



Department of Economic and Social
Affairs (UNDESA)
NGO Section / ECOSOC



*High Level Consultation and Regional Capacity Building Workshop
To Launch the UN-NGO-Informal Regional Network in Eastern Europe*

Bucharest, Romania

29 May - 1 June 2003

AIDE MEMOIRE

The High Level Consultation and Regional Workshop on Capacity-Building for the UN-NGO Informal Regional Network in Eastern Europe (IRENE/ Eastern Europe) is being jointly organized by UNDESA, through its NGO section, and UNDP Romania, in cooperation with the Black Sea University Foundation. It is co-sponsored by the Italian Government, as it will be implemented in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on Human Resources and Capacity Building, signed in 1996 by the Italian Government and the United Nations. UNDP Romania is also partly funding the workshop. It will take place in Bucharest, Romania from 29 May to 1 June 2003.

I. BACKGROUND

In order 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 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 (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.

In order to respond to these objectives, the NGO Section/DESA promoted the establishment of an informal regional network of NGOs (UN-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 in Aracaju (Brazil) “Launch of the NGO Informal Regional Network”.

The network, supported through the intermediary activities of designated regional and sub-regional coordinator organizations, 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 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.

In January 2002, the meeting on “Capacity Building for the Informal Regional Network in Africa”, held in Hammamet (Tunisia) from 8 to 11 January, launched the Informal Regional Network of NGOs in 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 the framework of the worldwide development of the UN-NGO informal regional network (UN-NGO-IRENE) and of its implementation in the remaining regions, a capacity building programme to launch the Network in Eastern Europe is proposed.

II. OBJECTIVES

The Capacity Building programme for the UN-NGO Informal Regional Network in Eastern Europe will focus on preparing NGOs to contribute to the work of ECOSOC by providing them with the tools to confront major problems of the region. The overall goal of the network for Eastern Europe is to minimize the financial and logistical constraints that have limited the ability of NGOs from this region to participate in the decision-making process at the global level.

Nine out of fifteen countries in the region have no NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. Consequently, isolation from global development strategies and weak cooperation mechanisms have resulted in limited success for the NGO community at the local level. Eastern European NGOs find themselves in a difficult situation, owing to the constraints imposed by governments in need of strengthening and reformed governance policies as well as unstable economic environment and high unemployment rates.

In particular, this meeting will contribute to the increased awareness and mobilization of Eastern European NGOs in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Particular emphasis will be given to achieving the goals of: 1. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, 2. Achieving universal primary school, 3. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, 4. Improving maternal health, 5. Reducing child mortality, 6. Promoting gender equality and Empowering women, 7. Ensuring environment sustainability, 8. Developing a global partnership for development.

Long-term objectives of the network

- ◆ To enhance NGOs’ contribution to the development of their country and their role in the new governance

- ◆ To facilitate NGOs' participation in the United Nations activities and in the international decision-making process
- ◆ To promote the effectiveness of NGOs' response to common development challenges
- ◆ To promote exchange of innovative experiences and best practices among NGOs, especially among the ones operating in neighbor countries.
- ◆ To contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in Eastern European NGOs

Immediate objectives of the Capacity Building Regional Workshops

- ◆ Reinforcing NGOs' existing skills and developing human resources
- ◆ Strengthening relationships, exchange, cooperation and partnership among NGOs in the region and between developed countries' NGOs and the other ones
- ◆ Establishing a permanent dialogue among the NGOs, the NGO Section/DESA, UNDP, and the United Nations in general, facilitating the access to information
- ◆ Strengthening partnership between the United Nations, NGOs and sub-regional and regional coordinators.
- ◆ Raising the effective participation of NGOs in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The general voluntary trust fund that was recently established by the ECOSOC Decision E/2002/225 will support the full functioning of the UN-NGO-IRENE as well as the implementation of its activities to reach the abovementioned objectives in partnership with selected and interested coalition of NGOs, NGOs, Governments, donor countries and IRENE partners.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that UNDP country offices support meetings, round-tables and seminars in which these experiential lessons can be disseminated. Such meetings also allow UNDP and NGOs to further identify potential not only to help each other in reaching the goals of human development but also to influence the ways that UNDP works in all its programmes. This encourages reflection and exchange of experience among NGOs on financial, technical, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and other topics pertinent to achieving a desirable balance between their commitment and effectiveness.

III. REGIONAL MEETINGS

The capacity building programme for NGOs (especially in consultative status) will be implemented through the organization of two Regional Meetings, one for each of the following groups:

- ◆ **1st Group: Eastern Europe: 15**
Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Yugoslavia.

This meeting will take place in Bucharest, Romania from 29 May to 1 June 2003 and is co-hosted by the UNDP Office in Bucharest and the Black Sea University Foundation, a Romanian NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC.

- ◆ 2nd Group: CIS: 12
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
(The Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) will be reviewed in the separate meeting to be held in the Russian Federation at a later stage)

IV. PARTICIPANTS

- ◆ 60 NGOs were selected and invited to participate in the meeting taking into account their field of intervention, as related to the MDGs, as well as their consultative status with ECOSOC and commitment. 30 to 40 representatives of NGOs from the 15 countries of the Eastern European region are expected to participate in the meeting considering the financial constraints. Each country will be represented by two and at least one NGO.
- ◆ The following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Yugoslavia will be represented by two or three NGOs, as they will be sponsored by the Italian trust fund. The other invited NGOs, which could fund their travel expenses and accommodation could participate. The United Nations is seeking other funding sources to cover the participation of two or at least one NGO from each of the remaining countries.
- ◆ The Host Country, Romania will be represented by 7 NGOs as participants, and 8 NGOs as observers.
- ◆ The following UN-NGO-IRENE partners will also participate in the workshop: CONGO, WFUNA, DPI/NGO, UNITAR/CIFAL, UNESCO, NGO Liaison Office in Geneva.
- ◆ The United Nations will be represented by several high officials.
- ◆ The UNDP will be represented by several high officials and by the Resident Representative in Romania.
- ◆ The Government of Romania will be represented by several high officials.

V. WORKING METHODS

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

Participants will be requested to give all relevant information on their organization, including field of expertise, objectives and activities. They will also provide documentation on innovative experiences and good practices that the organization has successfully implemented and might wish to share with other NGOs. Each participant should prepare a written report (5 pages), which should be sent to the NGO Section/ ECOSOC, UNDESA, either by e-mail to Ms. Najet Karaborni (karaborni@un.org) with a copy to Ms. Sherifa Khan (khanb@un.org), or by fax to 1-212-963-2916/ 9248.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The participants are responsible for obtaining visas for themselves.

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ANNEX 1

Number of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC in Eastern Europe

1st Group: Eastern Europe: 17 NGOs

1. Albania
2. Bosnia-Herzegovina (1)
3. Bulgaria (2)
4. Croatia
5. Czech Republic (4)
6. Estonia
7. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
8. Hungary (3)
9. Latvia
10. Lithuania
11. Poland (2)
12. Romania (5)
13. Slovak Republic
14. Slovenia
15. Yugoslavia