



United Nations **Nations Unies**
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Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

UNDESA Mission Report

**Najet Karaborni, Senior Interregional Adviser,
UN-NGO-IRENE Project Coordinator
NGO Section/OESC**

**Azerbaijan (Baku)
23 - 30 November 2004**

November 2004

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I. Purpose of the Mission

At the request of the Chief of the NGO Section, Office for the ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and two Azerbaijani leading NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, Ms Najet Karaborni, Senior Interregional Advisor and UN-NGO-IRENE Project Coordinator/ UNDESA, undertook an advisory mission in Azerbaijan from 23 to 30 November 2004. (See **Annex I**)

The purpose of the UNDESA Mission was to:

- 1.** Help organize and conduct a Capacity Building Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in Azerbaijan and strengthen NGO sector capacity and partnership with the United Nations;
- 2.** Conduct a Capacity Building Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in the Caspian Region and enhance the NGO sector contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially at the High Level Segment (HLS) of ECOSOC of July 2005;
- 3.** Assist in the formation of a preliminary strategic action plan for the newly established networks in Azerbaijan and for the Caspian region;
- 4.** Meet with the Government Officials in Azerbaijan to discuss follow-up activities to the capacity building meetings and potential cooperation between UNDESA, UNDP, Government and NGOs to effectively and efficiently implement the strategic action plan of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Azerbaijan through the promotion of a partnership programme on strengthening civil society in Azerbaijan and the Caspian region.

II. Capacity Building Meeting to Launch UN-NGO-IRENE/Azerbaijan in Baku

A. Conduct of the Capacity Building Workshop in Baku, 26 November 2004

Hosted by Fund of Aid for Youth (FAY) and National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA), the Meeting was organized in partnership with the NGO Section, Office for Economic and Social Affairs of UNDESA, and with the support of the Government of Azerbaijan and the UNDP Office in Azerbaijan.

In their opening speeches, President of FAY, Mr. Nedim Kaya and the Chairperson of NAYORA, Mr. Fuad Muradov, highlighted the importance of the Capacity Building Meetings to launch the UN-NGO-Informal Regional Network not only in Azerbaijan (UN-NGO-IRENE/ Azerbaijan) but in the Caspian Region (Caucasian/ Central Asia) as well. In bringing together Azerbaijani and Caspian Civil Societies, the meetings focused on increasing the exchange of experiences among NGOs and strengthening the NGO role at national and regional levels.

The UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Mr. David Eizenberg, presented the UN contribution to the NGO sector development in Azerbaijan and its involvement by all UN agencies in the UN work on MDGs. UNDESA Representative, Ms. Najet Karaborni gave a briefing on the background of the UN-NGO-IRENE, stressing the priority placed by the NGO Section/ ECOSOC of DESA on the capacity building programmes for NGOs in consultative status of countries with economies in transition as recommended by the ECOSOC Resolution of 1996 and the General Assembly of 1999.

The Meeting was attended by 84 participants including NGOs, government representatives, several UN agencies and the Media. It was conducted by Ms. Karaborni who made opening remarks and closing speech, and the two following PowerPoint presentations:

- ◆ ECOSOC and its relationship with NGOs: NGO consultative status with ECOSOC
- ◆ UN-NGO-IRENE and NGO Capacity Building within Participatory Governance

She presented the role of NGOs in contributing to ECOSOC work and explained the work of the NGO Section/ ECOSOC and its outreach programme, the UN-NGO-IRENE.

UN Resident Coordinator/ Special Advisor, Mr. Shahin Panahov did a PPT presentation on updating the Millennium Development Goals.

Seven NGO working groups were formed taking into account the MDGs and the crucial issues of Azerbaijan. They were facilitated by Ms Karaborni. (for more details on the workshop, please see **Annexes II, IV and V**).

B. Main Results/ Conclusions of the Meeting

The scope of the Network and the responsibilities of the participating NGOs were discussed and agreed upon. NAYORA was asked to serve as National Coordinator of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Azerbaijan. To better serve the needs of the beneficiaries of the Network and contribute to an effective and concrete implementation of the MDGs and the outcomes of the major UN conferences, the seven following thematic focal points were established in order to help and work in close cooperation with NAYORA, the National Coordinator of the Network:

- 1. Poverty Alleviation and Hunger (MDG 1):** Community Development Center in collaboration with Azerbaijan Democratic Students and Youth Organization
- 2. Education (MDG 2):** “Initiative” Charity Public Union
- 3. Gender Equality /Women Empowerment:** New Life Humanitarian and Social Support Union
- 4. Health (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) :** “NUR” Public Union of Children and Youth in collaboration with “Buta” Children Humanitarian Foundation
- 5. Environment (MDG 7):** ECORES
- 6. Partnerships (MDG 8):** Baku Youth Club in collaboration with Azerbaijan War Veterans Union
- 7. Peace, Security and Human Rights:** Azerbaijan Young Lawyers Union in collaboration with Society for International Cooperation of Disabled People

A preliminary strategic action plan for the Network was discussed and agreed upon (See **Annex VI**)

C. Main Recommendations for the UN-NGO-IRENE/ Azerbaijan

Following the establishment of the UN-NGO-IRENE in Azerbaijan, it is highly recommended that:

- 1.** Though the main focus of the Network will be on the Azerbaijani NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, all NGOs supporting the goals of the United Nations as set out in the Millennium Declaration should be included;
- 2.** The Network should begin operating as soon as possible in order to help NGO to apply for consultative status with ECOSOC and facilitate the access of Azerbaijani NGOs to the global scene;

3. A database of Azerbaijani NGOs would strengthen networking and exchange of information, innovative experiences and best practices among the NGOs community;
4. Mobilizing additional resources in order to realize the network's potential is very important;
5. The structure of the Network should be flexible and open;
6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be utilized to its full extent, with much of the actual networking conducted through the internet;
7. To facilitate information-sharing activities, a web portal for the Network should be set up;
8. 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;
9. The Strategic Action Plan should focus on networking, exchange of information, experiences and best practices, capacity building and promotion of partnership initiatives, projects and programmes with Government, Business communities, UNDP, UNDESA and the United Nations system in general. It has also to include the preparatory work, organization and conduct of the Annual Conference of the UN-NGO-IRENE/ Azerbaijan;
10. To produce a UN-NGO-IRENE/ Azerbaijan e-newsletter as soon as possible.
11. Following the meetings held by UNDESA Mission with five different sectors at top level (Foreign Affairs, Finance, Economic Development, Education, and Youth, Sport and tourism), the Network should take benefit of the prosperous environment and political goodwill in Azerbaijan to strengthen NGO capacity, and promote and help fund and implement partnership initiatives between NGOs, government, business community, donors and the United Nations

III. Capacity Building Meeting To Launch UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian Region in Baku

A. Conduct of the Capacity Building Workshop in Baku, 27 November 2004

The Meeting, taking place on the 27th of November 2004, was attended by 71 participants including NGOs, Government representatives, several UN Agencies and the Media. It was conducted by Ms. Najet Karaborni, Senior Interregional Advisor and UN-NGO-IRENE Project Coordinator / NGO Section/ECOSOC / UNDESA. Mr. Elshad Iskanderov, First Secretary of Azerbaijan Permanent Mission UN in New York made a presentation on "UN-NGO cooperation and role in conflict prevention and resolution"

Seven NGO working groups covering the MDGs and the crucial issues of the Caspian region were formed to agree on the thematic focal points to establish and discuss the main activities to be undertaken in the framework of a strategic action plan for the Network. Ms Karaborni and Mr. Iskanderov facilitated the working groups to come up

with practical and relevant proposals to integrate within the Caspian Region Network Action Plan.

At the Closing Session, the representative of the Turkish NGO, “Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity Association”, Mr. Ahmet Tecim proposed to host in Istanbul, Turkey and cosponsor with the NGO Section/ECOSOC of DESA and UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian Region a follow-up Meeting for the Caspian Region to start implement its strategic action plan. He also proposed to hold at the same time a Capacity building Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in Turkey with the support of the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section. The Turkish proposal was welcomed and highly appreciated by all the participants.

The Closing Session was chaired by Mr. Elshad Iskanderov, First Secretary of Azerbaijan Permanent Mission UN in New York who thanked the participants and expressed on behalf of the Government of Azerbaijan, the participants and himself his 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. He also thanked Ms Hanifa Mezoui, Chief of the NGO Section/ECOSOC for her leadership and commitment and Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary General of UNDESA for his strong support to UN-NGO-IRENE development.

For more details on the Workshop, please see **Annexes III, IV and V**.

B. Main Results/ Conclusions of the Meeting

The scope of the Regional Network and the responsibilities of the participating NGOs were discussed and agreed upon. The UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian region was established and Fund of Aid for Youth (FAY) was selected to act as regional coordinator of the Regional Network.

To better serve the needs of the beneficiaries of the Network and contribute to an effective and concrete implementation of the MDGs and the outcomes of the major UN conferences, 7 thematic focal points were established to help the Regional Coordinator:

- 1. Poverty Alleviation and Hunger (MDG 1):** Business Women’s Association – Uzbekistan
- 2. Education (MDG 2):** Kazakhstan Association of the Customs Brokers; Green Earth Foundation – Georgia
- 3. Gender Equality /Women Empowerment:** Kyrgyzstan Forum of Women NGOs
- 4. Health (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) :** National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA) in collaboration with “Buta” Children Humanitarian Foundation

5. **Environment (MDG 7):** ECORES – Azerbaijan; International Center for Environmental Research (Georgia)
6. **Peace and Conflict Prevention (Millennium Declaration):** International Associations of Young Diplomats – Georgia
7. **Human Rights (Millennium Declaration):** “EL” Development Center; International Charitable Foundation “Merrim” – Georgia

Based on the specific activities related to each theme proposed by the different working groups, a **preliminary strategic action plan for the UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian Region** was designed, discussed and agreed upon. (See **Annex VII**)

C. Main Recommendations regarding the UN-NGO-IRENE/ Caspian Region

Following the establishment of the UN-NGO-IRENE in the Caspian Region, the main recommendations of the Mission are as follows:

1. While the main focus for the Network should be on the NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, it also needs to include all NGOs supporting the goals of the United Nations as set out in the Millennium Declaration;
2. In order to help NGOs from the Caspian region to apply for consultative status and facilitate their access to the global scene, the Regional Network must begin operating without delay;
3. A database of Caspian Regional NGOs would strengthen networking and exchange of information, innovative experiences and best practices among the NGOs community;
4. Additional resources should be mobilized in order to realize the network’s potential;
5. The structure of the Network should be flexible and open;
6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and especially the internet should be fully used to facilitate networking and effectiveness of UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian Region;
7. A web portal for the Network would also facilitate information-sharing activities;
8. The NGO Section of DESA should provide a range of services, including regular flows of information to assist NGOs in making full use of their consultative status with ECOSOC;
9. The Strategic Action Plan should include the preparatory work for the Annual Conference of the UN-NGO-IRENE/ Caspian Region;
10. A UN-NGO-IRENE/ Caspian electronic newsletter should be produced;
11. UNDP country offices of each of the Caspian region countries and UNDP regional bureau for the region as well should be fully involved in the implementation of the strategic action plan
12. Following the meetings held in Baku, Azerbaijan by the UNDESA Mission with five different sectors at top level (Foreign Affairs, Finance, Economic Development, Education, and Youth, Sport and tourism), the Regional Network should take benefit of the prosperous environment and political goodwill in Azerbaijan to strengthen

NGO capacity, and promote and help fund and implement partnership initiatives between NGOs, government, business community, donors and the United Nations.

IV. Preparatory Meeting of 24 November 2004 in the UN Conference Hall

At the request of the Mission, Mr. Shahin M. Panahov, Senior Adviser to UN Resident Coordinator in Baku, Azerbaijan organized a UN Country Team Meeting in the UN Conference Hall on Wednesday 24 November 2004 at 4:30 pm. (See **Annex VIII**). Several UN Agencies participated in the Meeting including the Chief of Public Affairs and Information Department, UNFPA and UNICEF. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. David Eizenberg, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative who welcomed UNDESA Mission and highlighted the enhanced support of all UN agencies to the development of the NGO sector in Azerbaijan. Ms Karaborni briefed the participants about the purpose of her mission and the expected results and outcome of the planned capacity building Meetings of 25-26 November 2004 to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in Azerbaijan and the Caspian region to increase the number of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC in the region and bridge the gap between developed and developing countries as stated by the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31. She also encouraged all UN Agencies to actively participate in the Meetings and contribute to their outcomes to strengthen the NGO effective contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs especially in this fifth year review of their implementation.

V. Meetings with High Government Officials

Ms. Najet Karaborni had five meetings with the following high-level Azerbaijani Government Officials:

- 1. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mahmud Mamedgulyev**
- 2. Deputy Minister of Youth, Tourism and Sports, Mr. Intigam V. Babayev**
- 3. Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Elmar E. Qasimov**
- 4. Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Mikayil Jabbarov**
- 5. Deputy Minister of Finances, Mr. Azer A. Bayramov.**

They all highlighted their government's policy and action towards a strengthened NGO sector in Azerbaijan and discussed with the UNDESA Mission the ways and measures to undertake in order to help enhance the role and contribution of NGOs and the civil society in general at all levels (local, national, regional and global) in order to implement the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. More specifically, the Mission discussed concrete proposals with each Deputy Minister who fully agreed to highly consider them in the near future for more effectiveness. The proposals were as follows:

- ♦ Due to lack of internal financial resources to cover travel and accommodation expenses during their mission in New York and Geneva, NGOs couldn't participate in the ECOSOC High Level Segment sessions and other relevant UN meetings. To

help NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC fully participate and contribute to the ECOSOC work, the **Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs** agreed to **highly consider the Azerbaijani NGOs as part of the Azerbaijan Delegation to the ECOSOC Meetings** in New York and Geneva.

- ◆ The **Ministry of Youth, Tourism and Sports** is the only ministry with a budget of **US \$ 30 000 allocated to NGOs' activities**. During the meeting with the UNDESA Mission, it was agreed that this amount is very low and need to be strongly increased to strengthen the NGO contribution to economic and social development at local, national and global levels
- ◆ Taking into account a large number of NGOs working in the education field, the **Deputy Minister of Education** expressed his wish to establish a fund for NGOs' activities either at departmental level or national one
- ◆ With the **Deputy Minister of Economic Development**, UNDESA representative stressed the role of **National Economic and Social Councils (ECOSOC)** to enhance fruitful dialogue and consensus among all stakeholders and provide relevant advice to government and parliament. As Azerbaijan doesn't have yet a National ECOSOC and expressed its will to establish it, the Mission recommended including among its members, representatives of NGOs in consultative status and civil society to reinforce participatory governance. The Deputy Minister shared the view of the Mission who gave him several samples of National ECOSOC
- ◆ Following deep and fruitful discussion with the **Deputy Minister of Finances** on how Azerbaijan could strengthen its support to the NGO sector especially through the establishment of a national budget line within the budget of the Ministry of Finances for NGO activities. The Deputy Minister welcomed the proposal and expressed the possibility of funding NGO activities and projects based on relevant and timely proposals. To start with this innovative and outstanding initiative, the Deputy Minister agreed to consider for funding the activities proposed in the framework of the UN-NGO-IRENE strategic action plan both at national level and at regional one.

VI. Field visit to one leading NGO project

In addition, the participants of the Meeting visited the Community Development Center in Baku. After the presentation on the project activities made by the project managers, a friendly discussion followed particularly on the training activities of the project and their impact on the beneficiaries and especially the local authorities and NGOs. All participants appreciated the visit, exchanged their respective experiences in this field and expressed their wish to develop such projects in their countries with the help of the Community Development Center and the coordination of the newly established UN-NGO-IRENE. NGO Representatives expressed their high interest in working with NAYORA as national coordinator of UN-NGO-IRENE/Azerbaijan and FAY as regional coordinator of UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian region.

VII. General Conclusion

1. During the mission, the UN delegation had several meetings and informal consultations with government High Officials, United Nations Agencies' representatives and non-government agencies (see list of persons met in **Annex IX**). After intensive interactions with each of them, the UN delegation was strongly convinced that all of them are supporting the NGO sector development in Azerbaijan and that NGOs are extremely eager to participate in the UN-related activities, especially the areas which are related to the eight MDGs. In fact, most of them have already engaged themselves in these areas.
2. The NGOs that DESA Representative met have expressed their interest to participate in UN-NGO-IRENE, and have shown their willingness to apply for the Consultative Status with ECOSOC especially as only 5 Azerbaijani NGOs have the consultative status with ECOSOC (see list in **Annex X**). They firmly believe that the role of the NGOs in the national economic development should be further strengthened, and their participation in global forums addressing major issues and shared concerns should be encouraged.
3. They highly appreciated the visit of the UN delegation which offered them a great opportunity to share useful information concerning their future work and constructive suggestions to enhance their contribution to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs. They also hope that this type of capacity-building mission could be repeated in the future.
4. In establishing UN-NGO-IRENE in Azerbaijan and in the Caspian Region with NAYORA and FAY as the respective National and Regional Coordinator in collaboration with a great number of leading Azerbaijani and Caspian Region NGOs covering all MDGs and the crucial issues of Azerbaijan, the Caspian Region and countries with economies in transition in a globalized world will significantly help bridge grassroots concerns and needs, and policy issues; and bring lessons learned from operational activities and success stories to the international scene and the United Nations' analytical and normative work.
5. The participants and persons met (**See Annex IX**) expressed their appreciation for the strong support of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and its NGO Section to NAYORA as National coordinator of UN-NGO-IRENE/Azerbaijan and to FAY as regional coordinator of UN-NGO-IRENE/Caspian Region. Especially the government representatives also expressed their will to reinforce their support to the NGO sector development and to help strengthening its activities and impact at all levels (local, national, regional and global). This will help NAYORA and FAY to efficiently coordinate the activities of their respective Network in cooperation with all interested partners and donors including UNDP offices in the countries of the region and at regional level in New York, European Union, the World Bank, the business community, governments and the United Nations. This will also effectively increase

concrete civil society contributions to the ECOSOC work in implementing the MDGs, the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the UN Conferences

VIII. Thanks

The UN delegation would like to express its sincere thanks to:

The Chief of Public Relations Department of the Office of the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Arastun Mehtiyev, the Deputy Minister of Youth, Sport and Tourism, Mr. Intigam Babayev, all the Members of the Government of Azerbaijan that she met for their commitment for a strengthened civil society in Azerbaijan, and the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations for its kind help in facilitating the UNDESA Mission in Azerbaijan;

The UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Marco Borsotti, the UN Resident coordinator Adviser, Mr. Shahin Panahov, the Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP, Mr. David Eizenberg, and his team for their sponsorship of and the strong support to the Meetings as well as all the UN agencies, donors and partners involved in the Meetings;

Fund of Aid for Youth and National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan for their excellent organization of the Capacity Building Meeting to launch the UN-NGO-IRENE in Azerbaijan and in the Caspian Region, for their leadership towards a strengthened civil society in Azerbaijan and for their commitment to reinforce their continuous and effective contribution to the ECOSOC work;

All NGOs met for expressing their goodwill to participate in UN-NGO-IRENE in Azerbaijan, the Caspian Region, and worldwide;

The Turkish NGO, “Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity Association” for its kind invitation to host in Istanbul, Turkey a follow-up UN-NGO-IRENE Meeting for the Caspian region to start implement the strategic action plan of the Network, and to hold at the same time a Capacity Building Meeting to launch UN-NGO-IRENE in Turkey

FAY and NAYORA members and staff for their teamwork, dynamism and professionalism to ensure full success to the Network;

All those who helped the UNDESA Mission in Azerbaijan and the Caspian Region in achieving more than expected results.

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UN-NGO-IRENE Project Coordinator
NGO Section/OESC
Azerbaijan (Baku), 23-30 November 2004**

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