

UNITED NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS



AIDE MEMOIRE

Launch of the Informal NGO Regional Network

Convenor: NGO Section (UN/DESA)

Sponsor: The World Family Organization

Duration: 5–8 April 2001

Place: Aracaju, Brazil

Background

The Economic and Social Council has emphasized the importance of promoting a representative and inclusive NGO relationship and is granting consultative status to a steadily increasing number of organizations from a wide range of countries and regions to ensure geographical diversity. A significant number of such organizations, however, find themselves subject to financial and logistical constraints that effectively limit their ability to make full use of their consultative status with ECOSOC, particularly, in regard to participation at the international level.

A key problem is the difficulty of establishing and maintaining regular contact between the NGOs in these regions and with the NGO Section in New York due to geographic dispersion, travel problems and inadequate communications systems. These organizations are therefore often deprived of current information and opportunities to participate in UN activities either regionally or internationally. In 1999, the General Assembly recommended that the NGO Section **“work to 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”**.

Establishment of the NGO Informal Regional Network will be a means of drawing even the smallest and most isolated organizations into a system that provides information and support and the opportunity for collaborative action. Furthermore, the NGO Informal networks will provide a forum for exchange of views, information dissemination and practical experiences of cooperation with other UN system agencies in the respective fields covered by the networks. It would thus contribute to the harmonization of individual efforts of UN system agencies in their endeavor to foster cooperation with civil society at large.

One of the most important aspects of the proposed network system is the possibility of providing national and regional organizations with the practical tools to make a tangible contribution to the work of ECOSOC and to add the NGO perspective to the deliberations of that body, particularly the discussions of the High Level Segment. The networks offer the potential for sharing expertise and resources of every description to support joint NGO action within and among regions thereby enhancing their significance and strengthening their impact. It is intended that the networking capacity be exploited to the fullest in following up the outcome of all major international meetings, particularly the outcome of the Millennium Summit that resulted in a declaration of the political will of the world's leaders to achieve certain objectives for the betterment of humankind.

The NGO Informal Network will be supported through the intermediary activities of designated organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that have recognized standing within a particular area of expertise. Five such organizations have been identified in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Western Asia/Arab States, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Western Europe and other states.

Objectives

The meeting will provide a forum for exchange of information and consultation between counterpart organizations, providing them the opportunity to establish a network of future working relationships; The round-table discussions and brainstorming will be used to clarify the network concept, finalize the draft guidelines and terms of reference, and produce a plan of

action that can be initiated immediately. Draft objectives and guidelines that will be the subject of discussion at the meeting are reflected in the attached Annex; Regional strategies will be designed for NGO participation in High-Level Segment of the forthcoming 2001 regular session of ECOSOC.

Finally, a proposal for an operational project or programme addressing one or more of the areas of concern identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration will be outlined by the designated coordinator for implementation by each informal regional network represented at the meeting.

Agenda

It is envisioned that the session will be organised as follows:

Thursday 5 April 2001, A.M.

◆ Registration

9:30 – 10:00 A.M.

◆ Opening Session 10:00 – 12:30 A.M.

Welcoming Address:

Dr. Deisi Weber-Kusztra, President
World Family Organization (Host)

S.E. Sr. Jaime Lerner
Governor of the State of Paraná, Brazil

Follow up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration – the role of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Mrs. Gillian M. Sorensen, Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations
Executive Office of the Secretary-General (to be confirmed)

ECOSOC and Informal Regional Network Coordinator:

Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Director (to be confirmed)
Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator and their contribution to the global development objectives of the United Nations

Hanifa Mezoui, Chief
Non-Governmental Organizations Section, DESA

◆ Overview of the Issues and Organization of the Meeting: (by DESA)

- i. Setting immediate and long-term goals and objectives for The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator and identifying the means to achieve them
- ii. Finalizing the Guidelines for THE NGO INFORMAL REGIONAL NETWORK COORDINATOR activities
- iii. Formulating a strategic action plan to initiate and establish The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator
- iv. Regional programmes and projects to contribute to the stated goals and objectives of the United Nations Millennium Declaration
- v. Strategies and networking for collaboration and cooperation

- ◆ Lunch 12:30 – 14:00

Thursday 5 April 2001, P.M.

- ◆ PM Session 14:30 – 17:30
- ◆ Round table consultations will continue from the afternoon of 5 April through the morning of 6 April 2001. The agreed Plan of Action, Guidelines, Regional programme/project proposals and final report of the meeting will be presented in the afternoon of 6 April prior to the closure of the meeting on Sunday 8 April 2001.

Friday 6 April 2001, A.M.

09:30 – 12:30 – Continuation of Round Table Discussions

12:30 – 14:00 – Lunch

Friday 6 April 2001, P.M.

14:30 – 18:00 - Recommendations and approval of the Guidelines and Final Report.

Saturday 7 April 2001

On-site visit of the World Family Organization projects / Curitiba

Sunday 8 April 2001

On-site visit of the World Family Organization projects / Curitiba
Summary and Conclusion
Action Plan

Working Methods

A fully participatory, action-oriented approach will be adopted, drawing , to the extent possible, on the practical experience of the participants. Analysis of substantive and administrative issues and problems strategic action planning and proposals for regional operational activities will be addressed through group brainstorming in round-table discussion sessions.

Participants are requested to bring copies of all relevant descriptive information on their organization, including areas of expertise, aims, objectives, and activities.

During the course of the meeting, each participant will be expected to formulate the outline of a regional-level operational programme or project to be implemented within the coming year. The attached documentation, (United Nations Millennium Declaration, A/55/I2 and the Millennium Forum Declaration, A/54/959) lists the areas of special concern for global action. Participants are to give careful consideration to the issues indicated for action by the world's leaders and the representatives of the world's NGOs respectively with a view to formulating an operational programme or project in one or more areas that fall within their special competence or sphere of interest.

Discussion Topics

(See Annexes 1-4)

Outputs/Results

- ◆ Guidelines on The NGO Informal Regional Network will be agreed.
- ◆ The NGO Informal Regional Network would be launched.
- ◆ Senior NGO officials will have formed working relationships among their organizations.
- ◆ An initial action plan to establish and implement the informal regional network will be drawn up in accordance with the specific situation and needs of each region represented.
- ◆ Proposal outlines will be drafted for a regional-level operational programme or project to be implemented under the leadership of each regional representative present.

Duration - Timing

- ◆ A High level Consultation on launching an Informal NGO Regional Network Coordinator from 5 to 8 April 2001

Location

The World Family Organization, Curitiba, Brazil

Participants

United Nations Officials:

- ◆ Director of the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination,
- ◆ Chief of the NGO Section/DESA,
- ◆ Senior Interregional Adviser /UNDESA, Project Coordinator of The NGO Informal Regional Network,
- ◆ NGO Section Support Officer for The NGO Informal Regional Network
- ◆ Personal Assistant to the Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- ◆ Officials representing the Centre International de Formation des Acteurs locaux (CIFAL)

NGO Representatives:

Six NGOs will initiate The NGO Informal Regional Network, as follows:

- ◆ Africa : Association Feminine Tunisie 21 (Tunisia)
Economic and Social Council of West Africa (Senegal)
- ◆ Asia and the Pacific: Organization of Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA) - International (JAPAN)
- ◆ Eastern Europe : International Scientific and Educational "Znanie" Association (Russia)
- ◆ Latin America and the Caribbean : World Family Organization (Brazil)
- ◆ Western Asia/Arab States: (to be confirmed)
- ◆ Western Europe and other States : International Movement ATD Fourth World (France)

Administrative Arrangements

The NGO Section DESA will organize and guide the working sessions with the support of the Senior Interregional Adviser/DESA.

The World Family Organization will provide travel and lodging for participants. It will also provide the venue, secretariat services for meetings and working sessions.

Languages – English will be the working language, French translation is being requested

Next Steps - Follow-up meeting to be held either in Tunis, Tunisia, Moscow, Russia, or Palermo, Italy.

Annex I

DRAFT CRITERIA FOR THE NGO INFORMAL REGIONAL NETWORK COORDINATORS

1. The organization should be in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.
2. The organization should be of recognized standing within the particular field of its competence or be representative of a particular area or sphere of endeavor.
3. The organization should have an established headquarters with an executive officer empowered to act on the organization's behalf and be held responsible for fulfilling the commitments assigned to the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator in the agreed terms of reference.
4. The organization should be able to prove to the satisfaction of the NGO Section/DESA that it has and will have the necessary financial resources to undertake the activities assigned to the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator (see Terms of Reference).
5. The organization should be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the NGO Section/DESA that it has and will have the necessary human resources, technological support systems and organizational structure to enable it to implement the activities assigned to the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator (see Terms of Reference).
6. The organization should have a past record of collaborative work with other NGOs in the designated geographical region and extensive networking facilities.
7. The organization should be willing and able to share the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator' activities with one or more other organizations should this be deemed advisable by the NGO Section/DESA.

Annex II

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INFORMAL REGIONAL NETWORK COORDINATORS

1- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator's** networking activity at regional level will be clearly delineated and agreed upon by each NGO Informal Regional Network in corroboration with NGO Section/DESA. It is to be understood that the possible designation of additional NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator in a given geographical region, the parameters of this original network may have to be adjusted.

2- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will be responsible for establishing contact throughout its designated networking region with all NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council as well as potential applicants for consultative status;

3- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will be responsible for establishing systems of communication to transmit information from NGO Section to NGOs within its designated sphere of activity, particularly those with limited access to the electronic communication network. The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator shall moreover ensure that such information is disseminated in the timeliest manner possible;

4- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will devise the means:

(i) to provide advice to NGOs in consultative status in the region to assist them in preparing their mandated Quadrennial Reports in full conformity to the format set forth in the guidelines issued by the Section and,

(ii) to provide information and advice to NGOs seeking consultative status with the ECOSOC in the region, particularly with regard to the correct preparation and submission of the required application documents thus helping to ensure that the application are as complete as possible they actually sent it in to the NGO Section for review;

5- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will undertake to organize a yearly meeting/workshop to enable a representative of the NGO Section/DESA to engage in a direct dialogue with the NGOs of their respective regions on the significance of the consultative relationship and role of NGOs as active contributors to the work of United Nations in the context of follow-up to the various major international meetings and in particular the implementation of action to address the areas of concern identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

6- As a follow-up to the yearly meeting/workshop, **the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will undertake to provide advice and assistance to NGOs on the implementation of the measures outlined by the NGO Section/DESA for enhancing their participation in the work of the United Nations, (e.g. support to the establishment of NGO networks in the region; advice on strengthening the capacity of individual organizations and/or coalitions to make effective contributions in the area of economic and social development etc).

7- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will undertake to organize the necessary meetings to elicit representative regional inputs for the NGO contribution to the topic under discussion in the High-Level Segment of each Regular Session of the Economic and Social Council.

8- Wherever possible, networking activities will be undertaken in conformity with the established United Nation's development objectives and within the context of the areas of concern identified for global action in the third millennium.

- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** should keep the NGO Section/DESA informed of proposed and ongoing activities.
- Project outlines should include the following information:
 - i) Statement of the objective(s) and anticipated outcome(s) and success criteria.
 - ii) Where the project will involve only selected NGOs in the NGO Informal Regional Network, the outline must include the reasons for the selection, and describe the criteria used.
 - iii) Identification of and background information on any organizational entity other than a counterpart Network Coordinator that will be involved in the planning or implementation of the activity.

9- At the request of the NGO Section/DESA **the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will carry out additional ad hoc responsibilities, provided it is within the capacity of that organization to do so.

10- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will share experiences in implementing network activities as a major component of the annual meetings of the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator.

11- In pursuant to para 30 of ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, **the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** will prepare, in consultation with NGO Section, a written statement on the activities undertaken in the region relevant to the work of the Council.

12- As means of expanding its insight and familiarizing itself with the functions of the NGO Section/DESA, Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the relationship with the Economic and Social Council, each **NGO Informal Network Coordinator** will endeavour to recruit and sponsor at least one qualified individual annually to serve an internship in the NGO Section/DESA for a period no less than three months.

13- **The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** shall undertake the responsibilities outlined above for an initial period of two years to end in December 2003. The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinators' continued collaboration after December 2003, will be decided by mutual consultation between The NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator and the NGO Section at that time.

NB: It is to be understood and agreed that, should any NGO in the region wish to communicate directly with the NGO Section, it shall be free to do so without the intervention of **the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator** and this proviso must be made clear to all participant organizations in each network.

Annex III

DRAFT OBJECTIVES

I. Over-all Goals of The NGO Informal Regional Network

1. To ensure that national, sub-regional and regional NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC have access to the communication and interactions that will enable them to participate to the fullest extent in the activities of the Council and the UN at large.
2. To create a consensus for change through the networking and collective action of NGOs acting nationally, regionally and globally.
3. To enhance the contribution of all eligible NGOs by making it possible for them to share creative solutions to global problems achieved by people centered action at the grassroots level.
4. To join interrelated, multiple and unconnected local initiatives through a global vision and enhance the capacity to mobilize action on an increasingly wider scale and engage governments.
5. To provide through the joint efforts of the NGO community in the region and worldwide, the effectiveness of working across geographic, racial, ethnic, religious and even ideological borders for a common goal
6. To use NGO networks as a mobilizing tool to advance the global development debate and to consolidate NGO efforts for economic, social and sustainable development.

Ia. Time Limited Objectives

1. Functioning channels of communication: established: a) between the NGO Section/DESA, the designated NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator and its network partners; b) among the organizations within a given network.
2. Networking activities organised and sponsored by the informal regional network coordinator involving national and regional NGOs and aimed at promoting Collaboration and Coalition-Building
3. Activities organised and sponsored by each regional coordinator aimed at strengthening the NGO Sector from within
4. Operational activities underway to implement a regional project involving the collective action of coalitions of Network NGOs to address one or more of the areas of concern identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration

II. Objectives of the Aracaju Meeting

1. Review the overall concept of The NGO Informal Regional Network
2. Identify key issues and challenges that are,
 - (a). region specific
 - (b). common to all
 - (c). potential strategies regional /common
 - (d). inventory of available expertise and how to share in relation to identified needs
3. Formulate outline programme / project proposal for each regional network represented.

III. Objectives of the Annual NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator Meetings

1. Provide an opportunity to share successes and lessons learned.
2. Propose strategies for more effective collaboration.
3. Review preparations for participation in each forthcoming ECOSOC High-Level Segment.
4. Strategic planning for regional activities responding to United Nation's priorities identified for the coming year.
5. Identify obstacles to implementation of The NGO Informal Regional Network and seek solutions.

Annex IV

Draft Discussion Topics

Informal Regional Network: Objectives and their Achievement

1. Establishing channels of communication: a) between the NGO Section/DESA, the designated NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinator and its network partners; b) among the organizations within a given network.

- (i) Identifying and assessing existing channels of communication
- (ii) Identifying viable alternatives to information and communication technology (ICT)
- (iii) Bridging the digital divide – strategies to support and maximize use of ICT initiatives at different stages of development
- (iv) Collection and dissemination information in addition to that transmitted by the NGO Section/DESA

2. Promoting Collaboration and Coalition-Building

Design and implementation of activities and coordinating mechanisms to facilitate networking and coalition building, such as:

- (i) Meetings/seminars/regional fora to enable network organizations to discuss common concerns and explore ways of working together nationally, regionally and also cross-sectorally;
- (ii) Building comprehensive databases on network organizations including their mandates and areas of concern and activities.
- (iii) Establishing clearinghouses for information exchange and sharing of experience among organizations.

3. Empowering Network NGOs Through Collective Action

- (i) Organizing and coordinating the annual regional input to be presented to the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council.
- (ii) Strategies to promote consortia of NGOs to establish and/or strengthen working partnerships with national governments, regional and international agencies.
- (iii) Identifying partners and forming linkages with NGOs in other regions

4. Strengthening the NGO Sector From Within

- (i) Assessing needs and designing strategies to address them
- (ii) Identifying sources of expertise for training programmes, and advisory services at national, regional and inter-regional levels.
- (iii) Identifying and exploring ways in which the NGO Informal Regional Network Coordinators might exchange support in the form of sharing expertise/experience in areas such as:
 - Capacity-building in organizational development and management skills
 - Strategies for identifying and mobilizing resources
 - Understanding the policy-making process at the national, regional, governmental, and intergovernmental levels
 - Advocacy and implementation of operational programmes and projects.

5. Structuring Networking Activities to Enhance the NGO Contribution to Priority Areas Identified for Action by the United Nations at the Start of the 21st Century in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Forum Declaration.

The following areas have been identified by representatives of NGOs worldwide and the United Nations as issues of global concern:

- i. Peace, security and disarmament
- ii. Development and poverty eradication
- iii. Protecting our common environment
- iv. Human rights, democracy and good governance
- v. Meeting the special needs of Africa
- vi. Protecting the vulnerable (humanitarian assistance in armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies, including the protection of civilian population, displaced persons, and refugees and defense of the rights of a child)
- vii. Strengthening the United Nations

6. Formulating a Successful Programme/Project Proposal, Including Fundraising

Round Table Topics

Participants will discuss and agree upon topics contained in the Annex such as:

- ◆ Criteria for Informal Regional Network Coordinators
- ◆ Terms of reference for participation of Informal Regional Network Coordinator
- ◆ The development of electronic support systems to enable Network Coordinators to identify target NGOs and to establish and maintain linkages with organizations in their region.
- ◆ Mechanisms and strategies for sharing information and expertise among the designated Informal Regional Network Coordinator.
- ◆ Basic steps in the design and implementation of technical operational projects. Topics will include:
 - Problem identification and needs assessments
 - Resource and fundraising
 - Setting short-term, intermediate and long-term objectives
 - Projecting necessary inputs (human and /or resources, training materials, necessary infrastructure, equipment etc)
 - Specifying expected outputs
 - Identifying extraneous intervening variables
 - Making provision for monitoring and evaluation (success criteria, implementation milestones etc)
- ◆ Providing for replication of successful projects through careful documentation and reports emphasizing “lessons learnt”

Documentation: Informal NGO Regional Network **(Meeting in Aracaju – April 2001)**

1. Informal NGO regional Network Brochure
2. “NGO Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN” – ECOSOC Inf List E/2000/INF/4
3. Database by Region –
 - a. Africa;
 - b. Asia & the Pacific;
 - c. Eastern Europe;
 - d. Latin America & the Caribbean;
 - e. Western Asia/ Arab Countries;
 - f. Western Europe & Other States
4. Brochure of NGO Section/ Workshop of NGO Section
5. Listing of Resident Coordinators by region
6. Listing of UNIC Centers
7. Updated list of ECOSOC membership
8. Updated list of NGO Committee membership
9. Handbook – NGLS Handbook; NGLS a Guide for NGOS
10. Report of the High-level Panel on Information and Communication Technology
11. NGO Section compilation of documents
12. 55/2 United Nations Millennium Declaration A/RES/55/2
13. Millennium Forum A/54/959