



**Report of the President of the
Conference of Non-Governmental
Organizations in Consultative
Relationship with the United Nations
(CoNGO) to the 24th General
Assembly, January 17, 2011**

**THE STATE OF THE CONFERENCE:
ACCOMPLISHMENTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

Introduction

1. It is with great pleasure and sense of responsibility that I present this report as your President. It forms parts of the report by officers of the organization as required by Article 7 of the CoNGO Rules. What I present before you in summary form are the major events and accomplishments from end of December 2007 up to today. It is my final report on the State of the Conference.
2. When I assumed the Presidency, I gave you a glimpse of what my leadership would offer, including what issues and themes, of social and organizational nature, we would give focus on. Allow me to briefly recall with you certain portions of that acceptance speech and highlight specific themes that even as I close my Presidency continue to call our attention.
3. At the outset of my Presidency, I said human rights must be central to the life and work of CoNGO. If there is any cause that we must attach ourselves to, unequivocally, it must be to the visible living out of human rights in our lives and in the relationships we forge and nurture. Human rights are not taught. They are learned. However voluminous the conventions and protocols are, until we truly live and experience human rights, we will never truly fathom what it means to enjoy the fullest of human dignity and the extent of human rights.

4. It is in light of this focus on human rights that the many activities we have implemented in the last three years had a clear bent. I said then, and I say again now: It is in the respect for human rights where personal decency is anchored. It is the same respect for human rights where public morality is to be yoked. It is the same respect for human rights through which institutions – governmental or non-governmental – are to be held accountable. We, and the institutions we lead, must not be found wanting in the realization of human rights. What we fight for in the larger society we must exhibit in our organizational life. Discourse on human rights, in the end, amounts to nothing until human rights themselves are lived and exhibited in our personal, public and organizational relations.
5. The Civil Society Development Forums that we have conducted all that had a clear focus on human rights. The Outcome Documents and Action Plans that came out of these forums laid out a nexus between human rights and sustainable development. Such nexus is crucial to the achievement of the MDGs. During my Presidency, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was high and remains high in local and global agendas. Unless the development of peoples is solidly founded on human rights, asserting the equal dignity of every human being and the equal share of everyone in the forging of their lives and their future, our pronouncements for sustainable development will mean little to the poor, deprived and marginalized who are at the fringes of our economic, political, social and cultural structures and processes.
6. As an organization, we embarked on reforms that will make us relevant in the larger society, effective, and efficient as an organization. As an organization, we endeavored over the last three years to engage civil society in a **consultative process** with the United Nations, to engage CoNGO membership in a **collaborative approach**, and to join the international community in a **cooperative spirit** in bettering our world for peace and sustainability.
7. It is worth reminding ourselves about whom we are and our reason for being: CoNGO is an independent, international, non-profit membership association of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in existence since 1948. CoNGO aims at facilitating their participation in debates and decision-making processes of entities of the United Nations System. Specifically, CoNGO's key objectives, in that context, consist in:
 - ensuring the presence of NGOs as one of three parties in exchanges also including government and United Nations entities, on issues of global, regional or national concern; this implies assisting CoNGO's members in gaining access to and participating in consultative processes normally convened by United Nations entities at the request of governments;
 - facilitating the ongoing substantive dialogue specifically between entities of the United Nations System and NGOs per se;
 - informing CoNGO's membership of new activities conducted and initiatives developed by UN entities and NGOs;
 - empowering NGOs, through the provision of expertise available within CoNGO's member organizations and its substantive committees, to develop further the quality and reach of their activities;

- promoting and encouraging the synergies of NGO partnerships and collaborative networks in and between regions; and
 - training NGOs to help them develop leadership, management, advocacy and capacity-building skills.
8. The operational mantra during my term was about accountability, transparency and responsibility and the exactions that these put on our organizational structures and leadership. It is in this instance that we gave focus to the rationalization of CoNGO substantive committees. CoNGO's substantive committees were especially encouraged to be the places where strong advocacies will arise and action to abound. They were especially challenged to rise to a level of organizational professionalism that makes them worthy participants in both discourse and action in the thematic and geographic areas they claim expertise. It is for these resources that we appointed a Board Rapporteur on the rationalization of substantive committees. The First Vice President has excellently led this work and is coming to us with a set of proposals.
 9. The strength of our organization lies in our membership. We have been intentional in the last three years in bringing into our fold as many NGOs, from the width and breadth of civil society, that are already accredited by the United Nations. In this regard, we have started to organize CoNGO regional committees as a way to engage NGOs and civil society in these areas in addressing their concerns and harnessing their strengths in a more direct way.
 10. To speak truth to power, and to intervene in the public square, we needed to empower ourselves as NGOs with the necessary knowledge about the issues we advocate. We also needed to empower ourselves with the necessary skills and competencies that made us efficient and effective. Our major concern about physical and political access at the UN falls under this category. In this regard, the professionalization and rationalization of CoNGO's substantive committees – more than 40 of them spread across New York, Geneva, and Vienna – is very crucial.
 11. Intervening in the public square is a most urgent task about which we are prepared to do and our constituents are engaged in already. We must discover more ways why we are non-governmental entities and why such enterprise is necessarily independent from the UN and from government. Such independence is the best way NGOs can check on the commitments of governments and the United Nations on their duty to prosper and abide by the fundamental charter of the UN and the treaties, conventions and declarations they have forged. We will check, even as we will collaborate and partner to the fullest extent possible, so that we can claim a stake in the many worthy endeavors that the United Nations play crucial roles in.
 12. CoNGO's leitmotiv as I started my Presidency has been "Defining the Present – Shaping the Future." However, it is at the level of this General Assembly that I want us to look at the full implication of such a general theme. Here, I look forward to hearing the keynote and distinguished addresses. My challenge to you is to pay attention to what our speakers will say as much as what each of you will say. My hope is that from the challenge posed by these speakers and the exchange with them we will be able to grasp a little better our present-day realities, define and redefine them in ways that we as NGOs can then play a significant role in shaping the future we want.

13. It is to both that present and future that I challenge each of us to be responsible and relevant NGOs. We must be “Co-NGOs together” in the forging of a better, more just, more peaceable, and more sustainable world.

CoNGO’s Statutory Body – the Board

14. Let me recall with you CoNGO’s 23rd General Assembly which was held in Geneva from 5 to 7, December 2007. It elected the President, Liberato C. Bautista, and the following organizations to serve as members of the Board:

Members of CoNGO’s Board

- American Psychological Association (APA)
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia)
- Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Commission of the Churches on International Affairs/World Council of Churches (CCIA)
- Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI)
- Femmes Africa Solidarity (FAS)
- United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society (UMC-GBCS)
- Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices (IACTP)
- International Council of Women (ICW)
- International Federation of University Women (IFUW)
- International Federation of Women Lawyers (IFWL)
- International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO)
- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
- Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
- Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
- World Alliance of YMCAs (World YMCA)
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
- World Federalist Movement/Institute for Global Policy (WFM/IGP)
- World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)
- World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM)

Officers

The new Board met shortly after the General Assembly and elected the following officers:

- First Vice-President: Anna Biondi, International Trade Union Confederation
- Vice-President Vienna: Ilona Graenitz, International Federation of University Women
- Vice-Presidents: Femmes Africa Solidarity
World Organization of the Scout Movement
- Treasurer: World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy
- Secretary: Environment Liaison Centre International

15. It is at this point in my report that I want to express my deepest thanks to my colleague members of the CoNGO Board for the joint stewardship of the organization that has made it possible for us to steer the affairs of CoNGO in a manner that preserved the integrity of our organization and fostered to greater heights its witness in the public square, be in at the local, national, regional or global levels.
16. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to colleague officers whose countless volunteer hours of time, personal resources donated, and priceless counsel has made this Presidency, and burden of leadership, a bit lighter to bear. In fact, there were countless moments of joy that I either celebrated with them or celebrated alone.
17. My profuse thanks go to Cyril whose post in Geneva makes him my most important source of counsel on almost all of agendas that are before CoNGO. We did not necessarily agree when I was not yet a CoNGO President. But his co-leadership with me has elicited nothing but full cooperation and support from him. I am forever grateful to you Cyril for who you are and for your help during the entirety of my presidency.

Changes in Officer Leadership between 2008 and 2010

18. The First Vice-President, Anna Biondi, asked to be relieved from her duties during the Board meeting held in February 2009 at the Asian Institute of Technology at Pathumthani, Thailand, as she was to take up employment with ILO. The Board subsequently unanimously elected the then Secretary, Cyril Ritchie, as her successor and the World Federation of United Nations as new Secretary.

CoNGO's Substantive Committees – New York, Geneva, Vienna

19. CoNGO's Substantive Committees will be the subject of a longer report by the Board Rapporteur dealing with the rationalization of how committees organize their work and their structure. The aim was to revisit the CoNGO Rules and see how these rules are followed and if not, why. Our First Vice President has done an excellent job in monitoring over the three-year period various examples of good and bad practices that served as basis for what he will present to this body as proposals to enhance the work of our substantive committees.

CoNGO's Regional Outreach – Status Report on Regional Committees

CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP)

20. In February 2009, following the recognition, by the Board, of the establishment of a Regional Committee for Asia in accordance with CoNGO's Rules 33-37, an inaugural meeting was convened at the Asian Institute of Technology at Pathumthani back-to-back with a Board meeting. The Board agreed that the region would cover the entire geographical area of Asia, including the Asian Pacific, and that the body would therefore be named "CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP)." The Committee's Terms of Reference were provisionally accepted, also with a view to having them considered as an example for other regional

committees still to be launched. These Terms were subsequently circulated for the Board's information and publicized on CoNGO's website. The Global Cooperative Society (GCS) International offered to provide an office for the Regional Committee. It also put forward a proposal to launch a regional process for the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

21. The following CoNGO members were designated as members of the Provisional Steering Committee:

- Forum Asia
- Amman Centre for Human Rights
- International Federation of Women Lawyers
- GCS International
- Salvation Army, Australia
- General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church
- American Psychological Association (representation in Asia)
- Youth representative organization
- The President of CoNGO

CoNGO Regional Committee in Africa (RCA)

22. A number of member organizations had expressed the desire to establish a CoNGO Regional Committee in Africa several years ago, prior to my term, and recommended that such further regionalization be brought to fruition expeditiously. A series of discussions under the leadership of CoNGO's President, the Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarity and the Executive President of Nurses Across the Borders Humanitarian Initiative-Inc. took place in 2009 and 2010. The Board subsequently established the Regional Committee with the support of more than 20-member organizations at its meeting in May 2010.

23. The Regional Committee in Africa is to cover the entire geographical area of Africa. It aims at facilitating African NGOs' participation in United Nations and CoNGO's activities globally and regionally, in particular in those of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and other United Nations bodies and agencies in Africa. Its primary objective is to promote better cooperation among CoNGO's members and other civil society organizations in Africa.

24. The public launch of the Regional Committee was originally foreseen to take place back-to-back with a Board meeting to be held in Dakar in October 2010. However, due to financial constraints, various activities of CoNGO needed to be rescheduled, including the launch of the Committee in Dakar. A Preparatory Committee, established by CoNGO's President, also serving as the Regional Committee's Provisional Leadership Team, subsequently agreed to have the Regional Committee's public launch held in conjunction with the African Union pre-summit event organized by Femmes Africa Solidarity in Addis Ababa. It is now scheduled for 26 January 2011.

25. The members of the Preparatory Committee are:

- Femmes Africa Solidarity, Vice-President of CoNGO, represented by Bineta Diop
- Nurses Across Borders Humanitarian Initiative-Inc., represented by Pastor Peter Omoragbon
- African Women's Development and Communication Network, represented by Mama Koite Doumbia
- Tunisian Mothers Association, represented by Saida Agrebi
- Fairleigh Dickinson University, represented by Jo Anne Murphy
- CoNGO's President Liberato Bautista
- CoNGO's First Vice-President Cyril Ritchie

CoNGO Cross-Regional Committee for the Mediterranean

26. The member organizations Ius Primi Viri and the Tunisian Mothers Association submitted to the Board, at its October 2010 meeting, a proposal to establish a Cross-Regional Committee for the Mediterranean. The countries to be covered by this regional grouping would be: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Malta, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco. The member organizations of the cross-regional committee would work together on common issues within the organizational ambit of CoNGO, some of them collaborating already through the UN/NGO IRENE network.

27. At its 2 October meeting, the CoNGO Board "took note of the proposal by IUS PRIMI VIRI to create a CoNGO Cross-Regional Committee in the Mediterranean. As CoNGO Rules only foresee the creation of either substantive or regional committees, the Board approved the initiative on the condition that IUS PRIMI VIRI works towards the establishment of a Substantive Committee on Mediterranean Issues instead.

CoNGO's Membership

Quantitative evolution

28. At the close of 2007, at the time of the 23rd General Assembly in Geneva, 545 CoNGO members were reported. In early 2008, the number of CoNGO members reached 577, and by the beginning of 2009 we have breached the 600 mark. At the time of writing, 650 organizations had joined CoNGO as members.

29. This increase is assumed to be the result, to a large extent, or systematic highlighting of the benefits of CoNGO membership by the President, its officers and International Secretariat during their attendance of international conferences, specific CoNGO events and NGO gatherings.

Evolution of the members' substantive focus

30. CoNGO's leadership and its International Secretariat gave special emphasis to further the development of a membership base among youth movements. In support of such efforts the following concrete steps were taken:

- As CoNGO President I gave high priority to participation in international conferences having as primary audience scout movements, university student groups and democracy-building youth groups and encouraged these to join the organization. For example, I keynoted the International Youth Forum of the World YMCA in Hong Kong in 2010. I also keynoted a Korea-wide Model UN in Seoul, Korea in 2009 and a Model UN gathering in the entire Americas held in Punta Cana in 2009.
- Focal point responsibilities for designing more detailed youth-focused strategies were assigned to the Senior Associate for Membership Development and Services (New York), assisted by the Associate for Communications and Public Relations (Geneva). Both of them regularly participated in the meetings of CoNGO's Substantive Committees on Youth in their respective cities, provided briefings and helped the committee's officers prepare themselves for interventions at international conferences. The youth as a constituency is a mobile and transient group. The need to maintain a membership base, and a leadership pool, continues to be a challenge.
- The Substantive Committees on Youth were encouraged to participate in and contribute themes for debate at CoNGO's Civil Society Development Fora. Moreover, the agendas of these Fora were designed in a manner to ensure that some of the keynote speakers were representatives of such substantive committees, also prepared to play lead roles within the working groups.

31. The ultimate purpose of these efforts was help identify youth leaders and develop their skills. Through the gradual assumption of leadership roles, they were to be assisted in becoming seasoned in the fields of advocacy and diplomacy at all levels of civil society engagement. Thanks to their commitment an orderly transfer of responsibilities between successive generations of NGO advocates should be assured.

Fee income from membership

32. CoNGO's total income emanating from membership dues amounted to the equivalent, in Swiss francs (CHF) of 117'349 in 2007, to 103'761 in 2008 and 62'589 in 2009. As at 31 October 2010, membership dues income for that year had reached CHF 73'889. The decrease in dues income is due to several factors, including inadequate staff attention which has since been addressed.

33. The decrease also reflects the growing difficulties of member organizations in meeting their commitments in a gravely deteriorating financial environment. As a result of their own resource bases shrinking, because of fewer subsidies, and deteriorating financial reserves, a number of them asked CoNGO to accept delayed payment of their dues, or only fractions of their dues.

34. CoNGO's Board noted such requests from financially strapped members. It consequently reviewed the currently applicable U.S. dollar, Euro and Swiss franc rates of membership dues on several occasions. While it accepted, in exceptional cases and on an *ad hoc* basis, reduced dues

payments on the basis of evidence provided, it decided, as a general rule, to maintain these rates for the time being to avoid the risk of a further potential decline in income. However, at this Assembly I want us to examine this issue in greater depth and to formulate a reasonable tiered-system of membership dues rates.

35. Another factor accounting for the decline in the Swiss franc value of dues income was the significant weakening of the relative value of the U.S. dollar and the Euro. The U.S. dollar moved from an annual average rate of USD 1.00 equal to CHF 1.20 in 2007, to CHF 1.08 in 2008, to CHF 1.09 in 2009, and for 2010 by 30 November to CHF 1.05. The respective values for the Euro were 1.64 in 2007, 1.59 in 2008, 1.51 in 2009, and 1.39 so far in 2010. In addition to North American-based organizations, many organizations located in Asia, Africa and Latin America traditionally use the U.S. currency for international financial transactions. Moreover, as a result of this deteriorating exchange rate trend relative to Swiss francs, there is a growing tendency among a number of Europe-based organizations, even some based in Geneva, to pay their 2010 dues in U.S. dollars, i.e. an amount of USD 300, rather than CHF 360 or EUR 240.

Strengthening the Dialogue with the United Nations

(1) Participation in the work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies, and its major conferences and meetings

Civil Society Development Fora (CSDF) in New York and Geneva, and Briefings in Vienna, annually

36. During the period under review CoNGO organized NGO Fora every year, in cooperation with the NGO Branch of UN/DESA and other partners. In 2008, the conduct of the Fora was financed through supplementary funding by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), i.e. through resources that had been specifically earmarked for this event. The funding of the 2009 and 2010 events was essentially assured through SDC's core funding of CoNGO. Each of these Fora focused on an overall theme located within the same area as the theme of ECOSOC's High-level Segment and of its Annual Ministerial Review. Since 2008 the Forum has been comprised of three meetings – two normally two-day/two and a half-day “components” held each in New York and Geneva, and a half-day “briefing” in Vienna.
37. Specifically, every year, the first component was held at the location of ECOSOC's Substantive Session (alternating between New York and Geneva; hence in 2008 and 2010 in New York, and in 2009 in Geneva) to enable participating NGOs to thoroughly debate on a variety of sub-topics related to the central theme (which was in 2008: sustainable development, extreme poverty and hunger; in 2009; global public health; in 2010: gender equality and empowerment of women). These NGOs subsequently submitted their joint consolidated conclusions and recommendations (contained in an “Outcome Document”), emanating from their substantive debates, through CoNGO to ECOSOC's member governments. In addition, CoNGO's President highlighted these recommendations in his statements at ECOSOC's Substantive Sessions, and he, other officers and member organizations participated in the debates, especially those of the annual High-level

Segments, with a goal of helping enrich ECOSOC's deliberative process through the inclusion of civil society's reasoning and advocacy.

38. The second annual component (held in 2008 and 2010 in Geneva, and 2009 in New York) served for a review of the first component's Outcome Document in conjunction with the conclusions and recommendations of ECOSOC's Ministerial Declaration. The second component's debates and calls for action were reflected in "Action Points" addressed to member governments, organizations of the United Nations System and civil society. These action points are to feed into substantive discussions at ECOSOC and within the wider United Nations System. However, they are also intended to become a valuable instrument for assisting civil society organizations in shaping their own strategies at international, regional and local levels to attain the MDGs.
39. The Fora benefitted from statements by ECOSOC Presidents and keynote addresses of representatives of UN/DESA and United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations World Food Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.
40. Since 2009, CoNGO has also held briefings at the Vienna International Centre, under the leadership of its Vice-President Vienna. These meetings, mainly intended for the NGO community at another major centre of the United Nations Offices, also had an overall focus on the central theme of ECOSOC's High-level Segment and of its Annual Ministerial Review. CoNGO's Vice-President Vienna was able to obtain the agreement of a number of high-level speakers, including former senior officials of the Austrian Government, members of academic institutions and civil society, to make presentations at such briefings.

Human Rights Council, Geneva

41. CoNGO and its substantive committees, in particular its Committee on Human Rights and its Committee on the Status of Women, provided information to NGOs on sessions of the Human Rights Council and related mechanics to help participants to be well versed on the substance of the issues under consideration and also be prepared from a practical organizational viewpoint to participate effectively. CoNGO also organized/co-organized training sessions for newcomers, thematic side events and delicate consultations intended to facilitate the selection of speakers for high-level segments of the Council sessions. CoNGO's First Vice-President addressed a panel discussion on the right to food during the Council's 10th session, *inter alia* to present the conclusions of CoNGO's 2008 Civil Society Development Forum on that subject.

Durban Review Conference, Geneva, 20-24 April 2009

42. CoNGO organized the collection of NGO contributions for the preparation of the Conference's draft outcome document. During the Conference it played a major role in mediating between conflicting positions. In coordination with the Conference's liaison office, CoNGO helped ensure

that NGO representatives from all regions and civil society sectors be given opportunities to take the floor during the Review.

ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies (Functional Committees and Expert Bodies), New York

43. Various substantive committees of CoNGO followed the work of several ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, preparing civil society participation for their debates and holding appropriate side-events. CoNGO's Committees on Sustainable Development and Financing for Development followed the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. CoNGO's Committees on Social Development, on Ageing, on Youth and on the Family invariably followed the work of the Commission on Social Development – as did CoNGO's Committee on the Status of Women with regard to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, CoNGO's Committee on the International Decade for the World's Indigenous peoples with regard to the work of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the CoNGO-related Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice with regard to the work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Justice.

World Summit on the Information Society implementation and follow-up

44. CoNGO sought to contribute to the successful implementation and follow-up process related to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) by fulfilling its function as a facilitator, aiming at the inclusion of as many civil society organizations as possible in that process. This objective was pursued through, *inter alia*, (i) ensuring the back-and-forth dissemination of information pertaining to the WSIS process through partners in CoNGO's network, and (ii) encouraging like-minded organizations to participate, together with CoNGO, in meetings and events in support of that process.

45. In 2010 the opportunity arose for CoNGO's international secretariat, in agreement with CoNGO's President and Board, to enhance its collaboration with the WSIS Secretariat of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Then one of CoNGO's Vice-Presidents, World Organization of the Scout Movement's Richard Amalvy, was given prominence for his presentation at the high-level opening ceremony of the WSIS Forum 2010 as the civil society representative (his statement was also disseminated via webcast). The international secretariat was able to organize and conduct, at that Forum, a thematic workshop on "ICTD (Information and Communication Technologies and Development) activities and civil society". CoNGO's President and Board, and the ITU executive management, also expressed agreement with the thrust of a concept note developed jointly by both secretariats to "enhance CoNGO's involvement in the WSIS process as a key partner to facilitate the inclusion of civil society organizations."

In early December of 2010, the Under-Secretary General of UN DESA, Mr. Sha Zukang invited me in my capacity as CoNGO President to present a summary of civil society submissions to a high-level open consultation of ECOSOC on the implementation of the Tunis Agenda. My presentation was covered by audio and my full presentation is linked to the UN DESA's website.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) – Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting, Geneva, 2-3 November 2009

46. CoNGO assisted in the preparation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) – Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting. It helped coordinate, in consultation with the President of CoNGO's Committee on the Status of Women and the Senior Advisor to the UNECE Executive Secretary, the participation of NGO speakers during the meeting.

Quadrennial Report

47. Under ECOSOC's resolution 1996/31, NGOs with general or special consultative status must submit to ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs, every four years, a report on their activities, specifically on the support they gave to the work of the United Nations. By resolution 2008/4, ECOSOC may take measures to suspend the status of those organizations that fail to submit such quadrennial reports on time.
48. ECOSOC feels that, in line with the principle of reciprocity, NGOs benefitting from the consultative relationship are granted the privilege of participating in a wide variety of United Nations -sponsored meetings and activities. In return, these NGOs are expected to support the development aims of ECOSOC and the United Nations at large. The quadrennial review presents the opportunity for accredited NGOs to make their activities in support of the United Nations more widely known to Member States, and, at the same time, to receive feedback on their programmes of work and official acknowledgement of their contribution as partners to global development.
49. CoNGO submitted its latest quadrennial report, covering the 2006-2009 time-span, to the NGO Branch of UN/DESA at the end of August 2010. The report is expected to be "considered" by ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs during its end of January/early February 2011 regular session.
50. Following the work of the Committee on NGO of ECOSOC is an important aspect of CoNGO work. As President I have had the occasion to address twice this body. Always, this has been done through the cooperation of the NGO Branch of UN DESA. To the staff of this branch, I want to say thank you to Andrei Abramov, its Chief and Joop Theunissen, its Deputy Chief, for making a lot easier our navigating the labyrinthine UN system. Thanks to their cooperation, our work on ECOSOC-related matters are made easier.

(2) Cooperation with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies at headquarters and country level

61st Annual Department of Public Information (DPI)/NGO Conference, Paris, 3-5 September 2008

51. CoNGO assisted the Department of Public Information/NGO in the preparation of its 2008 conference, held for the first time outside New York, which, *inter alia*, was to reaffirm human rights and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

CoNGO's President delivered a statement at the conference (entitled: "*The Underside of Human Rights*") on the nexus between the reaffirmation of human rights for all the pursuit of the MDGs, and the crucial role of NGOs as advocates needing to continually emphasize that nexus.

62nd Annual Department of Public Information (DPI)/NGO Conference, Mexico City, 9-11 September 2009

52. CoNGO's Substantive Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security was active in the preparations of the Department of Public Information/NGO 2009 conference entitled "*For Peace and Development: Disarm Now!*". The committee played a key role in the preparation of the NGO Declaration "*Disarming for Peace and Development*", which was subsequently presented to the United Nations Secretary-General and to the incumbent and former Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.

63rd Annual Department of Public Information (DPI)/NGO Conference, Melbourne, 30 August – 1 September 2010

53. The 63rd Annual Department of Public Information (DPI)/NGO Conference focused on the theme "*Advanced Global Health: Achieve the MDGs*". CoNGO organized a related-event on the subject "*Global Public Health: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity.*" Following opening remarks by CoNGO's President, a panel of four speakers representing CoNGO addressed the issue of global public health from various perspectives. Some thirty delegates participated subsequently in a productive discussion.

Doha International Review Conference on Financing for Development, Doha, 29 November – 2 December 2008

54. A representative of CoNGO's Substantive Committee on Financing for Development attended the Doha International Review Conference and collaborated with other NGOs in the preparation of a "*Civil Society Declaration*" at the Civil Society Preparatory Forum.

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Geneva, 3 October 2008

55. CoNGO was an active participant in a multi-stakeholder discussion organized by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). It highlighted the need for a close involvement, by government and United Nations agencies, of the NGO community in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment, with a goal of maximizing the effectiveness of these actions. CoNGO's emphasis on such strategic involvement was well received and reiterated by attendees of the United Nations System and other NGOs.

WHO Roundtable Meeting with NGOs and Health Professionals on the Harmful Use of Alcohol, Geneva, 24-25 November 2008

56. CoNGO contributed to the discussions at the roundtable meeting with NGOs and health professionals, organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in preparation for a draft

global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. CoNGO's representative underlined the usefulness of NGO participation in this endeavor to ensure a successful implementation of WHO's strategy.

WFP's Annual Consultation with NGO Partners, Rome, 17-18 November 2008 – Collaboration with WFP

57. CoNGO took part in this annual Consultation of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) with its main NGO partners. The CoNGO representative emphasized in a series of meetings with WFP officials the need for a closer cooperation between WFP and NGOs in substantive policy areas. In order to be meaningful, such cooperation had to stretch beyond the level of mere contractual arrangements for the implantation of individual WFP humanitarian operations with the assistance of NGOs.
58. Executive-level former and present WFP staff supplied keynote statements at CoNGO events. The organization's former Executive Director/United Nations Under-Secretary-General provided a statement for CoNGO's first CSDF in June 2008 in New York on women's central role in the developing world's food supply. WFP's Deputy Director of its Regional Bureau for Asia spoke at the launch of the CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific on the attainment of the MDGs and on strategies to combat acute hunger.

Facilitating the work, and strengthening the dialogue, with civil society

CoNGO advocacy with NGOs – facilitating NGO's work

NGO Working Group on UN Access

59. During my Presidency, the NGO Working Group on UN Access was established in New York. The CoNGO President acted as Convener, with James Paul of Global Policy Forum and Bani Dugal of Baha'i International Community as co-conveners. The Working Group includes the chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee. Starting with a communication to the Secretary-General, indicating to him the Working Group's concern about deteriorating physical and political access by NGOs at the UN, and a subsequent response by him, the Working Group has since met the USGs for Department of Public Information and for Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Meetings have also been held with people related to the Capital Master Plan as well as with security. By the time of this General Assembly, three public meetings have already been convened by the Working Group, including a consultation that was part of the Pre-Assembly Gathering. In all of these meetings, the Working Group asserted the principle "nothing about us without us."
60. Working Groups have also been organized in Geneva and Vienna. Minutes of their meetings have started to be shared. In particular, a set of proposals have been submitted to UN authorities and will be important to get the full support of this Assembly so as to get more weight.

“Courage to Lead” – A Human Rights Summit for Women Leaders, Geneva, 8-10 December 2009

61. Women human rights defenders from around the world gathered in Geneva at a three-day meeting, the first “*Courage to Lead*” summit. Two groups, one comprising experience and one consisting of emerging leaders, shared and built on their experiences with the intention of enhancing mentoring and collaboration among women who play a key role in promoting human rights. The Summit was concluded with a videoconference with the U.S. Secretary of State, who spoke extensively on the role of women in socio-economic development processes. The debate was led, from the Geneva end, by the visiting head of The Eleanor Roosevelt Project of George Washington University.
62. The Summit was organized by The Eleanor Roosevelt Project and Vital Voices Partnership, with support from the U.S. Department of State/U.S. Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, the International Labour Organization and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Following a series of exploratory meetings, the U.S. Permanent Mission and the two organizing bodies selected CoNGO’s Geneva Office to provide its services for the planning and conduct of the meeting arrangements, accommodation of the participants and related logistics. The administrative overhead income thus earned helped CoNGO finance a significant portion of its 2009 outlays in New York and Geneva.

Collaboration with Kyung Hee University and Kent State University

63. During the period under review, CoNGO intensified its collaboration with Kyung Hee University (located at Seoul, Republic of Korea). From 2008 through 2010 CoNGO’s staff in its New York office contributed, on average, to the training of two students per academic semester, and its staff in Geneva, since September 2009, to the training of one student. Prior to their being assigned as CoNGO interns, these students had gone through a thorough selection process at their university. The training in the Geneva Office concentrated mainly on NGO topics, human rights (linked to the work of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) and global work of the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization). These interns also attended meetings of CoNGO’s substantive committees.
64. At the invitation of Kyung Hee University, the CoNGO President taught summer courses on NGO-related issues at its campus in 2008, 2009 and 2010. CoNGO had been selected by Kyung Hee University to be one of the twelve institutional partners for the conduct of the World Civic Forum 2009, organized by the university in partnership with UN/DESA and held in Seoul in May 2009. The Forum’s central theme was “*Building Our Humanitarian Planet.*” CoNGO’s President made a presentation, as a keynote speaker, on one of the three substantive themes – “*Civic Action for the Global Agenda, including Climate Change.*” He was also selected to present, at the conclusion of the event, the Forum’s “*Declaration*” at the plenary session. The Senior Executive

Coordinator gave a presentation on the nexus, in humanitarian operations, between human rights issues and operational perspectives.

65. CoNGO's Geneva office also provided internship training to one or two student(s), per academic semester, of the Kent State University Programme conducted in Geneva. These students had been carefully selected by the Programme's Director for this assignment. They attended, with much enthusiasm, the sessions of the Human Rights Council and meetings organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Their hands-on approach also helped the office effectively in the preparation and conduct of the Geneva Component of the Civil Society Development Fora.
66. In the course of every academic semester the Senior Executive Coordinator was invited by Kent State University to make a presentation to its students on the role of NGOs in global policy-shaping, the work of CoNGO and its nexus with the United Nations System.
67. Other internship opportunities at CoNGO Office in New York include placement by Bergen Academy of New Jersey, placing its honor students in a one-day a week schedule. FAFICS, a full CoNGO member, also started late last year to place an intern at the New York Office.

Re-branding of CoNGO

Re-design of CoNGO's logo and leitmotiv

68. (A PowerPoint presentation is used for this portion)

Re-design of CoNGO's E-Update

69. Following an extensive dialogue with CoNGO's membership on its expectations with regard to the weekly "*E-Update*," the Geneva office paid considerable attention to a re-design of this newsletter's periodicity and content. Specifically, the office wanted to ensure that such a newsletter was (i) to be responsive to the membership's needs, (ii) to provide up-to-date information and (iii) to reflect one of CoNGO's key functions, that of a facilitator between civil society and the United Nations System. The improvements included a number of new approaches.
70. The *E-Update* was henceforth disseminated through an open-source newsletter distribution system (PHPList) to eliminate spam threats and to comply with international e-mail marketing standards. The frequency was increased substantially – from a monthly/occasional to a weekly dissemination, thus leaving interested organizations more time to react, e.g. to properly plan their participation at conferences, and also publishing announcements that had been made at short notice. Despite the numerous last-minute communications to the Geneva office of items to be inserted in the newsletter, and irrespective of the volume of announcements, great efforts were made to ensure, as much as possible, as dissemination every Wednesday. The criterion of reliability of the timing of that newsletter played a central role in its finalization.

71. The coverage of individual events, including an explanatory narrative, was significantly expanded, to facilitate the readers' understanding of the contents, focus and expected outcome of an event. This often-required time-consuming additional research to complete the information provided by organizers. Links to websites were inserted into nearly all announcements to enable readers to obtain additional, mostly substantive, information. The revised design was intended to assure greater focus on the activities of CoNGO as a membership organization and of its Substantive Committees.
72. Numerous efforts were undertaken to encourage, in particular, member organizations of the Global South, which often do not have adequate resources for information dissemination, to make use of this communications instrument for their announcements. In putting together this newsletter, the Geneva office was required to verify systematically, often through time-consuming checks, the veracity of meeting announcements conveyed via Internet, in light of the considerable increase in bogus meeting notices.
73. Following the setting-up of tools to measure the E-update's outreach, it could be ascertained that, currently, readers click every month between 10,000 and 12,000 times on links of that newsletter – from at least 50 countries. Numerous recipients indicated that, upon receipt, they circulate it in-house so that its actual circulation is significantly more widespread than the one based on CoNGO's addressee list. SDC staff members expressed their satisfaction with its contents on several occasions and considered it a useful information tool that facilitated the organization of their work.

Re-design of CoNGO's website

74. CoNGO's current website – www.ngocongo.org – was continuously updated despite constraints due to the limitations imposed by its content management system (CMS).
75. Recognizing the importance of the website for CoNGO's public image, the organization's officers and staff felt that a new version of that communication tool needed to be set up. However, in view of the lack of resources for the hiring of external consultants for that task, CoNGO's Geneva office created a new version based on the open source CMS "Joomla."
76. This version is used by numerous academic, non-profit organization and government entities. It is free of charge, being developed continuously by a large online community, which ensures that it be well protected from hacker attacks and be enriched with an expanding plethora of "add-ons" (small applications) that allow for the incorporation of, *inter alia*, the latest social media features, multimedia, content-rich event calendars, intranets, user management with various access levels to retrieve and add information (e.g. for the Board, members and the secretariat), online payment of membership dues and donation, and multiple languages with the possibility of remote access for translators (moderated).
77. Once this new website is operational, numerous follow-up tasks will need to be carried out, such as a re-design of all links between the home page and the sub-sites, and between the sub-sites

themselves. Moreover, the large majority of sub-sites require comprehensive updating. The sub-sites of CoNGO's Substantive Committees also need to be re-designed to allow for back-and-forth communication with them, preferably through protected access.

Funding, Staffing and Administration

Development of CoNGO's resources

78. In 2008, CoNGO's total cash resources amounted to CHF 743,886, of which CHF 598,027 (equivalent to 80.4 percent) had been contributed by SDC to finance core expenditures of the organization, as well as the CSDF, during that year. Paid membership dues reached a level of CHF 103,761 (equivalent to 13.9 percent). The balance (5.7 percent) consisted of smaller contributions, essentially by the Millennium Forum and the Permanent Mission of Germany in Geneva. These contributions had been earmarked to cover specific expenditure items.
79. In 2009 CoNGO's total cash resources reached a level of CHF 564,886. A total of CHF 400,000 (equivalent to 70.8 percent) represented SDC's contribution, which was to cover, that year, both CoNGO's core and CSDF-related expenditures. Paid membership dues amounted to CHF 62,589 (equivalent to 11.1 percent). Additional cash income (CHF 90,242, equivalent to 16.0 percent) was obtained as payment for CoNGO/Geneva's services for the planning and conduct of the meeting arrangements, the organization of accommodation and related logistics of the *"Courage to Lead" – Human Rights Summit for Women Leaders* – managed, at the local level, in close consultation with the U.S. Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva.
80. Given the timing of the preparation of this report, the cash income figures for 2010 cover the period only up to 31 October. As of that date, paid membership dues reached CHF 73, 889. In the course of an SDC/CoNGO meeting in Berne on 30 July 2010, SDC emphasized the thrust of a decision, reached at its executive level, to pay CoNGO a maximum contribution of CHF 250,000 for 2010. However, following CoNGO's strong plea at a meeting for a higher level of funding, SDC subsequently committed itself, after further internal consultations, to pay CoNGO a contribution of CHF 300,000 for 2010. This amount was received in CoNGO's bank account on 26 November 2010. It is hoped that additional net cash income (after deduction of outlays) is generated by the conduct of a benefit concert and a stand-up event co-organized by CoNGO/New York during the fall of 2010.
81. SDC also indicated at the 30 July 2010 meeting that it was considering providing another annual contribution of CHF 250,000 – subsequently increased, following CoNGO's request to envisage a higher funding level, to CHF 300,000 – to meet CoNGO's core, and also possibly CSDF-related, expenditures in 2011. This contribution would be paid in three installments, each of them following the submission of the consolidated accounts for (i) end-2010, (ii) mid-2011 and (iii) end-2011. The contribution would also be subject to the outcome of a management audit of the organization, requested by SDC and to be conducted under its aegis probably in early 2011.

82. As from the beginning of 2012, however, the agency would no longer be in a position to finance CoNGO's core expenditure. In order to obtain additional funding, and also funding for the years beyond 2012, SDC suggested that CoNGO submit requests for financial support for the implementation of individual, specific projects. A project-based approach – as already pursued by most donor governments – would imply that CoNGO's core expenditures be met from other sources, probably primarily from membership dues.

Staffing in New York, Geneva and Vienna

83. Following the assumption of office by CoNGO's President – who, unlike his predecessor, is New York-based – the organization's centre of direction moved from Geneva to that city. The President, in consultation with the Board, proceeded with the setting-up of an International Secretariat, its components being located in New York, Geneva and Vienna. At the completion of this readjustment process, agreed upon during Officers' and Board meetings in Paris in September 2008, the staffing structure for the New York and Geneva offices (except for post #7) was as follows:

1. Senior Executive Coordinator	Full-time post [post subsequently abolished]	Geneva
2. Executive Coordinator	Increased from 50 percent to full-time post [post subsequently abolished; functions allocated to post #6]	New York
3. Senior Associate for Advocacy, Finance and Administration	Full-time post	Geneva
4. Senior Associate for Programme	50 percent post [post subsequently abolished; functions reallocated to/shared between posts #1, 3 and 5]	Geneva
5. Associate for Communications and Public Relations	Full-time post	Geneva
6. Associate for Management and Special Services	50 percent post [functions subsequently merged with those of post #2; new title: Senior Associate for Membership Development and Services]	New York
7. Associate for Publication,	Full-time post [newly	New York

Documentation and Special Services	established post]	
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84. Since then, the following amendments to that structure were carried out (in chronological order): The full-time post of Executive Coordinator (New York) was terminated in April of 2010. The functions of that post were allocated to the New York-based post of Associate for Management and Special Services, subsequently carrying the title Senior Associate for Membership Development and Services (50 percent post).
85. The 50 percent post of Senior Associate for Programme (Geneva) was abolished. Its functions were initially reallocated among (i) the Geneva-based posts of Senior Executive Coordinator, (ii) the Senior Associate for Advocacy, Finance and Administration, and (iii) the Associate for Communications and Public Relations. After the department of the Senior Executive Coordinator, the functions were given to the latter two staff members.
86. A new full-time post of Associate for Publication, Documentation and Special Services was established in the New York office in July 2010.
87. The full-time post of Senior Executive Coordinator (Geneva) was abolished, to take effect in December 2010, taking into account the staff member's accumulated leave.
88. The current staffing of the international secretariat, relative to that of 2008, thus shows the following shift in positions at the end of 2010:

Staffing in 2008	Current Staffing
Total number of posts: 5.0	Total number of post: 2.5
Of which in Geneva: 4.5	Of which in Geneva: 2.0
Of which in New York: 0.5	Of which in New York: 1.5

89. The services of (i) an administrative assistant in Vienna, (ii) the accountants in Geneva and New York and (iii) an external auditor in Geneva were remunerated on a consultancy per-hour-worked basis.
90. The Vienna-based administrative assistant resigned in 2009 and was not replaced. Many of her functions were subsequently carried out by the Vice-President Vienna with the temporary assistance of an intern.
91. The Geneva-based accountant recruited in December 2008 resigned in November 2010, to take effect by the end of January 2011.

Contribution of interns

Administration and financial tasks, including external audits

92. Following the resignation of CoNGO's previous accountant in April 2008, the organization used that opportunity to recruit it, in December 2008, a successor experienced in the preparation and maintenance of the accounts of NGOs (who, however, recently requested to be released of her duties by the end of January 2011). Moreover, at the staff level, one of the departing employees was replaced in October 2010 by a Senior Associate for Advocacy, Finance and Administration, who had had professional training in accounting and acquired experience in the financial management of NGOs and the monitoring of their financial positions.
93. The following reforms and new activities were subsequently undertaken: consolidation of all accounts of the Geneva, New York and Vienna offices into one financial report table, using Swiss francs as common currency for reporting purposes;
1. training of New York-based staff in the preparation of their financial statements for such consolidation; and
 2. setting up of appropriate organization-wide procedures for the identification, assessment, monitoring and reporting of in-kind contributions in the financial statements.
 3. The external auditor was requested to carry out a complete audit of all financial flows, irrespective of their sources of funding, starting – at the earliest opportunity and with the assistance of the international secretariat – with the audit of all 2008 accounts. The auditor expressed much pleasure in being asked to carry out henceforth such comprehensive audits overarching all of CoNGO's activities. The audits thus covered, for all years under consideration, the contributions made not only by SDC but also membership dues income as well donations in cash and in kind by other governments and organizations – and their use, including all corresponding outlays.

Perspectives for the Future

94. As I try to look toward the future, the future beckons with both challenges and opportunities. As we define the present and shape the future we want, it behooves us to not explore all the opportunities for mutual understanding, coherence and synergy on one hand, and for conferencing, collaboration, cooperation and consultation among ourselves, multilateral institutions, grassroots groups and social movements all trying not only prefigure a future but are actually acting upon the present so that they actively claim a stake in the future.
95. Borrowing from a working document of a meeting in 2008 that I attended, under the leadership of people like Arsenio Rodriguez who is here among us, a salient question we must ask ourselves is this: Is it possible to accelerate the transformation of human society through the enhancement of our interconnectedness, the appreciation of our common goals, while still respecting our specific organizational nuances and diversity? And how?

96. Among you steeped in NGO work, you will realize that we need to clearly identify the instances when we need to be working separately and individually for broadly the same goals at the same time that we keep identifying also those instances “when...to identify the basic organizing principles that could enable the different movements to become more cohesive and effective force for change...’Is it possible to accelerate the transformation of human society through the enhancement of our interconnectedness, the appreciation of our common goals, while still respecting our specific organizational nuances and diversity? And how?’”
97. For CoNGO to remain a gathering and an umbrella of NGOs, the above must be addressed. Who knows what interconnectedness brings. Who know what collaboration, cooperation, consultation brings. Perhaps a quote from the French philosopher Michel Foucault is instructive if not provocative:

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgements but signs of existence; it would summon them from their sleep. Perhaps, it would invent them sometimes – all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lighting of possible storms.

98. In my CoNGO Presidency, I have seen lightning born by powerful storms and thunders. In the next chapter of my NGO work, beyond the CoNGO presidency, I am open to Foucault's leaps of the imagination, and perhaps, just perhaps, they will bring “an idea to life” and that idea “would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments, but signs of existence.” Lots of existence, for the NGO work is never done. I will remain to be part of making it done.

Thank you very much.