



CoNGO: 75 Years and Beyond (1948-2023) “Defining the Present, Shaping the Future, Making the Change Now”

In its 75th year since its founding, CoNGO ([Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations](#)) continues the legacy of advocacy for the voice and agency of civil society to be presented at multilateral meetings at the United Nations systemwide. Since its founding in 1948, CoNGO has been a significant interface between NGOs, now the broader civil society, and the United Nations System. CoNGO has consistently promoted, defended, and boosted civil society access—both physical and political—to deliberative and decision-making processes throughout the United Nations System. CoNGO has encouraged and facilitated competent NGO inputs across the whole spectrum of local to planetary issues that constitute the daily and yearly agenda of the United Nations.

CoNGO has often spoken out in defense of the values that the UN and civil society share and has addressed governments with the plea—indeed the demand—that the financial underpinning of the UN is substantially reinforced to enable the Organization to adequately respond to the needs of the planet and its people. The 50+ entities, agencies, commissions, institutes, and other bodies comprising the United Nations System are coping with world, regional, and local aspirations and crises. Civil Society’s engagement with the United Nations is critical to the fulfillment of its mandate and its work, and CoNGO is a persistent and informed advocate of that cause. The depth and breadth of CoNGO’s knowledge of the United Nations System and NGO access to the system are unique.

CoNGO marks its 75th anniversary in 2023, with a look back, of course, but substantially with an eye to the future. The anniversary theme is “**Shaping the Present, Shaping the Future, Making the Change, Now.**” CoNGO will make the Anniversary a significant milestone on the road of cooperation and interaction between Civil Society—international, national, and grassroots—and the United Nations System. By motivating and galvanizing the entire CoNGO constituency and the United Nations System, CoNGO will build bridges to the future of multilateralism, cutting through the fogs of populism and short-termism. Together, the United Nations and Civil Society can—and must—work to enable future generations to enjoy healthy lives and sustainable livelihoods in greater peace, social justice, democracy, and the rule of law.

The CoNGO 75th Anniversary Committee and the CoNGO Board are undertaking ambitious but realistic goals—all forming part of the vision and direction that the presidency of Liberato Bautista has set to do. They constitute the backdrop to the following activities and events, which will be organized during the 75th Anniversary year and followed through for consolidation in 2024 and 2025: A) Four **Anniversary Commemorative celebrations** at UN Centres in Vienna (April), Bangkok (May), New York (October), and Geneva (December). Where possible, the events will include lectures and, where appropriate, cultural and hospitality events. B) Production of an **anniversary book** recounting the 75 years of CoNGO’s interactions among its members and with the UN System. The booklet will honor the giants of CoNGO’s past and present leaders and open a perspective into CoNGO’s future work. This shall include profiles of CoNGO presidents and vice presidents, the NGO substantive committees, and pages about CoNGO member organizations that may want to be featured. C) Six **global thematic webinars** will follow up on the themes that emerged from a [CoNGO Civil Society Summit](#) held in October 2021 with over 1,000 participants in person and online. The six thematic clusters are:

1. Social justice: Migration justice, racial justice, and health justice (March)
2. Pursuing Global Justice: Agenda 2030, sustainable development, and humanitarian action (May)
3. Gender Justice, youth, and intergenerational solidarity (June)
4. Peace and threats to the security of people and the planet (August)
5. UN-NGO relations: enhancing multilateralism, protecting NGO access, civil space and democratic discourse (October)
6. Human dignity and human rights (December)

To achieve CoNGO’s purposes for the 75th Anniversary, CoNGO has the structural benefit of a diverse and multidisciplinary membership of more than [600 organizations](#), solid and committed [global officers and board members](#), 37 substantive NGO Committees, [37 Substantive Committees](#) worldwide, and high-level 75th Anniversary Committee that provides advice and guidance. Through the involvement of international and national civil society organizations, all of the activities of CoNGO’s forward-looking 75th Anniversary Year will contribute to the achievement of the UN Agenda 2030, the advancement of the UN Secretary General’s “Our Common Agenda,” and the success of the UN 2024 Summit of the Future, including its follow up.

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