual statements. Even so, NGOs should not be pressured to do so.

In the context of both global conferences and annual Commission meetings, note should be taken of the role of NGOs in holding daily briefings which many find beneficial to both monitoring the proceedings and influencing the development of policy.

A growing operational partnership

The report does not acknowledge adequately the degree to which UN cooperation with NGOs at the operational level has been critical

— even essential — to the delivery of services to populations in need.

In addition to those cited in paragraph 33, among other frequently cited comparative advantages which NGOs bring to operational matters are: 1) the greater institutional flexibility of NGOs compared to both government and UN agencies; 2) the cost effectiveness of NGOs; and 3) the additional financial and voluntary resources NGOs frequently are able to bring to any given task.

The overview of operational practices by agency in paragraphs 34-45 is informative and helpful.

Capacity-building for NGOs in developing nations may be as important as the capacity-building UN and bilateral donors may undertake for government agencies. The collaboration with NGOs to deliver services will have much greater impact if it includes provision for local capacity-building, as recognized later with FAO in paragraph 65 and NGLS in paragraph 75.

Initiatives of UNDP (paragraph 42) and the World Bank (paragraph 43) to engage NGOs in policy dialogue are important. The significance of the relationships outlined in paragraphs 41-46 could be strengthened with specific mention, for example, of the World Bank NGO dialogue on the impact of Structural Adjustment Programs.

The report also omits mention of NGO cooperation with the human rights treaty bodies which has now become routine.

Building bridges between civil society and the United Nations

In keeping with the need to critically evaluate the work of various UN units relating to NGOs, the Secretariat should examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities conducted by the Department of Public Information as described in paragraph 51. NGOs based outside the major UN centers need to be better informed about up-coming UN meetings and events. This task is one in which the UN Information Centers could intensify their efforts.

NGOs can help the United Nations consider new approaches and new conceptual language to reflect both global and local needs. It will be cru-

cial for the UN Secretariat and the various agencies and subsidiary bodies to take more readily into the account work being undertaken at the grassroots by NGOs.

The role of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBL), as outlined in paragraph 56, may be misleading. The ICBL has done more than "lend tremendous weight to International and United Nations-led campaigns." In this instance NGOs eventually found the existing UN mechanism — the Convention on Conventional Weapons — inadequate to achieve the objective of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. The ICBL searched for governments to support their cause and jointly developed a more comprehensive treaty for which the United Nations became the depository. The collective victory for citizens of the world represented in this achievement shows the synergy that can exist when NGOs take the lead and governments, the United Nations and NGOs work as equals.

While UN officials and member states may feel that there was a breakthrough in perceptions of the role of NGOs with the United Nations conferences as asserted in paragraph 57, such a perception ignores the fact that NGOs were having an impact on the deliberations of the United Nations from the day of its founding, in such areas as human rights, conditions of work, arms control and economic and social development. The statement perpetuates a myth that suggests NGO participation is all new. While NGOs did not organize the global conferences of the 1990s, they did organize — often involving CONGO — the large NGO forums that had a crucial impact on government positions at the Earth Summit, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Many NGOs have stressed the importance of these meetings to the outcome of the conferences themselves and expressed appreciation to the Conference of NGOs and its committees which have often organized or helped organize them.

The report does not give adequate attention to an important portion of ECOSOC resolution

1996/31 — Part VII relating to participation of non-governmental organizations in international conferences convened by the United Nations. While this is mentioned in paragraph 58, it would be particularly important to make this information more visible to member states and all other interested parties because it presents a possible model also for NGO accreditation and access to special sessions of the General Assembly and perhaps even to the General Assembly itself and its Main Committees. If the General Assembly could consider this model, it might: 1) avoid an otherwise lengthy process of creating new and different arrangements specifically for the General Assembly and its Main Committees and 2) raise up the possibility of one Secretariat unit handling NGO accreditation with both the ECOSOC and the General Assembly, thereby contributing to efficient use of the United Nations' resources.

In a fashion similar to that described in paragraph 58 with regard to global conferences, the report could have made a similar point that the growing number of NGOs usually has not led to increased logistical or political difficulties for the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. This would be relevant also to some of the contentions about numbers presented, with a rationale related to security concerns, with which most NGOs disagree, based on statistical data.

The assertion in paragraph 59 that NGO involvement in the world conferences demonstrates a worldwide constituency for United Nations activities is indeed true, but too one-sided. The accomplishments demonstrated what can be achieved when the United Nations and NGOs are engaged - when awareness is raised in a way neither could effectively do alone and when focused debate forms a consensus. A new benchmark is established for performance by the United Nations, by individual governments and this affects the entire world.

Participation of NGOs from all regions

The report unfortunately does not link its discussion of the lack of access to information for southern NGOs in paragraph 66 to paragraph

78 in section VI, where access to the Optical Disk System (ODS) is mentioned. Despite the latter's reference to the need to review funding for the ODS, the relationship between these two concerns could be more closely drawn. On the other hand, it should be noted that some NGOs consider the ODS cumbersome, sometimes of limited utility (such as lacking a printer) and, in fact, inferior to alternative information technology that may be available. For example, through e-mail lists it should be possible to integrate the UN mailing list with a document base. NGOs themselves have managed lists and make documents available for the Committee on Sustainable Development.

Many NGOs believe there needs to be increased NGO participation from the South. The report does not describe adequately the ways in which the UN system has facilitated the presence of NGOs at UN meetings and the importance of additional resources being made available for such participation to enhance the presence of NGO representatives from all regions. It could, for example, be more direct in suggesting a stronger role for the regional Economic and Social Commissions in relating to NGOs — especially from developing countries — and enhancing their participation in UN activities at the regional and national levels. This role would be important with respect to assistance to national NGOs (paragraph 67) where regional offices should have a role along with UN field offices since the regional bodies might be less susceptible to local political pressures.

In this section the report could have acknowledged that, to an increasing degree, international NGOs are taking steps to have representatives of their national affiliates present at UN meetings in an effort to achieve greater balance from all regions among NGO representatives. Regional and national affiliates of international NGOs have been informed about UN activities and been asked for their feedback, even though for practical and financial reasons it has not been possible for these affiliates to attend UN meetings and events. While much remains to be done (and funding is one of the greatest impediments), highlighting this fact would help dispel the misconception among some member states

that because some international NGOs are based in the North, they are "Northern NGOs", when indeed most of their members are from the South.

Efforts by NGLS (paragraph 68) in identifying and financing participation for NGO representatives from developing nations need to be transparent and utilize widely-understood criteria.

As mentioned in paragraph 69, bringing together NGOs from different regions and from north and south in such large numbers has been one of the greatest contributions to the success of the global conferences. Their presence has had a major impact on the discussions and recommendations. The next version of the report should consider how the links and networks that consequently have been generated should be strengthened.

Paragraph 70 might have given greater emphasis on the possibilities of using the Internet for networking and communication.

Enhancing the participation of NGOs in all areas of the UN system

Within the context of paragraph 71, a survey of all NGO databases would be an important contribution and should be made accessible to NGOs. For example, we have also become aware of databases which profile most international NGOs and their relationship with intergovernmental bodies and could be accessed by the Secretariat as well as the general public via the Internet.

Concerning paragraph 74, NGOs are interested in the review of the policies and procedures outlined in the Secretary-General's Bulletin of 1984 which remains in effect. They should be consulted in the process of this review.

Discussion about relations with NGOs cannot be done authentically in the absence of NGOs. Therefore, it is questionable whether the Inter-Departmental Working Group on NGOs, mentioned again in paragraph 75, is a valid vehicle for such discussions given the absence of NGO representatives. In a related way, a system-wide survey of experiences and best practices in NGO capacity-building would be welcome and the results should be useful to all NGOs, as it would

respond to some of the questions about capacity-building mentioned in section III. Participation by NGOs at some stage prior to publication would be beneficial. Dissemination of results could be extremely valuable, and something in which NGOs might participate.

In paragraph 75 the report helpfully suggests that best practices in the area of relations with NGOs by organizations in the UN system might be catalogued utilizing the Interdepartmental Working Group as a tool for this endeavor. NGOs would also find such a sharing of experiences useful and would be interested in knowing whether there has been any progress in this effort.

In paragraph 76, the report does not fully explore the growing possibilities for the utilization of existing or rapidly evolving technologies which may enhance the participation of NGOs in distant locations. Interactive, as compared with one-way, communication is becoming increasingly feasible. In many instances these

methods may be used to partly bridge the physical limits to NGO access for those away from the main UN offices. Furthermore, greater attention needs to be given to sharing information with NGOs at the regional, sub-regional and national levels (This is also relevant to our comments on section V. above).

With respect to paragraph 78, please see our comments on the ODS and the use of the Internet (paragraph 66) in section V. above.

The proposal in paragraph 79 of the establishment of a trust fund to facilitate NGO participation from developing, least developed and transitional countries is an important element of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, which should be pursued, based on clear and transparent criteria. Such a fund might also be utilized to familiarize those NGOs with UN procedures and practices in advance of their participation in meetings and events and provide training opportunities as well.

Statement by the Council of the Union of International Associations on relations between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations

In preparation for the United Nations 50th anniversary, the Union of International Associations undertook a study, and in 1995 submitted to the UN Secretary-General a report, on "Relationships between international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations". That report, which presented an overview of these relationships as they had developed over the years and made recommendations for their strengthening, has proven useful in the on-going re-examination, by both the UN and the NGO community, of the interaction between them.

As part of that re-examination, the UN Secretary-General has now requested NGOs to submit by 7 June 1999 a statement of their current views on UN/NGO relationships. Since, given the standard of brevity which has been established for these statements, it would be impossible to cover all elements of UN/NGO relationships, the Union of International Associations herewith submits comments on topics which it believes should have priority attention. As requested, these comments have been organized under the headings set out in the Secretary-General's report on "Arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations system" (Document A/53/170).

Institutional arrangements and building bridges between civil society and the United Nations

1. While the Secretary-Generals report mentioned above provides an unprecedented amount of data on UN/NGO institutional arrangements throughout the system, only muted attention is given to the representational and policy influencing role of NGOs, and then largely in the context of the global conferences of the 1990s. In fact, NGOs have been contributing significantly to the policymaking process over many decades, reflecting the views of important constituencies and furnishing expert advice in many fields, both broad and technical. They have made important input into the formulation of numerous international instruments and they provide close monitoring of the implementation of these instruments.

2. The next major step in taking advantage of the mutually beneficial values of UN/NGO cooperation should be to expand NGO participation in the work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. Building on the long experience noted above, as well as on the extensive involvement of NGOs in the UN global conferences of the 1990s, mechanisms should be established for regular exchanges of views on issues before the GA and its subsidiaries.

3. Relationships between the UN and the NGO community are complicated by the absence of a single office in the UN Secretariat which bears overall responsibility for developing these relationships. Such an office, while not inhibiting direct interaction between NGOs and the various policy or operational units of the Secretariat, would give appropriate recognition to the major partnership role which NGOs now play in the UN system and would reduce overlapping and duplicative activities. The increasing recognition of the positive force of responsible civil society organizations requires that this office be headed at the Under Secretary-General level.

4. As widely reported in the media, many organizations operating internationally are now engaged in examining their structures and mode of operations in the light of Internet and Web communications. The Secretary-General's report limits its discussion of this to the use of the UN's own websites as a means of disseminating UN information to NGOs, although reference is also made to the long-standing problem of duplication of UN databases on NGOs.

5. An important role that a single high-level NGO office at the United Nations could play would be to consolidate the numerous NGO databases which exist within the Secretariat. In this connection, the UN should develop a closer

working connection with the extensive databases maintained by the Union of International Associations (as specifically provided by ECOSOC Resolution 334 B (XI) of 20 July 1950), which now contain not only organizational information on many thousands of NGOs but also profile some 10,000 issues identified by these groups, the strategies advocated for dealing with them, and the enormous range of links among them. The information is updated annually in book form and on CD, and has been available on the Web since 1998. An interactive version is currently being tested to facilitate participation of NGOs in distant locations.

Participation of non-governmental organizations from all Regions

6. Affirmative action needs to be taken to enhance access to the United Nations by NGOs based in the developing world. Desirable steps to this end would include:
 - a. The Regional Economic and Social Commissions should become more energetic in developing NGO relationships at the regional and national levels, and construct policy and operational partnerships with regional and national NGOs in implementing the decisions and programmes of the various UN Summits.
 - b. A Trust Fund, as suggested in the Secretary-General's report, should be established within the UN budget to provide support for participation by southern NGOs in UN meetings and conferences on a regular basis.
 - c. The use of the Internet, not merely to disseminate information but as a means for input by NGOs and for interactive exchange of views between NGOs and the UN Secretariat, should be expanded and systematized. (See Appendix for further discussion of this item.)

Enhancing the participation of NGOs in all areas of the United Nations System

7. Over the long run, greater awareness of the wide variety of institutional arrangements among the many agencies of the United Nations

system, fully compiled for the first time in the Secretary-Generals report, presents an opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness, determine "best practices" among them, develop recommended common standards for institutional arrangements throughout the UN system, and ultimately enhance the policy participation of competent and relevant NGOs at all appropriate levels. To accomplish this, it would be desirable to create a working group, composed of representatives of Member States, the secretariats of UN agencies, and the NGO community.

8. To ensure the effectiveness and durability of these ever-closer UN-NGO partnerships, NGOs will themselves need to devise and enforce mechanisms (e.g., codes of conduct) guaranteeing their adherence to universal ethical standards. NGOs would be right to expect that other parties within such partnerships — governments, private business, institutions — would equally commit themselves to such universal standards.

Appendix

- i. Given the financial constraints on ensuring the presence of Southern (or smaller) NGOs in New York, Geneva, and Vienna, and the severely limited possibility for effective and meaningful interaction of any such representative with UN officials there (who are already dealing with hundreds of NGOs), there is a strong case for exploring how specific concerns and exchanges of information could be managed through the Internet. The UN should play an active role in scoping out such possibilities in the light of current best practice and appropriate alliances, rather than awaiting the pressures that will render such a switch in procedure essential. Specifically there is a need to shift the focus from dissemination techniques to interactive techniques, bearing in mind the number of bodies involved and the challenges of information overload.
- ii. It is important to recognize that the nature of NGOs in civil society is in a process of rapid transformation. Increasingly non-governmental action will be enabled electronically, notably in order to involved

geographically distant partners at reasonable cost. An increasing number of "organizations" acting electronically will cease to conform to traditional patterns of legal entity. Coalitions will emerge and be dissolved in rapid response to the urgency of issues.

iii. The Secretary-General's report fails to fully address the implications of such changes for future NGO-UN relationships. This is in contrast to studies at the national and regional levels (notably in the European Union). For democratic and consultative

processes to be more than tokenistic, new approaches are required that can benefit from communication technology now widely available. These will also be essential in order to move beyond the conceptual tunnel vision through which issues tend to be managed in isolation - if the international community is to deal with the complexes of issues now characteristic of a complex society and the challenges of cross-sectoral strategic demands.

7 June 1999

Ilo's new chief, Juan Somavia, spells out key objectives

(ILO should provide "social pillar" in global economy) (650)

By Wendy Lubetkin

USIA European Correspondent
Geneva - Juan Somavia, the new Director-General of the International Labor Organization (ILO), says he wants the man in the street to know about the ILO, and plans to sharpen the focus on the labor body's key activities by setting out four strategic objectives for the ILO as it enters the next century.

Speaking at his first press conference since assuming office earlier

this month, Somavia said it is essential that the general public understand the nature of the ILO's work.

The International Labor Organization is the UN specialized agency which promotes social justice, human and labor rights.

"I think that the issues which ILO stands for are issues which people care about, and I want an ILO that is linked to people, and one where people can understand what it is that we are doing," Somavia said.

"The world economy needs a social pillar, and I believe that it is the basic responsibility of the ILO to provide that pillar."

Looking to the near future, Somavia said negotiations on a Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - due to be finalized at the International Labor Conference next June - are "absolutely top priority" in his agenda.

"I believe that this is a key next step of ILO in the fight against Child Labor," he said.

CONGO Board Resolution on relations with ECOSOC

The Board of the Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) met for its first 1999 meeting on 25-26 February in New York.

For some time a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been concerned about recent developments with regard to the UN Secretariat's understanding of a distinction between the relationship it has with NGOs in consultative status (in accordance with Article 71 of the Charter and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31) and with other non-state actors and groups in society. This was evidenced by the administrative decision to relate, at the level of the Secretary-General's Executive Office, to NGOs on an apparent par with the for-profit sector, despite the latter's lack of any formal ties to the United Nations. This arrangement was given additional credence by the establishment in 1998 of web pages on Business and Civil Society.

In addition, despite assurances that the previously moribund Interdepartmental Working Group on UNINGO Relations would meet more frequently and with clearer objectives, a number of NGO representatives have been disappointed that the foreseen reinvigoration of this group has not occurred.

As a consequence, the Board considered and adopted the following resolution:

Relations with the Secretariat
The Board of the Conference of NGOs:

1. Calls for a clear institutional separation within the United Nations Secretariat between responsibility for relations with not-for-profit Non-governmental Organizations and responsibility for relations with the for-profit private sector;
2. Requests the Secretary-General to establish a focal point within his Executive Office with the specific task of advising him on UN-wide relations with NGOs, as distinct from external

relations with other non-state actors and groups in society;

3. Urges that an appropriate reallocation of responsibilities and/or appointment be made urgently, in view of

a. the urgent need to address both conceptual and practical questions that are currently impacting negatively on UNINGO relations

b. the rapidly growing number of NGOs willing to establish relations with the UN

c. the contribution of NCOS and the strong support which they are able to mobilize through their constituencies in communities around the world for the ideals and the work of the UN

d. the need as acknowledged by the Secretariat and Member States, as well as NGOs themselves, to build these relations constructively;

4. Requests further that the Secretary-General take steps to reinvigorate the Interdepartmental Working Group on UNINGO specifying the outcomes expected

of this group, requiring that it establish a schedule of activities in New York, Geneva and Vienna designed to produce these outcomes, and requiring further that the Conference of NGOs be included systematically in these activities;

5. Insists on respect in both actions and the use of terms by all members of the Secretariat for the letter and the spirit of Article 71 of the UN Charter as well as resolu-

tions of UN organs regarding relations with NGOs;

6. Suggests that the Secretariat draw the attention of representatives of Member States to the precise requirements and language of Article 71 of the UN Charter and of Resolution 1996/31 in the course of any deliberations regarding UNINGO relations;

7. Proposes that the development of relations with other non-state actors, including the

for-profit, private sector, be conducted transparently on the basis of clearly defined and publicly-known criteria;

8. Invites the Officers of the Conference to seek an appointment with the Secretary-General as soon as possible in order to raise these matters.

eGroup home:
<http://www.eGroups.com/list/ngo-access>
Free Web-based e-mail groups by eGroups.com

Appeal of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to all NGOs

For the Representative to the UN In 1997 — for the first time in history — all the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates have signed an appeal to the World's Heads of State.

In 1998, the General Assembly replied positively to their Appeal by proclaiming the first Decade of the next millennium:

"International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non Violence (2001-2010)". Please find enclosed an invitations letter from Mrs. Mairead Corrigan-Maguire and Mr. Adolfo Perez Esquivel (Nobel Peace Prize Laureates), to join our International NGO Network to prepare this Decade together. We do need your help and contribution.

The Year 2000 has been proclaimed "Year of Thanks Giving" and "Year for a Culture of Peace" (coordinated by UNESCO). A first meeting was convened by UNESCO, on April 6, Room 7 at the UN Building in New York, from 1:15 to 2:45 (for any information contact Mr. Andy Rudolf at the UNESCO's Office in NY: phone (1/212) 963.59.74 Fax: (1/212) 963.80.14 or (1/212) 980.26.39). UNESCO intro-

duced their Action Plan for the Year 2000. His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh presented the work done at the UN for a Culture of Peace, and I introduced the work done with the Nobel Peace prize laureates for the Decade. This meeting was a preparation for the Hague Appeal in May.

Mrs. Monica Hoyt, Representative in New York, Phone/fax: (212) 757-8902. E-mail: Appeal2000@aol.com

For documents from the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates see: <http://www.nobelweb.org>

Annex

Letter from Mrs. Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Mr. Adolfo Perez Esquivel.

An invitation for the promotion of a culture of non violence and peace for the children of the world.

Dear Friends,

For the first time in the history of humanity, all the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates - without exception - have signed an appeal to the Heads of all the member states of the United Nations. Their appeal:

has been heard. The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century (from 2001 to 2010)

"The International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Non-violence and Peace for the Children of the World. This historic decision was unanimously passed.

You may find the official texts at our Internet site : <http://www.nobelweb.org>

This cultural evolution is not just a matter for political: leaders and the international: institutions at the United Nations. Each one of us has a role to play for we are all: members of the human community. We are therefore addressing an appeal to all: men and women in the civil society so that we may organize ourselves in an International Co-ordination for NGOs working together to achieve the success of the Decade.

The work of all those who are involved in the associative sector is vital: and we are deeply grateful to them. This appeal particularly concerns:

Movements and research institutes for Peace and the non-violent resolution of conflicts;

. Movements for the respect and defense of human rights;
 . Humanitarian organizations for solidarity and sustainable development;
 . Organizations for the protection of the environment;
 . Organizations working in favor of social justice;
 . Associations representing families, teachers, parents, children, young People and students;
 . Public figures in the performing arts and culture: artists, intellectuals, writers, the media;
 . Representative of spiritual traditions;
 . and all persons of goodwill, whatever their age or position, who, by their way of life, the way in which they produce and consume, contribute to the "culture" of the human family. Without the practice of non-violence in our everyday life, it would probably be impossible to build Peace, ensure the respect for human rights, especially the rights of children, promote economic and social justice and the respect for our environment. If we want to be consistent with ourselves and with our awareness of reality, we must ensure that this awareness be passed on to the minds

and hearts of our children. Today, we invite you all to come together so as to build together a culture of non-violence and to place at the center of all our activities our absolute respect for each individual.

As of now, as a first step, a world-wide awareness building campaign is being launched with UNESCO and all the organizations of the International Co-ordination of the Decade. The objective is to publicize the Commitment 2000(1). This document was drawn up to bring attention to the plight of suffering children and also as an invitation to each one to become aware of our personal responsibility.

We invite you to sign this manifesto and to publicize it as widely as possible (2). We invite you also to play an active role in the international co-ordination of the "Decade for the promotion of a Culture of Non-violence and Peace for the Children of the World," and we thank you in advance for your support (3).

As from now, even the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates cannot realize anything significant without your help. Too many children are suffering on this earth. They have suffered too long and snuffed to much.

We need you: Support the initiative of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates.

We wish you Peace, Courage and Joy,

Mairéad Maguire
 Nobel Peace Prize

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel
 Laureate Nobel Peace
 Prize Laureate

1. Already signed by many Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and personalities all over the world. We can send it by attach document to an e-mail or you can download it from our website.
2. Ask one person to sign the text. Then, when you have received his signed text, ask the person to obtain the signatures of at least five other persons. Then, send the same request to five new persons and so on each time you receive a new signed Commitment. Our objective is to obtain at least a hundred million signatures, all over the world, by September of the year 2000.
3. Contact Pierre Marchand or Stephan Galon.
4. You can contact us by e-mail at:
nobel.appeal2000@ivanadoo.fr

Tampere Convention

The Tampere Convention (1998) on telecommunications in international humanitarian assistance is a breakthrough in IGO-NGO cooperation in a specific area. A full page of the ITU NEWS last month, was devoted to publicity for the Convention.

It is said that the Tampere Convention provides the framework for the use of telecommunications in international

humanitarian assistance; removes regulatory barriers; protects providers of telecommunication assistance while safeguarding the interest of the host country.

The ITC 1998 Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference unanimously adopted Resolution COM5/3 on telecommunications in the service of humanitarian assistance which urges Member States:

- to work towards the earliest possible ratification, acceptance, approval or final signature of the Tampere Convention

- to take all practical steps for the application of the Tampere Convention.

The United Nations Secretary-General is the Depository of the Convention.

The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator is

the Operational Coordinator under the Convention, working closely with the International Telecommunication Union.

On Operational matters (application and implementation):

United Nations; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (OCHA); Disaster Response Branch; Geneva, Switzerland.

Tel.: +41 22 917 3516/1455;

Fax.: +41 22 917 0208/0023

E-mail:

hans.zimmermann@itu.int

For all matters related to ITU:

International Telecommunication Union

Mr. M. Harbi, Special adviser to the Secretary-General.

Tel.: +41 22 730 5571; Fax.:

+41 22 730 5137

E-mail:mohamed.harbi@itu.int

The cooperation of non-governmental organizations with the Council of Europe in the human rights area

The Institutional Frame - Development and Current Situation

During the first years of its existence, the Council of Europe took a slight position of defense towards non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is true that there had been sporadic informal cooperation since 1949 and that the temptation to use NGOs as mouthpiece and to profit from their knowledge had been existing, too, but the Committee of Ministers showed clear reserve in formalizing this relationship. It was anxious not to give any means of power into the hands of NGOs.

Despite the efforts of several NGOs to formalize their relationship with the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers therefore only responded to two major international federations of trade unions and created a special consultative status for them.

But with that, the ice was broken and it was nearly impossible to tell other important NGOs to stay outside. This was true all the more as the two main arguments against the participation of NGOs - the political nature of the Council of Europe and the occupation of the advisory function by the Parliamentary Assembly - had been invalidated by the Assembly itself.

Therefore, it was wise to open the Council of Europe to NGOs as promptly as possible and to find rules valid for all. This was made very thoroughly. The consultative status from 1954 regulated the relations almost down to the last detail. The already existing consultative systems of ECOSOQ, OEEC, and UNESCO served as examples. For instance, the Council of Europe took over the division in different categories with the intention of maintaining close contact to a few privileged NGOs and all the same including the big bulk into the system.

Yet, shortly after the introduction of the consultative status, it was obvious that a position of defense was not necessary. The NGOs turned out to be "peaceful" and cooperative and here and there, fruitful cooperation began to develop. The complex consultative status with its detailed provisions was rather an obstacle. The new regulations from 1960 led to a purified, more flexible status. The individual organs of the Council of Europe were allowed to profit from NGOs more than before.

But then, the fast growing number of NGOs with consultative status - from 38 in 1960 to

120 in the year 1972 - led to new objections. There was fear of an overstress of the consultative status and an overburdening of the bodies concerned. At the same time, it became obvious that some NGOs had aimed at consultative status only for prestige without any real commitment.

Those fears were taken into account with the new consultative status from 1972. Work-load was taken from the committees by the delegation of the admission procedure to the Secretary General. The introduction of an exclusion procedure established the possibility to exclude NGOs not complying with their obligations.

As a further simplification, the division in categories was abolished. Finally, it was stated that cooperation outside the consultative status was permitted.

1993, the first formal opening for regional and national NGOs took place, although they remain excluded from consultative status. Otherwise, the new regulations from 1993 are mainly an adaptation to the ongoing common practice. The new status attempts to assert a stricter check of NGOs to be able to profit more specifically from NGOs through better knowledge of their activities on the one hand, and to take stricter mea-

sures against NGOs not fulfilling the conditions on the other hand. These attempts may make sense, but they are threatened to fail because of the scarce capacities of the Secretariat General.

Altogether, one gets the impression that changes in the consultative status never came into being because of a future vision but as a make-up-for adaption to changed circumstances, as a "catch" of reality.

Relating to the European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organization one may be inclined to say: "All's well that ends well." But the Convention covers only a small part of the international legal protection and preference NGOs wish to reach.

Nevertheless, the Convention could be an important aid in facilitating the work of NGOs in the member states. But it can only prove its usefulness if many more states as to date ratify the Convention, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, NGOs should lobby in the interest of their own. Events like a NGO seminar on the implementation of the Convention held in

Strasbourg in February 1998, could give a fresh impetus.

An effective functioning of the NGOs' self-organization should be in their own interest, too. The slogan "Together, we are strong" is especially valuable in times when the number of NGOs is so large that the significance of individual NGOs, with the exception of a few, e.g. Amnesty International, has rather declined. In the world of NGOs, the future lies in the building of strong coalitions. Only a few NGOs have such a powerful position that sole action can be advantageous for them. The striving for prestige of the single NGOs must step in the background in favour of the common cause. Different opinions have to be bundled up and reduced to a common denominator.

At the Council of Europe, this seems to function rather badly, although indisputably there has been made big progress since 1975 with the creation of the Plenary Conference of NGOs, the NGO Liaison Committee, and the NGO Groupings by areas of interest.

The meetings of the Groupings by areas of interest, originally

thought to be meetings of experts, suffer in their quality because,

very often, not experts but voluntary representatives living in the area of Strasbourg and lacking of professional qualification are sent to the meetings. The reasons lay aside: They are mainly of financial and time-consuming nature, but they partly also show the poor interest in the Council of Europe in general and the Groupings by areas of interest particularly.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly possible to work out a common and sound position to a topic, and there is a danger that truly committed NGOs turn away disappointedly.

Altogether, one can state that the institutional frame, in the way it presents itself today, offers the Council of Europe and the NGOs quite good conditions for a fruitful cooperation, provided that financial means and time are available to make use of these possibilities. And not least, the realization is, time and again, dependent on committed personalities who take the initiative.

Netcolony, 14 Feb. 1999-06-21
Copyright © 1998 Nichle Roth

IHEAL

Interactive health ecology access links - Europe

Interactive Health Ecology Access Links - Europe (IHEAL-Europe) is a shared information service on the web with a focus on environment and health issues. It is being created by a network of non-governmental organizations. The information resource will be continually developed and maintained through interactive online public access.

The electronic platform of IHEAL enables people and communities to:

- Access information about environmental health concerns, risks and remediation strategies as articulated by different communities of concern;
- * Communicate local health knowledge and experience of their community environment;

- ' Register environment-related health information via inter-linked data bases;
- Map relationships and uncover patterns in community health and ecosystem health;
- Deploy geographic information systems (GIS) on the locational implications of environmental health;
- Understand relationships

between health and the world we live in - the ecology of health;

- Advance community monitoring of the dynamics of environmental health of Europe.

This self-sustaining project is an open process of collaboration among non-governmental organizations working within the context of the Aarhus Convention on public involvement in environmental affairs and community right-to-know about environmental health risks. The activity fits within the Environment for Europe process. IHEAL-Europe notably supports the Pollution Release and Transfer Registry (PRTR) and National Environment and Health Action Plan (NEHAP) pan-European initiatives.

IHEAL-Europe will be officially launched at 1:30 pm, Wednesday 16 June 1999 at the

WHO/UNED Healthy Planet Forum (London, 15-18 June 1999). The prototype information platform will be made available at this time. The Healthy Planet Forum is the parallel NGO event to the Third European Conference on Environment and Health: London '99, Healthy People Healthy Planet, convened by the World Health Organization (WHO/EURO).

Initial financial support for the prototype development of IHEAL-Europe has been provided by DGXI of the European Commission and the UK Department of Transport, Environment and Regions. Matching funds, expertise and resources are contributed by the IHEAL development partners.

The IHEAL website will provide an information framework

that can serve as a common depository for environmental health information. It will facilitate participative contribution to the information content through online comment and distance editing facilities. Through extensive hyperlinks, it will map the networks of interrelated health ecology issues and provide strong external linkage to other information resources on the web. It will provide a user-friendly, interactive interface that is easily accessible to the public, putting public health concerns back into the public domain and empowering individuals and local groups with the knowledge to act in their own interest. It will also serve as an electronic resource for policy researchers, media and the networks of community organizations working with environmental health matters.

The IHEAL Development Partners are:

UNED-UK

<http://www.oneworld.org/uned-uk>

Union of International Associations

(UIA) <http://www.uia.org/>

International Campaign for

Responsible Technology (I-CRT)

<http://www.svtc.org/global/>

Environmental Partnership of

Central and Eastern Europe

(EPCE) <http://www.ecn.cz/epce>

Right-to-Know Network

<http://www.rtk.net/>

What IHEAL means?

We live in a society dominated by information. There are conflicting views, often promoted by a variety of vested interests, on the problems, priorities and risks associated with environmental health. Individuals and communities have piecemeal access to such information and only limited ability to

register their particular concerns. IHEAL facilitates increased public awareness and knowledge as the foundation on which can be built public participation in the process of creating a healthy environment for all.

Who will use it and why?

IHEAL provides a one-stop information resource especially for non-governmental organizations, community groups and citizens on the complex issues of environmental health in Europe.

Development workers, journalists, planners and health officers in local authorities and others are already using IHEAL. Points of entry for an engaged public are self-medication, complementary medicines, daily health risks, children's health, hospice and familial caring, food and ageing.

What will be provided?

IHEAL is a participative knowledge base. The IHEAL datasets comprise both textual and GIS (mapped or geographic) information. Wherever possible, it incorporates consensual viewpoints articulated by concerned international constituencies. The extensive cross-referenced and hyperlinked nature of the text databases (over 350,000 links) between subject areas, strategic actions, problem definitions, organizations and bibliography create a unique cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary encyclopedia of global environmental health.

What IHEAL is not

IHEAL is not a statistical database on public health issues. It is not a comprehensive bibliographic reference tool. IHEAL is not a collection of authoritative documents. IHEAL is not 'officially authorized'. It does not necessarily contain 'expert' or scientifically

approved material. IHEAL is not limited to human health or a human-centred view of the environment- It is not limited to a focus on physical health or by the perspective of particular medical or cultural paradigms.

How will it be used?

IHEAL provides a common information platform for use by anyone with web access (including non English-language users). The primary function of IHEAL is to support community and NGO action at the national and local level. IHEAL supports international exchange of experiences and insights through its unique inter-

active features via the web, which will raise the exposure of a citizen agenda for environmental health and build environmental solidarity between isolated individuals and groups within society.

How will it be maintained and further developed?

The IHEAL databases will be continually developed by their users through unique interactive features. The custodians of the databases will seek additional funding and promote further project applications to support their maintenance, quality control and further improvement in association with various partners.

Linkages to other web initiatives

IHEAL makes very extensive linkages to other web resources.

Future cooperating partner organizations (with whom collaboration is expected) include:

Monitoring Network for Health and Environment, Netherlands
European Health
Communication Network

Contact: Nadia McLaren, UIA,
nadia@uia.be, tel +32 2 643
6197, fax +32 2 643 61 99

Preliminary web interface:
<http://www.uia.org/dataheal.htm>

24 pays pour « un espace européen d'enseignement supérieur »

Les ministres de l'éducation de vingt-quatre pays ont adopté, samedi 19 juin à Bologne (Italie), une déclaration en faveur de la création d'un « espace européen de l'enseignement supérieur ». Cette réunion était le prolongement de la rencontre organisée, le 25 mai 1998, à la Sorbonne avec les ministres allemand, britannique, italien et français.

Soucieux de respecter « l'indépendance et l'autonomie » de leurs universités, les ministres se sont engagés à « coordonner leurs politiques » en vue de promouvoir « un système de diplômes lisibles et comparable ». La déclaration, qui propose d'encourager toutes les formes de mobilité des étudiants et des enseignants, se prononce pour une harmonisation de la

durée des études en deux cycles: « undergraduate », au niveau de la licence (trois ans au moins), et « graduate » avec le « mastaire » ou le doctorat, dont la durée d'études n'a pas été fixée. En France, le conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (Cneser) devait examiner, lundi 21 juin, le projet de création d'un « mastaire » à bac + 5.

(Le Monde, 22.6.99)

Protecting Ngos against corruption and mismanagement

Amsterdam Monday 27 And
Tuesday 28 September 1999
RC Maagdenhuis Foundation,
Herengracht 220

Conference organised by The
Europhil Trust, in partnership
with Interlegal Moscow, the
International Bureau of Fiscal
Documentation, the Institute of
East European Law of Leiden

University and the Centre for non
profit Law, Free University of
Amsterdam

Project team:

DR Nina Belyaeva,
Robin Currie, Robin Guthrie,
Dr Frits Hondius

Rapporteurs:

Dr Ger van den Berg,
Professor Tymen van der Ploeg

Objective Charities and self-help groups are important actors in the civil society. However, no country is immune to problems of corruption and mismanagement which also threaten national and international voluntary organisations. The conference will examine countermeasures which have proved useful for maintaining public support of and confidence

in NGOs, such as transparency, codes of conduct and supervision. It will end with a presentation and discussion of a draft law on the subject now before the Russian Duma.

Participants

The Conference is open to NGO leaders, lawyers, accountants, fiscal experts, civil servants, members of police and judiciary, charity funders and academic experts especially those from or having experience in the new democracies of Central and Southeastern Europe.

Programme

Registration will start Sunday evening 26 September.

Presentations and discussions on the general theme, followed by a reception at Amsterdam townhall, will take place on Monday 27 September. On Tuesday 28 September, the Russian draft law will be examined in detail. The Conference will close at noon.

Registration and call for papers.

Registrations will be processed on a first come/first served basis, participation being limited to 50 persons. Registration fee : 70 Euros, or NLG 155, covers conference materials, a light buffet lunch on 27 September and refreshments. Registration deadline: 31 August 1999. Papers and

presentations by participants are invited.

Hotel

A limited number of rooms have been reserved at the Rembrandt Residence Hotel, a few steps from the conference house. Room and breakfast NLG 195 single and NLG 240 double per night. Booking through Europhil (one day to be prepaid)

Information and registration.

The Europhil Trust, P.O. Box J 00, 67069 Strasbourg, Cedex, France, phone 33388 561646, fax 33 388561210, e-mail: hondius@wanadoo.fr

Yearbook of International Organizations

Edited by the Union of International Associations
36th edition - 1999/2000 - ISBN 3-598-23332-9

o Vol. 1A and Vol. 1B

As of the 36th edition, Volume 1 is printed in 2 parts, thus enabling a significant increase in information.

Organization Descriptions and Cross-references
36th ed. 1999/2000. - ISBN 3-598-23333-7
Descriptions of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, covering every field of human activity. Listed in alphabetical order of title.

Contents of descriptions: The descriptions, varying in length from several lines to several pages and based almost entirely on data supplied by the organizations themselves, include: organization names in all relevant languages; principal and secondary addresses; main activities and programmes; personnel and finances; technical and regional commissions; history, goals, structure; inter-organizational links; languages used; membership by country. Cross-references: Integrated into the alphabetic sequence of descriptions are cross-references to related organizations. Access is possible via organization names in English, French, and other working languages, and via initials or abbreviations in various languages

o Vol. 2 International Organization Participation: Country Directory of Secretariats and Membership (Geographic Volume)

36th ed. 1999/2000. - ISBN 3-598-23334-5

Countries are listed giving:

- Secretariats: the international organizations which maintain headquarters or other offices in that country. Addresses are given in each case.
- Membership: the international organizations which have members in that country. For each organization listed, the international headquarters address is given, in whatever country that is located

o Vol. 3 Global Action Networks: Classified Directory by Subject and Region (Subject Volume)

36th ed. 1999/2000. - ISBN 3-598-23335-3

International organizations are listed by subject, with general and detailed categories, according to their principal pre-occupations. The classification scheme highlights functional

relationships between distinct preoccupations. The international organizations are also listed by subject according to the region with which they are particularly concerned.

The index includes: keywords from organization names; former names in various languages; alternative names/initials in various languages; organization subject categories in English, French German, Russian and Spanish; names of principal executive officers; names of founding personalities.

o Vol. 4 International Organization Bibliography and Resources

36th ed. 1999/2000. - ISBN 3-598-23336-1

Periodical and other major publications of international organizations are listed by title, with an indication of the organization publishing the item and of where the description of that organization may be found in Volume 1. This expanded version of the index, previously published as an Appendix to Volume 1, also contains bibliographic information on research on NGOs and information derived from the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential.

YEARBOOK / ANNUAIRE PLUS International Organizations and Biographies / organisations internationales et biographies
5th ed. 1999/2000. - ISBN 3-598-40419-0

Enriched multi-lingual CD-ROM version of all volumes of the Yearbook of International Organizations and Who's Who in International Organizations.

All 4 volumes of the Yearbook plus the complete CD-ROM are also available as one set.
36th ed. 1999/2000. - ISBN 3-598-40364-X

For more information contact:

Union of International Associations
Rue Washington 40, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium.
Tel. (32 2) 640 18 08
Fax (32 2) 643 61 99
Email: uia@uia.bc
Website: <http://www.uia.org/>

Transnational Associations
year
Associations transnationales

51st
51^e année

Some items in recent issues: Parmi les thèmes traités récemment :	Issue number: Numéros :
Transnational actors in the international system Les acteurs transnationaux dans le système international	6/1995, 3/1997, 2/1998, 2/1999.
The recognition of the legal personality of INGOs La reconnaissance de la personnalité juridique des OING	3/1986, 3/1990, 5/1990, 3/1995.
Cooperation between INGOs and IGOs La coopération entre les OING et les OIG	5/1996, 6/1996, 1/1997, 2/1999.
Social movements, trade unions and cooperatives Mouvements sociaux, syndicats et coopératives	1/1996, 5/1996, 6/1996, 3/1997.
Social and economic development Développement économique et social	4/1995, 1/1996, 4/1996, 4/1998.
Environmental problems Les problèmes écologiques	4/1989, 1/1990, 4/1995, 2/1996.
Humanitarian aid and humanitarian law L'aide et le droit humanitaires	4/1992, 2/1994, 2/1996, 2/1999.
Language, communication, education and gender Langage, communication, éducation et égalité des sexes	4/1996, 3/1997, 2/1998, 1/1999.
Civil Society and the State La société civile et l'Etat	6/1996, 3/1997, 4/1998, 1/1999.
Internationalism in Science Science et transnationalité	6/1997.
Latin American and North-American Associations Les associations latino-américaines et nord-américaines	6/1989, 3/1990, 1/1993, 4/1996.
African Associations Associations africaines	4/1995, 1/1996, 2/1996, 1/1999.
European Associations after Maastricht Les associations européennes après Maastricht	2/1997, 1/1998, 2/1998, 4/1998.
Arab Associations Associations arabes	1/1998.
Asian Associations Associations asiatiques	9/1997 2/1997.

Transnational Associations Associations transnationales

Editor
Rédacteur en chef
Paul GHILLS

Editorial Board
Comité de rédaction
Jacques RAEYMAECKERS
Geneviève DEVILLE
Anthony J.N.JUDGE
Ghislaine de CONINCK

Published by/Publié par
Union of International
Associations (UIA)
(founded 1910)
Issn-0020-6059

Administration
rue Washington 40,
1050 Bruxelles (Belgium)
Tél (02) 640 18 08 -
640 41 09
Fax (322) 646 05 25
E mail: uia@uia.be
<http://www.uia.org/uia-pub/pubtrans.htm>

Editeur responsable
Jacques Raeymaeckers
rue Washington 40
1050 Bruxelles (Belgique)
Tél. 02/640 18 08 -
640 41 09
Télécopie: (322) 646 05 25

Subscription rate
BF 1.780, or equivalent per
year (6 issues) + postage
BF 270.

Abonnement: FB 1.780 ou
équivalent, par an (6
numéros) + Frais de port
F8 270.

Method of payment
Mode de paiement à
utiliser

Bruxelles: Compte chèque
postal n° 000-0034699-70 ou
Compte n° 210-0508283-55
à la Générale de Banque, 253,
avenue Louise, 1050
Bruxelles.

London: Account n°
04552334, National
Westminster Bank Ltd,
21 Lombard Street.

Genève: Compte courant
n° 472.043.30 Q à l'Union
des Banques suisses.

Paris: par virement compte
n° 545150-04200 au Crédit
du Nord, 6-8 boulevard
Haussmann, Paris 75009.

Copyright © 1996 by

Associations. All rights
reserved. No part of this
work may be reproduced or
copied in any form or by
any means - graphic,
electronic, or mechanical,
including photocopying,
recording, taping or

permission of the Secretary
General, Union of
International Associations.

UNION DES ASSOCIATIONS INTERNATIONALES UNION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Président d'honneur:
August VANISTENDAEL
(Belgique)
Ministre d'Etat

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
CONSEIL

President:

Anne Marie BOUTIN (France)

à la Cour des Comptes

Vice-Présidents:
Raymonde MARTINEAU
(Canada)

Chargés des relations avec
les ONG, Office
des Nations Unies
Turkia OULD DADDAH
(Mauritanie)
Directeur général de l'Institut

Cyril RITCHIE (Ireland)
President, Federation of
Semi-Official and Private
International Institutions
Established in Geneva (FIGI)

Treasurer General
Trésorier général
Paul E. HIERNAUX
(Belgique)
Président honoraire de
l'Association des chambres

européennes
(EURO-CHAMBRES)

Secretary-General
Secrétaire général
Jacques
RAEYMAECKERS
(Belgique)
Ambassadeur honoraire.

Members/Membres
Mike BAKER
Former Executive Secretary,
International Council of
Scientific Unions
Yves BEIGBEDER
Senior Special Fellow.
UNITAR
Nina BELYAEVA (Russia)
President
Interlegal Research Center

Paul CARON (Suisse)
Expert financier
Christian DE LAET
(Canada)
President, Development,
Alternatives, Montréal.
André DE SCHUTTER
(Belgique)
Président de la Fédération des

établies en Belgique (FAIB)
Philip EVERTS
(Netherlands)
Professor, Instituut voor

Frits HONDIUS
(Netherlands)
Chief Trustee
Europol
George KIBEDI (Canada)
President, Educational
Society
Georges MALEMPRE
(Belgique)

Directeur du
Cabinet du directeur général
UNESCO
Marcel MERLE (France)
Professeur émérite
Université de Paris I
Andrew E. RICE (USA)
Consultant, Former Deputy,
Society for International
Development
Egon SLOPIANKA
(Allemagne)
Ancien secrétaire général de
l'Alliance européenne des
UCIG-YMCAS(EAY),
Gianni TIBALDI (Italie)
Professeur, Università di
Padova, SIOI-Palazzo Reale.

UIA
REPRESENTATIVES
REPRÉSENTATIONS
PERMANENTES DE
L'UIA
Organisation des Nations
Unies
New York: Andrew RICE
Genève: Cyril RITCHIE
Paris: Maryvonne
STEPHAN

172

