



COMMITTEE REPORT
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NGOCOM73

NGO COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION(CONGO)

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Report of the Committee for the CONGO Board Meeting 13 December 2008

During 2008 the full committee has met twice (10 April and 26 November). The discussions have been largely devoted to the Committee's responsibility for an NGO input into the Durban Review Conference at Geneva (April 2009). Moreover, the Committee has also been discussing the issue of our Committee's relationship with the NGO Special Committee on Human Rights (CONGO)

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 15 January 2009. At that time an already appointed sub-committee will present to our Committee its propositions about *'By-laws' for our NGO Committee*. This is considered necessary because of the particular status of our Committee (founded almost thirty years ago) vis à vis CONGO and vis à vis the NGO Special Committee on Human Rights. Moreover at our session in January 2009 discussion will continue about our Committee's participation in a *'Civil Society Forum'* during the Durban Review Conference. At the November 26, 2008 meeting of our Committee a majority of our Committee's members present voted in favour of support for a Civil Society Forum (NGO Forum) at the Durban Review Conference.

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Member organisations of our Committee sponsored '*briefing sessions*' at all of the United Nations meetings in Geneva related to preparing for the Durban Review Conference. In particular three 'briefing' sessions were held on 15, 16 and 17 October 2008 during the Second Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference session in Geneva. During these 'briefing' sessions discussion concentrated on three main topics: (1) What would be the characteristics of such an NGO Forum?; (2) Could a provisional 'Coordinating Committee' for such an NGO Forum be established; (3) what might be the relationship of our NGO Committee Against Racism with such a 'Coordinating Committee'?

There were wide differences of opinion among the more than fifty persons / organisations present at these 'briefings' on the question of support for an 'NGO Forum' at the Durban Review Conference.

The question of an official support of our NGO Committee Against Racism for this initiative of 'NGO Forum' was discussed at our Committee's meeting on 26 November 2008 and a majority of members present voted in favour of supporting such an initiative. However the exact relation of our NGO Committee's participation in an Civil Society / NGO Forum at the Durban Review Conference needs to be debated further, probably at the 15 January 2009 next session of our Committee.

Apart from these difficult issues facing our NGO Committee, another major issue concerns the necessity to elect a new 'Bureau' for our NGO Committee. Its president, Jean-Jacques Kirkyacharian, resigned in April 2008 but continues in office until new elections. New elections for the Bureau of our Committee are planned for 2009 as soon as possible but probably only after certain issues concerning the our Committee's relation with the NGO Special Committee on Human Rights and our Committee's decisions about its 'by-laws' are settled.

Charles Graves
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(Secretariat of the NGO Committee)
2 December 2008