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**BEYOND THE 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)\***

***“The price of liberty is eternal vigilance”***

*In 2008, both CoNGO and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights marked their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. To build on that occasion, the following statement, crafted by CoNGO Officers with input from CoNGO Substantive Committee Chairs, was adopted by consensus by the CONGO Board with a view to keeping ALL HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL at the top of the world’s agenda in coming years. This statement has added significance by marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and by being approved at a CoNGO Board meeting in Vienna, where in 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights declared that “Women’s Rights are Human Rights.”*

1. One of the aims of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) is “to mobilize public opinion in support of the aims and principles of the United Nations, and to promote education about the UN with special emphasis on the contribution which NGOs make to its work”.
2. For 64 years the United Nations General Assembly has been the world forum of governments, established to determine the standards that the world should adopt and apply to ensure that peace and security prevail. The UN General Assembly has probably never taken a decision of higher principle than its adoption on December 10, 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus it is a duty and an honour for CoNGO to support the UDHR publicly and permanently. Public Opinion – worldwide, nationally, locally – must be mobilized to comprehend the UDHR, to endorse its goals, and to demand its application and extension.
3. Most United Nations proclamations, conventions, treaties, action programmes are outstanding declarations of intent and of promise. To impact the real world, to transform the human condition, to guarantee and expand the development and rights of individuals and communities, these multiple declarations must be made known and *implemented* – implemented universally, fully, consistently, and transparently. Given its fundamental importance, the UDHR above all requires unqualified implementation.
4. It is even more natural for CoNGO to support and mobilize in favour of the UDHR when one recognizes the vital role of NGOs at every stage of the life of the UDHR. As with so many UN instruments and programmes, responsible NGOs have brought their expertise to the table, illustrating the now well-known dictum that competent civil society input enhances responsible governmental output. In many circumstances CoNGO facilitates such input. Sensible and open cooperation between the intergovernmental and non-governmental sectors can be a most powerful mechanism for establishing both high standards and procedures for monitoring adherence to them.

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The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations  
in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO).



5. Sixty years of the life of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have not been enough to eradicate injustice, oppression, inhumanity, neglect, discrimination. This is why the work of NGOs must be intensified, redoubled, deepened, and at the same time illuminated. To continue to change the world for the better, people's views and actions make a difference. As the organized expression of people's views and actions, NGOs will continue to make a vital difference as humanity strives to live up to the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. Answering the hopes and expectations of humanity beyond these past 60 years, we issue a clarion call for trust and respect throughout all nations and all sectors of society. It is time to break through the vicious circle of humiliation and abject poverty, to achieve economic and social justice for all – changing the world with passion and commitment, to rid it of scarcity, to liberate it from cruelty, and to create a new political culture based on the respect and implementation of human rights – a future of non-discrimination, participation and inclusion; accountability and the rule of law within the holistic human rights framework.
7. Now looking forward we must ask, “What is the meaning of human rights to our daily lives?” Can human rights become the guiding light for crafting a better world by all, for all? And if so, why do so few of us know the meaning of human rights as a way of life?
8. Human rights instruments and their social implications stand to move humanity from the oppression of vertical and hierarchical institutions to newly constructed horizontal spaces of choice - yet so few know about them. Norms and standards that allow people to move freely and make choices for their lives are hardly known to the billions of people who could use them around the world, acknowledging new opportunities and revived trust in the future.
9. NGOs represented by CoNGO believe that the follow up to the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UDHR should be commemorated by deeds not words. We demand that governments of the UN Member States as well as international bodies, such as the World Bank and the WTO, to:
  - incorporate the provisions of the Human Rights Declaration into national legislation, implement and enforce them



- install and/or strengthen institutions – governmental and non-governmental – to report on the implementation and enforcement of human rights legislation
- enhance, implement and enforce democratic participation and transparency of government
- look into ways to incorporate Human Rights Articles into regulations and rules concerning public procurement and public recruitment practices
- establish at all levels educational means to familiarise students with human rights and to raise their *awareness*
- propose and implement legislation enhancing the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons
- support the work of NGOs promoting All Human Rights for All.

10. CoNGO calls on *its* member organisations and all NGOs to:

- take their task as human rights watchdogs very seriously
- Work on human rights awareness- raising programmes and activities
- Take public action to raise human rights awareness
- Take responsibility in preparing human rights “Shadow reports” and similar activities
- Work on the development of human rights educational material.

11. CoNGO is proud to reflect and promote NGOs’ aspirations to make real the Human Rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration.

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\* Approved as a statement of the CoNGO Board at its semi-annual meeting on Nov.9-10, 2009 in Vienna, Austria.