

**HIGH LEVEL CONSULTATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING MEETING  
TO LAUNCH THE UN-NGO INFORMAL REGIONAL NETWORK IN TURKEY  
FOLLOW-UP TO NOVEMBER 2004 AZERBAIJAN MEETING LAUNCH ES OF  
THE UN-NGO-IRENE IN THE CASPIAN/ CENTRAL ASIA REGION  
PROMOTE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BALKAN REGION**

**Bursa & Istanbul, Turkey, 28 -30 September 2005**

**Background**

To increase civil society's involvement in economic and social life and the number of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) being granted consultative status, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decided to promote inclusive relationships with a large number of NGOs from all regions of the world. This initiative also responds to the fact that **a great number of organizations face financial and logistical constraints that minimize considerably the effective use of their consultative status with ECOSOC and limit their participation in the international decision making process**, preventing them from taking advantage of the increasing role they might play in the new governance at all levels (global, regional, national and local).

In 1999, the General Assembly recommended that the United Nations Secretariat NGO Section/ECOSOC (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) "improve the exchange of information through informal networks of country or regionally-based NGOs in consultative status with the ECOSOC, which will serve as links between the NGO Section and NGOs in each region". This recommendation intends to promote regular contacts between this Section and NGOs, to improve the spread of information on the United Nations' activities regionally and internationally towards NGOs and to strengthen their capacities and their partnership with the United Nations.

In order to respond to these objectives, the NGO Section promoted the establishment of a United Nations informal regional network of NGOs (UN- NGO-IRENE) gathering organizations representing Northern Africa, Western Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Latin America. This initiative was launched in April 2001 during the meeting of Aracaju (Brazil) "Launch of the UN-NGO Informal Regional Network".

The Network, supported through the intermediary activities of designated regional, sub-regional, national and local coordinator NGOs, aims at creating a system that provides information and support to all organizations, even the smallest and the most isolated, and gives them the opportunity for sharing expertise and resources, so as to reinforce their capacity, role and impact. It thus contributes to harmonizing and unifying the actions launched by the United Nations System in favor of an increased cooperation and partnership with civil society to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and achieve the Millennium Declaration at all levels and for all.

In January 2002, the meeting on “Capacity Building for the UN-NGO-IRENE in Africa”, held in Hammamet (Tunisia), established the UN-NGO-IRENE/Africa. One of the most relevant outcomes of the meeting was the designation of five African NGOs to serve as sub-regional coordinators and of one of them as regional coordinator.

In May 2003, the UN-NGO-IRENE in Eastern Europe was also established with the support of UNDP/Romania and the Government of Romania during the Bucharest, Romania Meeting with two sub-regional coordinators and one regional coordinator.

In November 2004, The UN-NGO-IRENE in the Caspian (Caucasian/Central Asia) Region was established during the Baku, Azerbaijan Meeting with the support of the United Nations System in Azerbaijan and the Government of Azerbaijan. A regional Coordinator from Azerbaijan was elected.

In March 2005, the UN- NGO-IRENE in Asia and the Pacific was established in Islamabad, Pakistan and the UN-NGO-IRENE/China was elected to act as the first Regional Coordinator of the Network.

In September 2005, the UN-NGO-IRENE/Caribbean was established in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and one leading NGO from Haiti was elected to serve as first Regional Coordinator of the Network

The UN-NGO-IRENE was also established at national level in Azerbaijan, Canada, China, Haiti, India, Pakistan, Mauritania and Tunisia. For Mauritania, it was created with the strong support of UNDP/Mauritania and the Government.

In the framework of the worldwide development of the UN-NGO-IRENE and its implementation in the remaining regions and countries, the “Federation of Balkan Turks & Associations for Emigrees (BGF)” in cooperation with the Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity Association (IBS), two leading NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, hosted from 28 to 30 September 2005, in Bursa and Istanbul, Turkey, the High Level Consultation and Capacity Building Meeting to launch the UN-NGO-IRENE in Turkey, with the support of the UN-NGO-IRENE / NGO Section / ECOSOC of UN DESA, the Local authorities and the Chamber of Commerce of Bursa, and the Government of Turkey.

Additionally, the interest sparked by the concept of UN-NGO-IRENE itself has attracted a number of UN and other intergovernmental and large international bodies to seek synergy and mutually supportive action for the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section/DESA, as informal partners in its implementation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The High Level Consultation and Capacity Building Meeting to launch the UN-NGO Informal Regional Network in Turkey (UN-NGO-IRENE/Turkey) took place in Bursa and Istanbul, Turkey from 28 to 30 September 2005.

Hosted by the Federation of Balkan Turks & Associations for Emigrees (BGF) in cooperation with the Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity Association (IBS), two leading NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, the Meeting was organized in partnership with the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section, Office for Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Support and Coordination of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and the support of the Government of Turkey, the local authorities of Bursa and the Bursa Chamber of Commerce. In welcoming the participants on behalf of the two host NGOs, the President of BGF, Mr. Turhan Gencoglu highlighted the importance of the Capacity building Meeting to launch the UN-NGO Informal Regional Network in Turkey (UN-NGO-IRENE/ Turkey). In bringing together the Turkish, Balkan and Caspian civil society and NGOs, the Meeting purposes were also to follow-up to the Azerbaijan Meeting that established the UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian (Caucasian/Central Asia) and to promote partnerships with the Balkan NGOs. This will enhance the exchange of experiences among NGOs, promote partnership initiatives and projects, and strengthen the NGO role at all levels (local, national, subregional, regional and global) in a more and more globalized world.

On behalf of the United Nations and more specifically the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Ms Najet Karaborni, Senior Adviser/UNDESA and Project Director of the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section made an opening statement underlining the United Nations evolving relationship with NGOs from consultation to partnership. The UNDESA Representative reminded the background of the UN-NGO-IRENE focusing on the priority given by the NGO Section/ECOSOC of UNDESA to capacity building programmes for NGOs in consultative status of developing countries and countries with economies in transition as recommended by the ECOSOC Resolution of 1996 and the General Assembly of 1999, especially as these countries have a reduced number of NGOs in ECOSOC consultative status. She also emphasized the role played by BGF and IBS, the hosting NGOs in organizing such a Meeting so rapidly and efficiently. She thanked the Government of Turkey, the local authorities and Chamber of commerce of Bursa, the UN and Diplomatic agencies in Turkey for their full support to the Meeting and all the participants for their high commitment and good will to enhance their contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs and achieving the Millennium Declaration in the framework of a good participatory governance at all levels (local, national, regional and global).

After the hearty welcoming words of the Mayor and Governor of Bursa, the vice President of the Parliament, Mr. Faruk Celik expressed in his opening speech his appreciation and thanks for this important initiative and stressed the full support of the Government of Turkey to NGO sector development in Turkey in order to play a significant role. It is important to mention that the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister Deputy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, the Minister of Agriculture, the State Minister of Gender and the leader of Motherland Party sent letters of appreciation to the Meeting participants expressing their strong support to NGOs and wishing full success to the Meeting. The Adviser to the Prime Minister, Mr. Sayit Yusuf, and the Chief of the NGO Section of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Administration also participated in the Meeting.

Two presentations were made by Mr. Hikmet Sahin, Mayor of Bursa on “Healthy City of Bursa”, a joint project with WHO, and Mr. Aytac Durak, the Chairman of the Turkish Municipalities Union and Mayor of Adana on “Overgrazing goats’ impacts on severe erosion and poverty”.

The Plenary sessions were moderated by Mr. Serdar Yildirim, President of IBS and conducted by Ms Najet Karaborni who made the three following power point presentations:

- ◆ ECOSOC and its relationship with NGOs: NGO Consultative status with ECOSOC
- ◆ MDGs’ Implementation Progress in Turkey and the Balkan & Caspian/Central Asia Regions
- ◆ UN-NGO-IRENE Objectives and Role in Building NGO Capacity within Participatory Governance and enhancing NGO Networking and Action towards a Better World for All through an efficient and result –oriented Partnership for MDGs’ full implementation everywhere on the Earth.

Several leading NGOs made interesting presentations and documentary films on their outstanding activities in the field to share their innovative experiences, the lessons learned and success stories with other NGOs as follows:

- ◆ IBS success stories especially in Ache presented by Mr. Serdar Yildirim,
- ◆ BGF activities in the Balkan region presented by Mr. Emin Balkan
- ◆ TURCEP action for a coordinated environment and ecology policy and strategy in the region presented by Mr. Tanay S. Uyar
- ◆ Turkish Press Council activities presented by Gokalp Yazir
- ◆ A video presentation on Lighthouse Association poverty alleviation activities
- ◆ United Caucasian Council action for women empowerment presented by Hurriyet Ersoy

The closing session was chaired by Ms Karaborni who warmly thanked the participants for their very active and fruitful participation during the plenary sessions, and for their very intense brainstorming and concrete and useful proposals during the working group sessions. She expressed on behalf of the United Nations, the Chief of the NGO Section and the participants her gratitude to the Turkish Government for its important support to the civil society in Turkey and to the UN-NGO-IRENE General Voluntary Trust Fund. The Government of Turkey was the first NGO Committee Member to make a contribution to this Fund. She also thanked again the two leading NGOs: BGF and IBS for their initiative and efficient organization of the Meeting as well as the Bursa Chamber of Commerce and the Mayor and Governor of Bursa for hosting the Meeting. The great success of the Meeting was accomplished thanks to joint and generous efforts of all.

Mr. Turhan Gencoglu, President of BGF and Mr. Serdar Yildirim, President of IBS also warmly thanked all participants for their great contributions and expressed their deep appreciation for the tremendous and outstanding work performed by Ms Karaborni to have a successful and result-oriented Meeting and get more than expected outcomes.

It is important to mention that the President of the Feminist Club of Georgia, Ms Lia Nadaria proposed to host in Georgia and cosponsor with the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section/ECOSOC of UNDESA a High Level Consultation and Capacity Building Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in Georgia with the support of the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section. The Georgia proposal was welcomed and highly appreciated by all the participants who asked to be present in the Georgia Meeting as observers in order to also follow-up on the Turkey Meeting.

**240** Participants attended the Meeting representing the following:

- ◆ **115** participants representing **71 NGOs** from: **Turkey** (97 participants representing 55 NGOs), **the Caspian/Central Asia region** (12 participants representing 11 NGOs from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) and the **Balkan region** (6 participants representing 5 NGOs from Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia)
- ◆ **56 Sponsors and Partners** representing Civil Society Organizations (**32**) and the Chamber of Commerce (**24**)
- ◆ **27 Representatives** of the Business Community
- ◆ **3 Special guests:** Vice President of the Turkish Parliament Group of AKP, two (**2**) Consuls from the Consulate of Bulgaria
- ◆ **5 High-level Government representatives** representing the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the State Department on Gender
- ◆ **11 Representatives of local Authorities:** the Mayor of Bursa and the Mayor of Adana and their teams
- ◆ **21 Media Representatives:** from TV channels, news agencies, periodicals
- ◆ **2 Representatives of the United Nations (DESA and UNDP field office in Turkey)**

It is important to mention that **35 women** participated in the Meeting.

The meeting agreed on the relevance and the need for an Informal Regional Network of NGOs in Turkey. NGO representatives noticed that such an initiative was a timely one.

It was agreed that the primary focus for the Network should be on the NGOs in ECOSOC status in 2005, but that it needed to go beyond this to include all NGOs supporting the goals of the United Nations, notably as set out in the Millennium Declaration.

Building on the work of existing NGO coalitions, participants underlined the need for the Network to be quickly operational to facilitate an enhanced access of Turkish NGOs to the global scene. One of the important added values of this Network would also be its responsiveness to the diversity of Turkish NGOs and the priority given to engaging with NGOs at all levels (local, regional, national and global).

Consideration was given to the need for a database of Turkish NGOs to strengthen networking and exchange of information, innovative experiences and best practices among the NGO community. The scope of the Network and responsibilities of participating NGOs were discussed and agreed upon during the working groups' brainstorming sessions. As National Coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Turkey, BGF and IBS were asked to take responsibility for the Network in close cooperation with the seven elected thematic focal points and in collaboration with Ms. Karaborni, the Senior Adviser of DESA and the UN-NGO-IRENE Project Director.

Participating NGOs stressed the vital importance of mobilizing additional resources in order to realize the Network's potential. Information about sources of funding could be disseminated through the Network.

Following substantial and fruitful working groups brainstorming and discussions, the meeting agreed on the following major issues:

## ***I. OBJECTIVES***

The following objectives were agreed:

1. To strengthen and promote partnerships initiatives and projects among Turkish NGOs and between them and the United Nations, Government, Corporate Sector and Donor Community;
2. The network should serve as a focal point and clearing house in Turkey for ECOSOC accredited NGOs and should help other leading and committed NGOs to apply for consultative status with ECOSOC;
3. To establish permanent dialogue and direct contacts and promote partnership initiatives among Turkish NGOs and the Caspian/Central Asia and Balkan regions and between them and the NGO Section/DESA and the United Nations in general.

## **II. STRUCTURE**

It was agreed that the structure of the Network would be flexible and open, and optimize the use of Information and Communication technology (ICT). Much of the actual networking would be conducted through the Internet. It was considered necessary to set up a Web portal for the Network and facilitate information sharing activities.

To better serve the needs of the beneficiaries of the Network and contribute to an effective and concrete implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the outcomes of the major UN conferences, 7 thematic working groups were formed to come up with 7 NGO thematic focal points and a comprehensive strategic action plan based on the specific needs of each sector/theme. Following the working groups presentations it was agreed to establish the 7 following NGO thematic focal points to help the Network National Coordinator (BGF and IBS) to fulfill its important task:

### **Thematic Focal Points**

1. **Poverty Reduction (MDG 1):** The Lighthouse Association (Deniz Feneri Aid and Solidarity Association) in collaboration with the Turkish Press Council
2. **Education and Women Empowerment (MDG 2 & 3):** Human Resource Development Association
3. **Health (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) :** Association for Solidarity with Freedom-deprived Juveniles
4. **Environment (MDG 7) :** Ecology Platform of Turkey in collaboration with Turkish Foundation for Combating soil Erosion for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA)
5. **Partnership, Governance and peace (MDG 8 & Millennium Declaration) :** Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity Association (IBS)
6. **Disaster and Risks Management (Millennium Declaration) :** Foundation for Human Rights and Humanitarian Relief
7. **Human Rights and Immigrants' Social Rights:** Federation of Balkan Turks and Associations of Emigrees (BGF)

## **III. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

The meeting concluded with a discussion and adoption of a Strategic Action Plan, which includes the preparatory work for the Annual Conference of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Turkey and other main networking activities as well as activities and projects related to each thematic focal point to cover all relevant Millennium Declaration and MDGs for Turkey and its region as well as the crucial issues for NGOs.

It also concluded with a draft of a strategic action plan for Turkey that will be finalized by the different thematic focal points designated during the Meeting in cooperation with the UN-NGO-IRENE/Turkey National Coordinator. Mr Serdar Yildirim, the President of IBS

Other important activities could be discussed and included with the coordination of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Turkey coordinator in the Network Strategic Action Plan during upcoming sessions of respective focal points with relevant NGOs and the UN-NGO-IRENE Annual Conference.

#### **IV. CONTRIBUTION OF THE PARTNERS AND OF THE UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO SECTION/ ECOSOC/UNDESA**

In addition to the proposals to be included in the Strategic Action Plan, partners of the Network would contribute to the flow of information.

The NGO Section of DESA would provide a range of services, including regular flows of information to assist NGOs in making full use of their consultative status with ECOSOC. It was proposed that a UN-NGO-IRENE/ Turkey newsletter be produced.

#### **V. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TURKISH AND BALKAN NGOS**

The first session of the day two of the Meeting focused on partnership between Turkish and Balkan NGOs. It was moderated by Mr. Turhan Gencoglu, President of BGF who underlined in his opening statement the importance of promoting partnerships between Turkish and Balkan NGOs. He also announced that the Executive Director of the Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) and UN-NGO-IRENE/Subregional Coordinator for the Balkan region, Mr. Albert Musliu had a car accident on his way to Bursa to attend our Meeting and he is in the hospital in Bulgaria. He expressed good wishes for Mr. Musliu on behalf of all participants and emphasized the hope of seeing him in good health as soon as possible.

Several NGOs took the floor to present their activities and highlight potential areas of cooperation and partnership between Turkish and Balkan NGOs. This includes the following:

- ◆ Mr. Aleksandar Krzalovski, Regional programmes Coordinator of **Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC)**, who made a brief presentation on MCIC activities and highlighted the importance of cooperation between Balkan NGOs. He also invited all the participants to attend the NGO Fair in Macedonia.

- ◆ Mr. Adnan Ismaili, representative of **Cultural Humanitarian Organization “Merhamet”** from Skopje/Macedonia, who expressed the willingness of his NGO to cooperate with Turkish and Balkan NGOs especially in Education sector.
- ◆ Mr. Basri Zilyabid, President of “A. Davudoglu” **Fraternity Foundation from Sofia/Bulgaria**, and **numerous Turkish NGOs** welcomed the partnership proposal on education and expressed their readiness for such cooperation.

In closing the session, Ms. Karaborni emphasized the importance of networking among NGOs and exchange of their outstanding field experiences to achieve the national development plans and contribute to implement the Millennium Development Goals. This will enhance the civil society and NGO role and impact not only at local and national level but also at subregional, regional and global ones, and strengthen the work of the ECOSOC and the United Nations. Mr. Turhan Gencoglu thanked all the participants for their contribution.

## **VI. FOLLOW-UP TO THE NOVEMBER 2004 AZERBAIJAN MEETING ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UN-NGO-IRENE/CASPIAN (CAUCASIAN/CENTRAL ASIA) REGION**

The second session of the day two of the Meeting was moderated by Ms Najet Karaborni, Senior Adviser/UNDESA and Project Director of the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section. She started the session with a summary of the Meeting held in Baku/Azerbaijan in November 2004 focusing on the objective of the session which has to agree on the strategic action plan of the newly established network in the Caspian (Caucasian/Central Asia Region). She also thanked Turkey for inviting the region NGOs to follow-up on the Azerbaijan Meeting.

The Regional Coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian (Caucasian Central Asia) region, Mr. Nedim Kaya presented the strategic action plan of the Network that he finalized with the help of all participant NGOs in Azerbaijan Meeting as recommended by Ms Karaborni..

Several NGOs from the region presented proposals and recommendations based on their successful experiences and best Practices. This includes:

- ◆ Mr. Grigol Abramia, Director of **International Center for Environmental Research** who underlined the cross border work of his NGO and the importance of cooperation among neighboring countries and regions especially in the environment field

- ◆ Ms. Lia Nadaria, President of **Feminist Club of Georgia** who made a brief statement about promoting partnership initiatives and projects and proposed to host a High Level Consultation and Capacity Building Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in Georgia with the support of the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO section..
- ◆ Ms. Nurgul Dzhanaeva, **President of the Forum of Women' NGOs of Kyrgyzstan** who presented the activities of her Organization highlighting the importance of cooperation and exchange of experiences among NGOs. For the gender and women empowerment field she proposed to make a concrete proposal and share it with all of the participants

The strategic action plan for UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian (Caucasian/Central Asia) region was adopted by all the participants and the Georgia proposal was welcomed and highly appreciated by all the participants. The session was closed by Ms. Karaborni.

## ***VII. ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE PRESS***

Press information and invitation about the Capacity Building Meeting to Launch the UN-NGO-IRENE in Turkey was sent to all mass-media and news agency representatives.

Several media representatives attended at the meeting. The event was enlightened on TV Channels and the results were reported and published by several news agencies. Several articles were published at the newspapers.

## ***VIII. VISIT TO NGO PROJECT***

The participants of the Meeting visited the **Lighthouse Association (Deniz Feneri Aid and Solidarity Association)** in Istanbul, Turkey on 30 September 2005.

After his welcoming to the participants, the President of the Lighthouse Association, Mr. Engin Yilmaz made a presentation on his NGO outstanding activities. A friendly discussion followed particularly on the remarkable work performed by this NGO toward poverty alleviation not only in Turkey but also in several developing countries mainly in Africa and Asia and in countries with economies in transition in the Caspian and Central Asia region.

The activities which are focusing mainly on humanitarian aid and relief, job creation and vocational training for the poorest of the poor and people in most need, rely on donations in kind and in cash from individuals and private companies.

Making full use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) potential, the Lighthouse Association created a confident relationship and partnership with the business community and Turkish people as it is constantly reporting - through internet, television and website advertisements and documentaries including TV films and spots - on the needs of the target population and on the Lighthouse Association activities in the field to meet them.

The direct and immediate impact on the beneficiaries and their families was highlighted during the visit especially with the very successful fundraising campaign and the huge Turkish people and business financial, in kind and voluntary support.

All participants expressed their full appreciation for the Lighthouse Association enormous achievements and asked for the development - by Lighthouse Association in cooperation with IBS and the technical support of the UNDESA Senior Adviser, Ms Karaborni - of a handbook on this innovative and extremely useful and helpful experience with no governmental or external financial aid.

This concrete and result-oriented civil society-private and public partnership represents indeed a way forward for an efficient implementation of the MDGs. This handbook will facilitate and enhance the promotion and the implementation of such experience and projects not only in the participant NGO countries but also in all interested countries with the help of the Lighthouse Association and the coordination of the newly established UN-NGO-IRENE in Turkey.

NGO Representatives expressed their high interest in working with IBS and BGF as national coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Turkey.