

Report of the NGO Forum

**for consideration at the High Level Segment
of the United Nations Economic and Social Council
1-3 July 2002**

**On the theme “The contribution of human resources development,
including in the areas of health and education, to the process of
development”**

NGO Forum co-sponsored by

**the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative
relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)**

and

**the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the United Nations
Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA)**

14 June 2002

1. SUMMARY

An NGO Forum was held as an opportunity for representatives from UN-affiliated NGOs to convene and offer comments about the theme for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. The two-part meeting included a panel discussion in the morning and a session in which representatives made specific recommendations regarding the draft ministerial declaration in the afternoon.

The forum was co-sponsored by the NGO Section of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO). Representatives of NGOs, delegates from Permanent Missions to the United Nations and staff, members of specialized agencies and the UN Secretariat had participated in the Forum.

During the morning session Ambassador Ivan Šimonoviæ - the President of ECOSOC, Mr. Sarbuland Khan - Director of the UN Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Ms. Hanifa Mezoui - Chief of the NGO Section and Ms. Leslie Wright, 1st Vice President of CONGO addressed participants of the NGO Forum. Then, four panelists made presentations:

- Mr. Bremley W. B. Lyngdoh – Global Youth Action Network,
- Dr. Christine Durbak – World Information Transfer,
- Ms. Jenny Perlman – The Hunger Project,
- Mr. Frank Schroeder – Friedrich Ebert Foundation

The panelists presented statements and comments on the issues to be considered by ECOSOC. During the afternoon session the NGO representatives formed smaller groups to review the draft Ministerial Declaration with a specific focus – gender, finance, employment, health and education.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Šimonoviæ emphasized the importance of maintaining a good and healthy relationship between ECOSOC and the NGO community. He noted that the theme of the High-Level Segment was focused on improvement of human resources, especially health and education, and the impact of this on economic development. He said that participants in the forum would doubtless focus on the link between the theme of the High-Level Segment, and conclusions reached at Monterrey in the UN Conference on Financing for Development as well as the action plan intended to be agreed at the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg this summer. Ambassador Šimonoviæ underlined the importance of NGOs' participation in the work of the Council and in particular in the High-Level Segment.

Mr. Khan pointed out that the effort for the Ministerial Declaration was to have full contribution of all parties concerned, including Ministers of the UN Member States, civil society and the private sector. He underlined that the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General to the Council had drawn upon a large array of sources, bringing in various suggestions and inputs from specialized agencies and NGOs. He said that High-

Level Segment of the Council would be a multi-stake holder dialogue, seen in the context of the Millennium Declaration Goals, and would show what civil society, community organizations and businesses could do to achieve these goals. The issue of resources would be a key factor. Mr. Khan said that the outcome of the Forum would be submitted for consideration by the High-Level Segment of the Council.

Mrs. Mezoui presented an overview of the five segments of ECOSOC and their functions, with details on the High-Level Segment. She also noted that an important responsibility for the NGO Section was not merely to give accreditation for NGOs but also to get their full contribution and participation, so the ECOSOC could appraise of their opinions and expertise.

A panel discussion followed, with presentations from four panelists, under the moderation of Ms. Leslie Wright, 1st Vice-President of the CONGO. The first speaker, Mr. Bremley W. B. Lyngdoh (Global Youth Action Network) discussed the crucial role of youth in the sector of sustainable development, with emphasis on youth partnerships and sustainable income-generating employment for the youth.

Next, Dr. Christine Durbak (World Information Transfer) stressed the importance of the health of a nation to poverty reduction and long-term economic development. She cited the example of East Asia and Southern Europe, where disease control and nutritional improvement contributed greatly to rapid economic development in the 1950s. According to her, global warming and the use of chemical pesticides are two health-related issues with effects on an omnipresent, global scale.

Ms. Jenny Perlman (The Hunger Project) then observed that the draft Ministerial Declaration contained some critical elements to end the hunger crisis, including community ownership and true partnership between developing and developed nations. However, he pointed out that 2 key aspects were missing: 1) the need for local democracy to address hunger; 2) fundamental transformation of gender relations. While some attention had been given to the issue of gender mainstreaming, the Ministerial Declaration, according to Ms. Perlman, should specify more explicitly that the low status of women contributed to the persistence of hunger and that their education and economic empowerment were determinant factors linked to poverty eradication.

The last speaker, Frank Shroeder (Friedrich Ebert Foundation), addressed issues of financing for economic development and moving forward from the Monterrey Consensus. He urged that: 1) Donors have to increase their aid by \$50 billion in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015; 2) The trade agenda should not be set by the WTO, since it is not a debt institution; 3) Ministerial Declaration should call for additional debt relief, which would further debt cancellation for least developed nations, and debt coping mechanisms for developing nations.

The morning session ended with an open exchange of views, which gave NGO representatives an opportunity to bring questions and comment on the presentations of the panelists.

The representatives of NGOs raised various issues and concerns with respect to the Ministerial Declaration. These included aspects of demilitarization and gun control, gender equality, girls' education, health issues pertaining to development – particularly preventative actions, public education awareness, and special concerns for indigenous people. NGO representatives also were concerned with evaluation, development indicators and the role of NGOs. Representatives sought to raise support for issues important to their respective organizations, and stressed that these should be addressed in the final outcome document.

During the afternoon session, NGO representatives gathered in small informal groups to review the draft Ministerial Declaration with specific focus on gender, finance, employment, or health and education. Despite limited time, they managed to have some fruitful discussions. Their suggestions for changes will be included in a report of the forum, to be submitted to the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC for consideration. The participants strongly supported the call by Ambassador Šimonoviæ for increased NGO participation in UN activities. They hoped for their views and experience to be reflected in the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are those suggested by the NGOs attending the NGO Forum held at the United Nations in New York on June 14, 2002. They are not to be construed as being representative of all NGOs, nor do they represent any official position of the Conference of NGOs (CONGO). This compilation is presented for consideration by the Economic and Social Council as it deliberates on the High Level Ministerial Declaration from 1-3 July 2002.

1. Gender Equality. Many of the organizations present felt that the draft Declaration did not state forcefully or specifically enough the need to invest in the education of girls and women. Research shows that educating girls results in higher per capita income and improved health for their families when they marry. Women need to play a vital and central role in the social, economic and political development of countries. It is precisely the low status of girls and women that results in poverty, and only with fundamental transformation of gender relations can this situation be altered.
2. Education is primarily the responsibility of the state. However, education consists of formal, informal and nonformal structures and each is delivered differently. NGOs called for new partnerships with governments, private sector and NGOs to provide relevant, high quality education to all, with gender sensitive programs that encourage girls to learn. In addition, NGOs wished to call attention to the

fact that girls are often prohibited from attending school because of inadequate facilities, safety, transportation, proper clothing or expense to families. These complex situations need to be addressed.

3. Environmental quality affects the ability to people to be healthy, which affects their ability to work. Global warming, pesticides and other modern factors have created an environment of climate change, increased disease and new strains of disease that could devastate populations.
4. The new Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria should be applauded in the document, and more funds should be identified to support the fund. More needs to be done to give expertise to programs from targeted countries with high rates of HIV/AIDS so they can apply for and administer the funds, as some of them are receiving very little of the monies available.
5. The health infrastructure in many developing countries requires higher levels of investment, especially in rural areas of LDCs. It is important to make use of those health care delivery systems of health care delivery that are working in those areas.
6. Family structures need to be consulted and included in providing adequate health care. For example, when families were interviewed by health workers in Madagascar, the health care environment was changed to make it more comfortable, resulting in more compliance with treatment and better health for the individuals affected.
7. Attention must be paid to the infrastructures for health, water supply, sanitation and waste disposal in order to prevent unnecessary health problems. Failure to address these needs leads to unsustainable urban communities. It is also important to assess the need for adequate, sustainable human settlements as part of the health equation necessary to support human resource development.
8. Older women and their role in the care and treatment of family members and the education and nutrition of children need to be considered. Many older women are not equipped to deal with the situations they are faced with and need assistance, information and training.
9. NGOs recommended aligning the discussion with stakeholders to the 9 major groups identified in Agenda 21 to clarify the parties. They also stressed the desire to be incorporated specifically in the monitoring and evaluation of progress, and desired improving their capacity to support the MDGs.
10. Peace and security are necessary to provide human resources development. NGOs called for reduced military and arms spending to provide additional resources for health and education programs. They also called on countries to halt

internal armed conflicts and to become productively involved in supporting and developing people instead.

11. Young people attending called for education to be relevant to employment, noting that more than 50% of the population was under 25 years and over a billion in the 15-24 age cohort. 85% of these young people are living in developing countries, entering the workforce with few skills and even fewer opportunities for productive work. Youth need a bold approach from the Ministerial Declaration to address this recipe for potential disaster.
12. Sustainable livelihoods need to be developed for people so that they can move out of poverty into productive employment. Relevant jobs need to be created that can be filled by people willing to work.
13. Literacy remains a serious problem, particularly for women. Literacy programs must be sustainable and must offer challenges for those who go through them to remain learners. It is not enough to define literacy as being able to sign one's name or to write a simple sentence. Support must be given to improve the skills learned and to make literacy relevant.
14. ICT is not necessarily a panacea for success, though it is an important way through which people can address job and skill development. Those who are successful with ICT are generally better educated, wealthier, literate and have access to hardware/software and can communicate in a language used on the internet. Those who do not have those qualities are often left out.
15. NGOs called on governments to recognize that the population throughout the world is ageing. They called on governments to use older people as a resource to younger generations, cultivating them as mentors, mediators and advisors, thus effectively assuring their role in human resource development.
16. Indigenous peoples need to have more investment in their issues, especially health care and education. NGOs recommended that there be attention to establishing a secretariat for the new Permanent Forum so that it might make specific recommendations to ECOSOC.
17. NGOs addressed the need for increased resources for LDCs and developing countries to improve health and education to reach human resource goals. This includes increased ODA for some countries, and better coordination between ECOSOC and financial institutions such as the World Bank, WTO, IMF and others.
18. NGOs encouraged the Bretton Woods Institutions to give priority to capacity building, education and job opportunities while giving financial assistance to governments of the developing world to work genuinely towards the objective of educating all peoples, with special attention to the poor and to the girl child.

19. NGOs complimented ECOSOC on the development of its website and called on it to publicise its accomplishments, which they viewed as relatively unknown throughout the world. They also asked for a newsletter from the ECOSOC segments that could give them “the flavor” of the meetings, not just the results. NGOs expressed their interest in being true partners with governments in discussing not only what needs to be done, but in working with governments to implement decisions reached.
20. Finally, NGOs wished to compliment ECOSOC on the way in which it sought input directly from NGOs, beginning with the roundtables early in the year, and wished to express their sincere thanks for specific inclusion. They expressed their willingness to bring expertise to other segments of ECOSOC and pledged to work together throughout the year.

3. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants from Non-Governmental Organizations:

ADRA – Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFICS – Association of Former International Civil Servants
American Association of University Women
American Indian Law Alliance
American Women’s Medical Association/International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
Anglican Council
Armenian Assembly of America
AVSI – Association de Volontaires pour le Service International
Baha’i International Community
Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)
ECPAT USA Phil. Rights
Franciscans International
Global Alliance for Women’s Health
Hadassah
Human Rights Watch
IFFD – International Federation of Family Development
IFS – International Foundation for Science
International Council for Caring Communities
International Council of Negro Women

International Federation for Home Economics
IWAC/IVAES – International Women’s Anthropology Conference (IWAC)
Legion of Good Will
MaryKnoll
Mercy International Association
Naeer Foundation
OFER
Radim Institute for Family Health
Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries
Soroptimist International
The Hunger Project
The Lutheran World Federation
The Salvation Army
Universal Great Brotherhood
Vivat International
WIT – World Information Transfer
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
World Federalist Movement
World Federation of United Nations Associations
Yachay Wasi

Participants from Delegations:

China
European Commission
Namibia
Nigeria
Romania
Tunisia
Ukraine
United States of America

Participants from the United Nations Entities:

DESA
DPI/NGO Section
UN-HABITAT
UNHCR

