

**President : Annelise OESCHGER**

**Strasbourg, 7 December 2007**

**Memorandum on  
reorganisation of the Conference of INGOs  
of the Council of Europe**

**Introduction by Annelise Oeschger, President of the Conference of INGOs**

The intent to enhance the political role of the Conference of INGOs as the voice of civil society in Europe, to make its activities more directly usable in the Council of Europe as well as in the member countries, and to be a transparent, effective body has prompted the Liaison Committee to undertake reflection on a structural reform.

Such a reform appears particularly fitting in view of the stipulation in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union of 10 May 2007 that "the contribution of civil society to achieving the objectives shared by the Council of Europe and the European Union will also be encouraged" (para. 50).

This memorandum is based on the preparatory work conducted by the members of the Liaison Committee and other representatives of INGOs since the autumn of 2006. It embodies the proposals made at various meetings (seminars organised by the Liaison Committee, 7-8 October 2006 and 5-6 October 2007, Liaison Committee meetings on 25 June and 1 October 2007, meeting of the Conference of INGOs on 26 June 2007); it is intended to stimulate discussion and reflection on the implications of these proposals and a collaboration in preparing the broad outlines of the reorganisation of the Conference of INGOs.

**Proposed timetable for reorganisation**

**First stage:**

The members of the Conference of INGOs are invited to forward their comments on this draft memorandum **by 10 January 2008**. A revised memorandum will then be drawn up and published on the website of the Conference of INGOs. It will serve as a basis for discussing and adopting the broad outlines of the reorganisation when the Conference of INGOs meets on Tuesday 22 January 2008.

**Second stage:**

The revised organisation chart for thematic work in the groupings/committees will be sent to members of the Conference of INGOs on 15 February with a view to taking a decision at the meeting on 15 April 2008.

**Third stage:**

Draft rules of procedure will be sent to the members of the Conference of INGOs in mid-March for discussion on 15 April 2008. The revised draft rules will be forwarded to them on 25 April with a view to taking a decision at the meeting on 24 June 2008.

**Fourth stage:**

Election of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the new groupings/committees on 2 and 3 October 2008. Calls for nominations will be issued on 4 July 2008.

**I. REFORM OF THEMATIC WORK**

**1. Structure of the committees**

The structure of the committees would be aligned to the present structure of other Council of Europe bodies, with the aim of bolstering the influence of INGOs holding participatory status, and of the Conference of INGOs, in the Council of Europe steering committees and groups of experts, as well as outside. It has been suggested that we call the thematic groupings 'committees' to conform to the designations used for the structures of the other Council of Europe pillars.

A limited number of six committees is proposed. The new committees would appear as follows:

- Human Rights
- Social Cohesion
- Culture and Education
- Democracy and Civil Society
- Sustainable Development
- Gender Equality

There would be no order of precedence between the committees. Each would have a subject area and responsibilities of its own. The primary and secondary responsibilities envisaged are listed in Appendix 1.

"Transversalism" would be a working principle for all committees.

The committees could set up sub-committees for specific tasks. There would also be the possibility of forming *ad hoc* working groups to deal with urgent matters. The names and structures of the sub-committees and working groups would be settled by the committees after consulting the Bureau. The sub-committees and working groups would be of limited duration.

Transversal subject areas are indicated as 'secondary responsibilities' in Appendix 1. The Standing Committee (see below) would have the responsibility of facilitating co-operation on inter-committee themes of a transversal nature.

## **2. Functioning of the committees**

### **2.1. Dates/times :**

- Four sessions per year to be held, with few exceptions, during the Parliamentary Assembly sessions;
- Either each committee meeting would last half a day, bringing the committee meetings as a whole to three days,
- Or each committee meeting would last only an hour and a half, so that additional meetings of sub-committees or working groups could still be organised over three days;
- Special events should be organised outside these three days;
- If a committee organises a special event, it should do so during the time allotted to it;
- Joint sessions of committees could be organised on transversal or specific themes;
- Committee meetings ought not to be organised concurrently, so that all members of the Conference are able to participate in all committees.

### **2.2 Organisation :**

- Need to lay down procedures in accordance with the democratic process;
- There should preferably not be more than two discussants per meeting, chosen according to the themes dealt with. The time allotted to discussants from outside should not take up more than half the meeting time;
- Proper preparation of the meeting by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs;
- Preparatory concept groups (by e-mail);
- Proposals for motions/recommendations should be submitted in writing before the meeting to allow members to examine and work on them, while retaining the necessary flexibility for motions/recommendations of a pressing nature;
- Meeting reports should be available not later than three weeks after the meeting;
- Equal opportunities for INGOs, irrespective of size, financial resources, geographical representation, etc.
- During sessions, a work area with computer and other equipment would be needed.

### **2.3. Continuity :**

- Continuity of work between sessions should be ensured. Delegates should be named to report on the committees' proceedings;
- Need to evaluate the work accomplished before and after meetings;
- Need to make the accumulated expertise of the Conference of INGOs and its organs readily accessible (possibility of creating a system of digital references, especially for important working documents viz. declarations, recommendations, etc.);
- Need for recognition of the individual work performed by members (eg honorary status).

#### ***2.4. Use of the two languages***

- Equal use of the two working languages, English and French;
- Important documents for meetings should be made available to members in English and French at least 10 days before the meeting.

## **II. REFORM OF THE CONTROLLING BODIES**

### **1. Conference of INGOs**

It would retain the powers currently assigned to it (cf. Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs) and would decide as to the policy directions and stances on fundamental questions.

It could adopt Recommendations to be directed at other Council of Europe bodies and other national and international institutions.

### **2. Bureau**

Decisional power would be transferred to the Bureau which would become the central organ of the Conference of INGOs.

#### ***2.1. Composition of the Bureau :***

The Bureau would consist of the President of the Conference of INGOs, three Vice-Presidents, a General Rapporteur, four Rapporteurs and the President of INGO Service. The members (except the President of INGO Service) would be directly elected by the Conference of INGOs (at intervals to ensure the due continuity of work).

The Bureau would be supported by a staff employed either by the Council of Europe or by INGO Service.

#### ***2.2 Main functions of the Bureau :***

- Defining the orientations of the Conference of INGOs;
- Decisions on fulfilment of the political priorities laid down by the Conference of INGOs;
- Drafting, following up and evaluating the action programme;
- Representation within the Council of Europe;
- Communication, internally and within the other Council of Europe structures;
- External relations (particularly with the European Union).

### **3. Standing Committee**

The Liaison Committee would be replaced by a Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee would be the link between the Bureau, the committees, sub-committees, working groups and the Conference of INGOs.

It would perform a role of thematic co-ordination, consultation and suggestion.

The Standing Committee would consist of the Bureau members and the 6 committee Chairs (substitutes: the Vice-Chairs), and the Chairs of groups on transversal themes or groups of experts (four at the most). The meetings of the Standing Committee would be open to the observers of the Conference of INGOs.

The President of the Conference of INGOs would also chair the Standing Committee.

Should provision be made for a few additional Standing Committee members to be elected by the Conference of INGOs?

The Standing Committee would make recommendations on themes discussed by other Council of Europe agencies or could invite the latter to address certain questions . The subjects should reflect the thinking and the needs of the people and groups concerned (citizens, local NGOs, etc.), and the proposals should be the outcome of monitoring of the present situation in specific areas, and originate from the grassroots of civil society.

A proposal would be to preserve some decisional power for the Standing Committee as well.

### **III. COMMUNICATION**

#### **1. Internal**

- Better use of Internet;
- Blogs, discussion lists, documents on the web

More attention to a unified image (establishment of a "corporate identity", consistent use of logos, etc.)

#### **2. External**

- Greater visibility of the commitment made in connection with Council of Europe projects/campaigns etc., and support to projects of national NGOs;
- Promotion of the Conference of INGOs by its members on the occasion of external events and events organised by the Council of Europe (such as steering committees, always mentioning the Conference of INGOs even if the person was invited as representative of a given INGO);
- Participation in Council of Europe delegations to conferences held by other international organisations.

### **IV. FINANCE**

INGO Service would retain its present functions and furthermore would be mandated to raise funds.

To make it possible to employ or compensate persons assisting in the operation of the bodies of the Conference of INGOs, it was proposed to:

- Seek donors and sponsors (according to the criteria of a code of good conduct drawn up beforehand) ;
- Seek voluntary contributions (also for specific projects such as financing of conferences).

## **ORGANISATION OF THE 6 COMMITTEES OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Human Rights**

Fundamental freedoms  
Monitoring of HR violations  
Monitoring of application of HR instruments  
HR education  
HR defenders  
Peace issues  
National minorities  
Fight against xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism

#### **Social Cohesion and Social Charter**

Social policy and labour issues  
Migration and integration  
Health  
Family  
Elderly & Handicapped  
Extreme Poverty  
Equality of opportunities for

#### **Sustainable Development**

Human development  
Towns and rural areas development  
Transport and infrastructure  
Regional planning  
Environment  
Ressources (energy, water)  
Climate change  
North-South solidarity

Media  
*Secondary responsibilities:*  
Human development

all  
*Secondary responsibilities::*  
Intercultural dialogue  
North-South Solidarity

**Education & Culture**

Inequality in access to education  
Formal and informal education  
Intercultural and interreligious dialogue  
Media  
Youth issues  
Life-long learning  
Elderly education  
Language education  
Sports  
Arts

*Secondary responsibilities:*  
Media

**Civil Society and**

**Democracy**  
Democracy and fundamental freedoms  
Rule of law  
Monitoring NGO legislation in member states  
Accountability and transparency of institutions  
Civil participation and civic education  
Promoting of democratic standards  
National languages  
Peace and conflict resolution

*Secondary responsibilities::*  
National minorities

**Gender Equality**

Implementation and monitoring of the gender mainstreaming  
Equal representation in decision-making bodies  
Violence against women, children and men  
Equality of opportunities  
Feminization of poverty  
Women in conflict areas  
Women and the family

*Secondary responsibilities:*  
Migration  
Education  
Intercultural and interreligious dialogue