NEWSLETTER
November 2016

I. MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CoNGO

In this November 2016 E-NEWSLETTER I wish to celebrate a CoNGO event that took place at UN Headquarters this very month. A new CoNGO Substantive Committee was officially launched: the NGO COMMITTEE FOR RARE DISEASES.

At the initiative of the Agrenska Foundation, a CoNGO Full Member, (www.agrenska.se) and of EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe, a CoNGO Associate Member, (www.eurordis.org) an intense full day meeting took place. There was high level participation from across the United Nations (DESA, UNICEF, SDSN, WHO, UN WOMEN, DSPD, UNDP) and from Government Permanent Missions. The event was under the high patronage of Queen Silvia of Sweden. Rare Diseases International was integrated as a partner (www.rarediseasesinternational.org).

Highly professional and/or scientific - and sometimes very moving - presentations were made by representatives of Patients’ organizations, Medical Institutions and Foundations, Advocacy bodies and health-oriented corporate entities. By video the Prime Minister of Malta pledged full support to the new Committee.

The event's report will be available from the organizers, and will be referenced in a future CoNGO E-NEWSLETTER. The Committee will conduct meeting in 2017 in New York and Geneva. To join the Committee or for further information: ngocomiteerarediseases.org

The launch event had a Keynote Address by the President of CoNGO, and this is reproduced here.

LAUNCH OF A NEW CoNGO SUBSTANTIVE COMMITTEE

NGO Committee for Rare Diseases, New York - November 11, 2016

Keynote address by Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO

"The United Nations and Civil Society: CoNGO and CoNGO Committees"

It is a highpoint of CoNGO’s life in 2016 to mark today the launch of a new CoNGO Substantive Committee: The NGO COMMITTEE FOR RARE DISEASES.

I thank and congratulate all those in the Agrenska Foundation and in EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe for their initiative, enthusiasm, commitment and sheer hard work that has led up to this auspicious moment. It is of additional significance that the launch is taking place in United
Nations Headquarters, under the high patronage of Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden, with the active support and encouragement of several governments, and with engaged participation of a broad range of NGOs and CSOs. This moves me to place the event in the broader United Nations and Civil Society context.

Throughout the United Nations System, thousands of NGOs/CSOs have for decades had an increasingly interconnected relationship with different UN entities. The relationship may be consultative or informational; it may cover advocacy or operations; it may involve participation in UN Conferences and taskforces, or contractual field-service delivery. What is vital to underline is that the interlinkages between the worldwide NGO/CSO communities and the multifaceted United Nations structures are based on a wide range of shared values, shared ideals, and a common commitment to making the world a better place for future generations.

NGOs and CSOs are representative of the good causes they promote, defend and advance. Some agencies or bodies of the United Nations System could scarcely fulfill their mandates without being able to call upon – and rely upon – the competence, infrastructures and constituencies of NGOs and CSOs. At UN policy-making levels, the experience-based and professional input from NGOs - based on field and community realities, and on frequently-intense analysis of the genuine needs and aspirations of populations - enhances the ultimate output from governments. These synergies work towards more realistic policy decisions, which themselves will have greater chance of being effectively implemented. This applies whether the topic is the protection of refugees, the achievement of gender equality, or the drafting of a Convention. Truly, the world needs a stronger UN, and stronger UN-NGO relationships.

For most of the United Nations history, the "Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations" - often shortened to "the Conference of UN NGOs", and universally known as CoNGO - has been a principal interface between the world's NGOs/CSOs and the entire UN System. CoNGO has become a depository of a vast sum of knowledge on the functioning of the United Nations System and uses its "insider" position to facilitate access, dialogue and enhanced interactions on the widest range of issues that are on the planet's agenda - from the eradication of poverty to the empowerment of women; from environmental degradation to the integration of the disabled; from ageing to health to human rights to disarmament. These issues require planetary cooperation: NGOs and CSOs bring essential and fresh perspectives and insights to the negotiation tables and the drafting processes, and are key to then transforming words into action.

CoNGO's 40 Substantive Committees are "front-line soldiers" in these processes. Each Committee brings together a community of knowledgeable NGO/CSO leaders, who in their own area devote their resources and energies to seeking solutions to one or more of the range of issues that figure every year on the United Nations General Assembly Agenda, or on the agendas of the Specialized Agencies, the ECOSOC Commissions, and other entities of the UN System. Each Substantive Committee focuses on the field its members know best, and brings input and advice - sometimes warning and criticism - to the relevant UN organ. While cooperating in a collegial way under the umbrella of CoNGO, each Substantive Committee takes the initiatives it judges appropriate to make progress towards a more just world.

I thus welcome the NGO Committee for Rare Diseases to the CoNGO family, to the UN circuit, and to the wider constituencies that will benefit from the work that you are about to
inaugurate. I wish you well as you now move to contribute in your area of specialization towards creating that better world that we all desire.

Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO

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The present edition of the CoNGO E-NEWSLETTER was put together by the current Kyung Hee University Intern in Geneva, Yujin Jo, who will finish her internship in early December. I am very grateful to her for her devoted and efficient service. CR

II. CoNGO Secretariat

Having just been asked by a member for a clarification as to the different categories of CoNGO membership, and the participation in CoNGO Substantive Committees, I thought it would be useful to share the information with all members, just as a recap. Cyril Ritchie, President

To be a Full Member of CoNGO, the NGO has to have Consultative Status with ECOSOC (no matter which level of status).

CoNGO Associate Members are any other NGO that has a working/operational / procedural/ contractual link with any other body/ entity of the United Nations System, including Conventions, Treaties and Courts. Both categories receive all general and regular communications and notices, and may send in questions/suggestions/notifications at any time.

Only Full Members have nomination, eligibility and voting rights at the CoNGO General Assembly.

The 20 founding members of a CoNGO Substantive Committee have to be Full Members, but any Full or Associate Member may join any Substantive Committee at any time. Many Substantive Committees are also open, at their discretion, to "specialists" in their domain, e.g. academics or researchers.

The Chair and Vice Chair of a CoNGO Substantive Committee have to be Full Members.

III. CoNGO Substantive Committees

CoNGO SUBSTANTIVE COMMITTEE ON AGEING, New York

The NGO Committee on Ageing, New York, is actively working to promote the elaboration of a United Nations Convention to promote and protect the rights of older persons. The UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing will meet from 12 to 15 December, 2016 and will discuss such a Convention.
This initiative is described in the following flyer, which is transmitted herewith to encourage support and participation from the broadest civil society community. The flyer contains the necessary documentary references and contact points.

GET INVOLVED !!!!!

- ECOSOC consultative status is not required to participate in the OEWGA process. NGOs with an interest in older persons’ rights can be accredited to attend sessions, and submit statements, information and reports. Deadline for registration by NGOs with ECOSOC status is 6 December 2016.
- Become a member of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) and contribute to the unified voice around the world advocating for a convention to protect the rights of older persons: www.rightsofolderpeople.org.
- Contact your government authorities and urge them to support a convention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – READ ALL ABOUT IT !!!!!

- General Assembly resolution 70/184 on measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons.
- Reports of the OEWG: A/AC.278/2011/4; A/AC.278/2011/5; A/AC.278/2012/1; A/AC.278/2013/2; A/AC.278/2014/2; A/AC.278/2015/2.
- Reports of the Secretary-General: A/65/158; A/66/173; A/67/188; A/68/167; A/69/180; A/70/185.
- General Assembly resolution 48/91 on United Nations Principles for Older Persons.

USEFUL WEBSITES

https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Focal Point on Ageing
http://www.ohchr.org - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
http://www.who.int/ageing - World Health Organization (WHO)
http://www.rightsforolderpeople.org - Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP)
http://www.helpage.org/what-wc-do/rights - HelpAge International (HAI)
http://www.iaag.info – International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG)
http://www.lc-alliance.org - International Longevity Center, Global Alliance (ILC, GA)
http://www.ifla-fiv.org - International Federation on Ageing (IFA)
http://www.inpea.net - International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)

SUPPORT EFFORTS TO START DRAFTING A CONVENTION NOW !!!!!

Contact Co-Chairs, NGO/CoA-NY, Subcommittee to Promote a Human Rights Convention for Older Persons:
Susan Somen, ssomens5@gmail.com, and Frances Zainoeddin: fzainoeddin@msn.com.
24 October 2016
IV. CIVIL SOCIETY NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

CIVICUS LAUNCHES "CIVICUS MONITOR"

The CIVICUS Monitor is a new research tool built by civil society to share reliable, up-to-date data on civic space in all countries. This new platform allows access to live updates from civil society around the world, track threats to civic space and learn about the ways in which the fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression are being realised or threatened.

The CIVICUS Monitor platform is based around an interactive world map and will offer ultimately:

- RATINGS of the state of civic space in every country of the world.
- NEWS of latest developments in each country, no matter how big or small.
- UPDATES that reflect the voices of local people and civil society organisations.
- COUNTRY PAGES to reflect the vast differences between country contexts.
- INFORMATION that is verified, categorised and searchable.
- COMPARISONS between countries and across time.

Information: www.civicus.org

V. UN NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)

The 26th UPR Session was held from 31 October to 11 November, 2016, thus completing the full UPR Second Cycle. On this occasion, here is an overview of the UPR origins and history.

THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, which created the Human Rights Council, mandated the Council to "undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States; the review shall be a cooperative mechanism, based on an interactive dialogue, with the full involvement of the country concerned and with consideration given to its capacity-building needs; such a mechanism shall complement and not duplicate the work of treaty bodies."

Subsequently, the UPR mechanism was established through the adoption by the Council of its "institution-building package" - HRC resolution 5/1 - on 18 June 2007, one year after its first meeting. Among the elements of this package was the new UPR mechanism, which aims to ensure that all United Nations Member States, starting with the members of the Council, have their records examined in order to improve human rights conditions worldwide. Furthermore,
the Council decided that these reviews would be conducted on one working group composed of the 47 members of the Council.

The UPR Working Group consequently held its inaugural session in April 2008 for the first group of States, the order for which was decided through the drawing of lots. With the holding of this first session the first cycle took off through which all 193 United Nations Member States have had their human rights records reviewed over a four-year period (April 2008 to October 2011); this included South Sudan which became a Member State during the course of the first cycle. The second cycle concludes in November 2016.

Per Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 adopted on 25 March 2011 and decision 17/119 pertaining to the review of the Council, the second and subsequent cycles of the UPR should focus on, inter alia, the implementation of the accepted recommendations and the developments of the human rights situation in the State under review. This resolution and decision also established that the periodicity of the review for the second and subsequent cycles will be four and a half years, instead of four, and thus 42 States would be reviewed per year during three sessions of the UPR Working Group. Moreover, the order of reviews established for the first cycle was to be maintained.

**UPR REPORTING AND OBJECTIVES**

In accordance with the Council's "institution-building package", and as reinforced by the outcome of the Council's review adopted in March 2011, the three documents on which State reviews should be based are information prepared by the State concerned, which could be presented either orally or in writing; information contained in the reports of treaty bodies and Special Procedures, to be compiled in a report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); and information provided by other relevant stakeholders to the UPR including non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, human rights defenders, academic institutions and research institutes, regional organizations, as well as civil society representatives, also to be summarized by OHCHR in a separate document.

Per the adopted institution-building package, the objectives of the UPR are: the improvement of the human rights situation on the ground; fulfilment of the State's human rights obligations and commitments and assessment of positive developments and challenges faced by the State; the enhancement of the State's capacity and of technical assistance, in consultation with, and with the consent of, the State concerned; the sharing of best practice among States and other stakeholders; support for cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights; and, the encouragement of full cooperation and engagement with the Council, other human rights bodies and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Right.

**UNITED NATIONS REPORT URGES LIBERIA TO ACT ON RAPE**

"Appalling, tragic, unacceptable"  CR.

A United Nations report released in October documents the high incidence of rape in Liberia as well as the widespread impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.
The report, released by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), indicates a very high number of rapes reported in all the 15 counties across the country, with 803 cases in 2015. “Rape is the second most commonly reported serious crime in Liberia,” according to the report.

Liberia’s high incidence of rape is in part a legacy of its 14-year civil conflict, from which the country is still rebuilding, says the report. According to the World Health Organization, “between 61.4 and 77.4 per cent of women and girls in Liberia were raped during the war.” Despite this, there has been no criminal accountability for perpetrators of war crimes in Liberia, including perpetrators of wartime sexual violence.

Impunity also prevails for recent rapes, with only two per cent of rapes and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) cases reported last year resulting in a conviction in court.

Rape victims do not achieve justice due to multiple challenges, including institutional weaknesses, corruption, lack of due diligence by government as well as logistical and financial constraints. “These combined factors have led to a widespread culture of impunity for SGBV, particularly for rape, putting women and children at continued serious risk of sexual violence,” says the report.

Other barriers to victims reporting rape include undue influence by traditional actors, cultural and patriarchal attitudes, as well as gender stereotyping. A previous UN report published in December 2015, had already highlighted the widespread impunity for SGBV crimes in the context of Liberian traditional and cultural practices. **

Social pressure to informally settle cases out of court is also a major obstacle to justice. “In the Liberian context, victims face challenges at every step of the process if they attempt to hold their assailants criminally accountable,” says the report.

The vast majority of perpetrators of rape in Liberia are males over the age of 18 who are known to the victim. Most perpetrators are community members, and in some cases close relatives to the victim. “The shame of accusing a community or family member of rape prevented most victims from reporting the case,” the report notes.

The report also says that close to 80 per cent of rape victims documented by the United Nations in Liberia in 2015 were under the age of 18, including at least five cases of girls under the age of five being raped. However, children are not necessarily disproportionately targeted, according to the report: “Child rape reports may be higher because they shock the conscience and are not pre-empted by the generally discriminatory attitudes towards women survivors of rape.”

The report provides a number of recommendations to the Government, as well as other national and international stakeholders and the United Nations, to urgently combat the scourge of rape. These include enhancing the fight against impunity through additional resources and capacities, including to the sex crimes prosecutor’s office, developing forensic investigation, harmonizing rape provisions in the penal code and enacting the Domestic Violence Act, which would make spousal rape a criminal offence.
UN WOMEN INAUGURATES GENEVA LIAISON OFFICE

UN Women has inaugurated a Geneva Liaison Office, which will provide strategic support and boost efforts for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide. A large number of intergovernmental processes with direct impact on the women's empowerment agenda, from human rights to humanitarian aid, trade and migration, are based in Geneva.

At the inauguration, Ambassador Valentin Zellweger, Head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva stated “Switzerland is fully committed to the realization of gender equality as there is no sustainable development and peace without addressing the needs of both women and men and fulfilling their human rights. We support the establishment of UN Women's liaison office in Geneva as this is the place where UN, other international organizations, private sector, civil society and academics work together and make a difference for gender equality and empowerment of women in such key domains as health, migration, humanitarian affairs, economics, labour and human rights."

"Our strengthened presence in Geneva through the new UN Women Liaison office will strategically amplify our global voice for women and girls and accelerate the delivery of results. As the new Liaison Office takes shape, we will build concerted action among our partners to put the empowerment of women at the top of the global agenda and keep it there," added UN Women's Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

UN Women now has 89 country offices around the world, liaison offices in Belgium, Denmark, Japan, UAE and Switzerland, to remove barriers to equal opportunities for women and girls and to support efforts to ensure that laws and commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment are fully implemented.

Contact: www.unwomen.org

UN GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
Cancun, Mexico, 22-26 May, 2017

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is the main global forum for strategic advice, coordination, partnership development and the review of progress in implementing international instruments on disaster risk reduction.

Private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples,
migrants, and others - are invited to join the preparatory processes and help build a stronger movement to reduce disaster risks worldwide.

Contact:  Glenn Dolcemascolo  -  Email:  Dolcemasclo@un.org

**VI. Books and Articles of Interest**

Developing a United Nations Emergency Peace Service: Meeting our responsibilities to prevent and protect

Author:  H. Peter Langille;  New York:  Palgrave, 2015

Reforming the United Nations: a chronology

Editor:  Joachim Müller;  Brill, 2016

**VII. CALENDAR**

**NOTICE:**

1. The CoNGO Calendar is a service to the NGO constituency to enable each individual organization to determine, in good time, its possible or desired involvement in the event mentioned, in accordance with the organization's own statutory or programmatic focus.

2. The conferences and meetings listed in the CoNGO Calendar are not under the convening or invitational or access responsibility of CoNGO. They are listed for the information of readers, and any queries about any event should be addressed solely to the organizer of the event, not to CoNGO.

Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO

2016

**November**

**November 30-December 2:** Intertwined meetings of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (reconvened 59th Session) and the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (reconvened 25th Session)  (UNOV, Vienna)
2017

January
January 15-18: UN WORLD DATA FORUM (Cape Town, South Africa)
   http://www.UNdataforum.org

January 27: Committee on Teaching about the United Nations (CTAUN)
   Annual Conference (UNHQ, New York)
   http://www.ctaun.org/

January 30-February 3: International Narcotics Control Board, 118th Session (UNOV, Vienna)

February
February 1-10: UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
   55th Session. Priority theme: "Strategies for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable development for all" (UNHQ, New York)
   http://unsdn.org/event/55th-session-of-the-commission-for-social-development

February 8-9: INTERNATIONAL RARE DISEASE RESEARCH CONSORTIUM (IRDiRC)
   3rd IRDiRC Conference (Paris, France)
   http://irdirc-conference.org/

March
March 13-17: UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 60th Session (UNOV, Vienna)

March 13-24: UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
   61st Session. Priority theme: “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” (UNHQ, New York)

May
May 15-26: International Narcotics Control Board, 119th Session (UNOV, Vienna)

May 22-26: GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (Cancun, Mexico)
   http://www.unisdr.org/conferences/2017/globalplatform

May 22-26: 26th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)
   (UNOV, Vienna)

June
June 7-16: UN Office of Outer Space Affairs: Commission on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,
   60th Session (UNOV, Vienna)
**June 12-16:** World Summit on the Information Society-WSIS Forum 2017 (Geneva, Switzerland)

**June 13-15:** 10TH CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD) (UNHQ, New York)  

**July**

**July 22-29:** 102nd World Esperanto Congress (Seoul, Korea)  
Universal Esperanto Association: uea@co.uea.org

**November**

**November 8-10:** World Federation of the Deaf, Third International Conference (Budapest, Hungary)  
http://wfdbudapest2017.com  
golob@congressline.hu

**2018**

CoNGO’s 70th Anniversary!

**March**

**March 1-3:** 26th CoNGO General Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland)

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament  

UN-HABITAT: 9th World Urban Forum (WUF9) (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)  

**2019**

100th Anniversary of the International Labour Organization (ILO)  
http://www.ilo.org/century/