

# Newsletter

February, 2017

## I. MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CoNGO

### ■ CoNGO 26th GENERAL ASSEMBLY, March 1-2-3, 2018

A. This is a first convocation to the CoNGO 26th General Assembly, to be held in Geneva on March 1, 2 and 3, 2018.

In coming months you will receive the provisional agenda and the programme, and the requisite reports and documents. A Registration Form will also follow, so it is not necessary to respond at this time. However, you are requested and urged to block the dates in your agenda.

For those who will need to travel to Geneva, please think of how many nights accommodation you will require. The Assembly will be held at the John Knox International Center, which has single and double accommodation, so you may book a room there at any time, subject to availability (welcome@johnknox.ch)

B. In accordance with the Rules, the 2018 General Assembly will elect a new CoNGO President and Board. As required by the Rules, the Nominations Committee has been appointed and will be communicating with all Members during the course of 2017. All other procedures required by the Rules will be in place later in 2017.

C. It is of great importance to already now remind all CoNGO members that the Rules specify:  
"Only members which have paid their membership fee until the end of the previous year shall be eligible to send delegates to the General Assembly."

"In order to be eligible to vote at the General Assembly, an organization in consultative status which is a member of the Conference must have paid annual membership dues for each year since the previous General Assembly."

"Only members which have paid their annual membership fees until the end of the previous financial year may be nominated or may nominate or support candidatures."

Thus in practice, to participate fully in every stage and aspect of this CoNGO governance process culminating in March 2018, Members must have paid their dues for 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Any Member which has a shortfall may of course now pay any arrears, which will be credited to the appropriate year.

D. I encourage the full engagement of all Members in the planning for CoNGO's future. The Assembly in 2018 will in fact open with a first celebration of CoNGO's 70th Anniversary (1948-2018) - a reflection on achievements and an opening to future opportunities.

Cyril Ritchie  
President of CoNGO

## **II. CoNGO Secretariat**

### **■ CoNGO – 2016 Brief Summary**

In 2016 the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) continued its long-standing role of being a collective interface to all parts of the UN System to promote and defend NGO access, rights and voice, which some governments willfully neglect or restrict. CoNGO has spoken up at, inter alia, the several platforms dealing with the 2030 Development Agenda, the UN. DPI/NGO Annual Conference, the Forum of the World Summit on the Information Society, several ECOSOC Functional Commissions, UN.ESCAP, the Human Rights Council.

CoNGO's Substantive Committees continue to be the "front-line soldiers" of the NGO community in bringing expertise, community knowledge and grass-roots experience to the debates of many UN organs, thereby rendering them more "real-world" and contributing to the adoption of more implementable resolutions. The ranks of CoNGO's Substantive Committees have been augmented in 2016 by the creation of Status of Women Committees in four regions, and by the inauguration in New York of the Substantive Committee on Rare Diseases. The CoNGO Committee on Education went through a process of revitalization to become the Committee on Education, Learning and Literacy, with its full launch in the first months of 2017.

Throughout 2016 CoNGO made strides towards the long-planned launch of a CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP). Thanks to intensive work by CoNGO volunteers and interns, a data base of nearly 500 Asia-Pacific NGOs/CSOs has been established. The activities of UN.ESCAP Standing Committees have been cross-referenced with the activities of CoNGO Substantive Committees, and both further cross-referenced with the 17 SDGs. These preparations will lead to the launch of RCAP in Bangkok on May 12 and 13, 2017 immediately before the annual governing meeting of UN.ESCAP (May 15-19). Separate notification will be forthcoming shortly.

■ **New CoNGO Intern in the Geneva Office**

The excellent long-standing relationship of CoNGO with Kyung Hee University, Korea, has made available a long succession of KHU interns to work for CoNGO. The latest, Yoojeong Jeong, began her service this month of February, and she has already competently processed this issue of the CoNGO E-NEWSLETTER, for which I express my thanks.

Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO

### **III. CoNGO SUBSTANTIVE COMMITTEES**

■ **NGO Committee on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (New York)**

As not all address lists have been updated, may we recall that the "NGO Committee on the International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples", a New York-based CoNGO Substantive Committee, has changed its name to "NGO Committee on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples".

Information: [indigenous.committee@gmail.com](mailto:indigenous.committee@gmail.com)

■ **"NGO Committee on Sustainable Development (Vienna)" elected the following new officers in December 2016:**

Chair: Ilona Graenitz (SIW)

First Vice-Chair: Dora Vrdlovec (Soroptimist International)

Secretary: Julia Lobnig (Südwind)

Deputy Secretary: Roland Leithenmayer (VFV)

Treasurer: Ingeborg Geyer (Zonta)

### **IV. CIVIL SOCIETY NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS**

■ **THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT SUMMER SCHOOL**

**19-23 JUNE 2017, NUI GALWAY, IRELAND**

This year's ICC Summer School will include a special session on CORPORATE CRIMES AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT. The list of speakers at the 2017 ICC Summer School includes the following: PROFESSOR WILLIAM SCHABAS (Irish Centre for Human Rights/Middlesex University);

PROFESSOR JAMES STEWART (University of British Columbia); DR. FABRICIO GUARIGLIA (Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court); DR. ROD RASTAN (Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court); DR. MOHAMED M. EL ZEIDY (International Criminal Court); MR. RICHARD J. RODGERS (Global Diligence LLP, DR NOELLE HIGGINS (Maynooth University).

An EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION FEE OF €400 is available for delegates who register BEFORE 1 APRIL 2017, with the fee after that date being €450. Scholarships are also available, with the closing date being 15 MARCH 2017. The registration fee includes all conference materials, all lunches and refreshments, a social activity and a closing dinner. The registration fee also includes a complimentary copy of Professor William Schabas' book 'An Introduction to the International Criminal Court'. The closing date for registrations is 1 JUNE 2017.

Information: [iccsommerschool@gmail.com](mailto:iccsommerschool@gmail.com)

## V. UN NEWS & UPCOMING UN EVENTS

### ■ NEW UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL:

Extracts from the first formal statement to the UN Security Council by Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General from January 1, 2017

The United Nations was established to prevent war by binding us in a rules-based international order. Today, that order is under grave threat. Millions of people in crisis look to this Council to preserve global stability and to protect them from harm, but the enormous human and economic cost of conflicts around the world shows how complex and challenging this is. Yet we spend far more time and resources responding to crises rather than preventing them. People are paying too high a price. Member States are paying too high a price. We need a whole new approach....

The interconnected nature of today's crises requires us to connect our own efforts for peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, not just in words, but in practice. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on sustaining peace demonstrate strong intergovernmental support for an integrated approach.

The challenge now is to make corresponding changes to our culture, strategy, structures and operations.

We must rebalance our approach to peace and security. For decades, this has been dominated by responding to conflict. For the future, we need to do far more to prevent war and sustain peace....

The primary work of conflict prevention lies with Member States.

As societies become multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural, we will need greater political, cultural and economic investments in inclusivity and cohesion, so that people appreciate the benefits

of diversity rather than perceiving it as a threat. All groups need to see that their individual identities are respected, while feeling that they belong as valued members of the community as a whole. Civil society has a role to play in raising the alarm when this respect is threatened or lost.

We must commit to a surge in diplomacy for peace, in partnership with regional organizations, mobilizing the entire range of those with influence, from religious authorities to civil society and the business community.

Too many prevention opportunities have been lost because Member States mistrusted each other's motives, and because of concerns over national sovereignty. Such concerns are understandable, in a world where power is unequal and principles have sometimes been applied selectively. Indeed, prevention should never be used to serve other political goals. On the contrary, prevention is best served by strong sovereign States, acting for the good of their people.

But in taking preventive action, we need to avoid double standards. But that does not mean that there are no standards at all. Preventive action is essential to avert mass atrocities or grave abuses of human rights. And we can achieve this only through reasoned discussion, based on facts and the pursuit of truth.

Prevention must consistently be seen as a value in itself. It is an essential means of reducing human suffering and enabling people to reach their full potential....

Disagreements about the past cannot allow us to prevent us from acting today.

Together, we need to demonstrate leadership, and strengthen the credibility and authority of the United Nations, by putting peace first. Ending the boundless human suffering and the wanton waste of resources generated by conflict is in everyone's interests....

War is never inevitable. It is always a matter of choice: the choice to exclude, to discriminate, to marginalize, to resort to violence. By restoring trust between governments and their citizens and amongst Member States, we can prevent and avoid conflict. But peace, too, is never inevitable. It is the result of difficult decisions, hard work and compromise. We should never take it for granted, but should prize and nurture it in every country, at every time. Prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority. If we live up to our responsibilities, we will save lives, reduce suffering and give hope to millions.

Links:<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-01-10/secretary-generals-remarks-maintenance-international-peace-and>

## ■ UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (UNITAR)

UNITAR offers the following online courses which target professionals who are involved in inter-governmental negotiations.

A. United Nations Protocol, 24 April - 21 May 2017

This e-Learning course aims to provide an overview of UN and multilateral protocol practices to guide the protocol practitioners who operate within the Offices of the UN at its Headquarters and other Offices throughout the world. With the help of interactive online exercises, participants will finish the course with a concrete understanding of specific protocol-related situations.

Registration: <https://www.unitar.org/event/full-catalog/united-nations-protocol-16>

B. Overcoming Negotiation Deadlocks, 24 April - 21 May 2017

This course aims to equip participants with practical skills to enhance individual negotiation capacity and lead through situations of deadlock. It will help learners to improve their negotiation performance in order to obtain better outcomes in bilateral and multilateral negotiations, but also to become brokers of agreements when solutions look impossible.

Registration: <https://www.unitar.org/event/full-catalog/united-nations-protocol-16>

E-Learning courses – (Phone) +41 (0)22 917 87 16 / (E-mail) [mdp-elearning@unitar.org](mailto:mdp-elearning@unitar.org)

– (Website) <http://www.unitar.org/>

## VI. Publication

### ■ EXEMPLARY PRACTICES TO PROTECT REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Women and girls fleeing from war, persecution and violence in their home countries are particularly at risk of sexual and gender-based violence during their journey to safety and when they arrive in the European Union. The World Future Council, filia.die frauenstiftung and UN Women National Committee Germany have issued a report on good practices to better protect refugee women and girls in the EU.

#### Executive Summary

An increasing number of refugees worldwide are women and children. In many cases, they are forced to leave their homes due to armed conflicts, insecurity or generalized violence. For women and girls, their migration experience is shaped by particular features, the roots of which lie in the gendered forms of violence they may face throughout their journey. Some may leave their country of origin because of experiences of gender-based violence or in fear of such violence, while others may seek to escape the threat of female genital mutilation or forced marriage. Without regular pathways to reach a country where they can seek international protection, women often have to resort to dangerous routes. During their journey, they are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence,

including rape, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, psychological violence, trafficking, early and forced marriage, transactional sex and domestic violence.

When they reach their destination, many women and young girls still face risks due to limited access to support services, a lack of effective procedures to identify survivors of gender-based violence and inadequate reception conditions in accommodation facilities. What can be done to better protect women refugees and asylum-seekers? What practical steps can be taken to prevent violence?

This report suggests positive actions that policy-makers and civil society organizations can take to ensure that refugee women and girls arriving in the EU are safe from violence. This collection of good practices contains more than 30 inspiring initiatives from 13 countries which are effective, practical, and can be easily replicated and adapted. It is intended as a resource for governments, local, regional and national authorities, policy-makers and civil society organizations working with refugee women and girls.

Information: <http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/protecting-refugee-women-and-girls-from-violence>

## VII. FROM THE ARCHIVES

### ■ Note from the President:

As I look back on over 50 years of being in and around CoNGO I find some interesting nuggets in the archives and so will select an illustrative item to put in this new Chapter in each of the next issues.

Like me, after reading them you may have a "Plus ça change..." feeling! CR

October 2006: Extracts from the Keynote Address by Jakob von Uexkull to the "*International Civil Society Forum for Democracy*", Doha, Qatar.

Theme: "Democracy - the Road to Peace"

"Growing distrust and cynicism not just towards politicians but towards democratic politics, also in civil society, is a growing danger. We need to rehabilitate and participate more in politics....Today fewer people vote but of those who vote which part of them votes? Is it the engaged citizen or the superficial consumer, because there are no serious alternatives on offer?

Climate Chaos, if not stopped, will make democracy irrelevant as citizenship does not interest the dro wning, or thirsting. 'No taxation without representation' is a basic democratic principle. Yet we 'tax' and discpount away the very lives of the poor and of our children and future generations!

Capacity building logically means ensuring that democracies have the ability to respond to the challe nges they face. Here are some initiatives which can strengthen and enliven democracy:

- Participatory budgeting is an old idea now coming back...Nothing will enliven democracy faster

that giving citizen meetings the ability to allocate even a part of the budget.

- The new eParliament will link the world's democratic parliamentarians electronically, forming a virtual world parliament. The eParliament will speed up decision-making on urgent issues. ([www.e-parl.net](http://www.e-parl.net))

Some argue that, as human beings are greedy, the problem is too much democracy....But it is absurd to claim that people have democratically chosen to destabilize the global climate or would knowingly do so. The reason for our current predicament is not too much, but too little democracy. The democratic space of decision-making has been drastically reduced as the power of the economic sector has been increased.

Today we face a crisis of (moral) leadership, especially in mature democracies, and the less leaders are trusted, the less they dare to do - a vicious circle. If democracy is powerless to respond to global changes, it will not be the road to peace, but to chaos - and the hour of the dictators will come again.....Just as democracy is incompatible with the Church or state dominating all sectors of society, it is incompatible with the economic sector claiming dominance over all other institutions and areas of life. Market values and 'market discipline' belong to markets! Living democracy needs commerce-free space."

## VIII. 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

## 2017

- Centennial year of the birth of Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988), founder of ATD Fourth World (ATD Quart Monde)

Website: [www.atd-fourthworld.org](http://www.atd-fourthworld.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 61<sup>st</sup> Session. Priority theme: "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" (UNHQ, New York)  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017>

### May

- **May 12-13:** Launch of the CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP),  
Bangkok, Thailand
- **May 15-26:** International Narcotics Control Board, 119th Session (UNOV, Vienna)
- **May 18-20:** International Press Institute World Congress  
"Building the journalism we need: media freedom and quality in the digital age" (Hamburg, Germany)  
Website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at) / E-mail: [ipi@freemedia.at](mailto:ipi@freemedia.at)  
Address: International Press Institute Spiegelgasse 2/29 A-1010 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) [http://bit.ly/crpd\\_cosp10](http://bit.ly/crpd_cosp10)

## July

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

## September

- **September 20-23:** UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Ministerial Conference on Ageing, preceded by an NGO Forum on Ageing, Lisbon Portugal  
  
E-mail: [ngoageing@gmail.com](mailto:ngoageing@gmail.com)

## November

- **November 8-10:** World Federation of the Deaf, Third International Conference (Budapest, Hungary) <http://wfdbudapest2017.com> [glob@congressline.hu](mailto:glob@congressline.hu)

# 2018

## CoNGO's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

## March

- **March 1-3:** 26th CoNGO General Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland)  
  
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament  
<http://www.2020visioncampaign.org/en/action-alerts/high-level-nuclear-disarmament-conference.html>  
  
UN-HABITAT: 9<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum (WUF9) (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)  
  
<http://unhabitat.org/kuala-lumpur-to-host-world-urban-forum-in-2018/>

## 2019

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

## 2020

- **200th Anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale**("The Lady with the Lamp", inspirer of modern health and nursing services)

NB: The Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH) has proposed a "Nightingale 2020 Vision" linked to the SDGs.

E-mail: [NIGHinfo@gmail.com](mailto:NIGHinfo@gmail.com)