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**Civil Society Development Forum (New York Component)**

**15 – 16 October 2009**

**New York, New York**

**Action Points<sup>i</sup>**

**Threats to the Health and Sustainable Development of Nations  
(Civil Society Proposals on Global Public Health in the Context of the Global Economic Crisis)**

Introduction

1. The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) organizes every year Civil Society Development Fora (CSDF) in New York and Geneva. These Fora advocate civil society positions towards United Nations Member States through the governments participating at the annual Substantive Sessions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Specifically, the main CSDF event is held at the location of the Substantive Session (which alternates each year between New York and Geneva). The follow-up CSDF event is subsequently conducted at the other location.
2. The CSDF's Outcome Documents constitute the primary advocacy instrument for conveying the political content of civil society's positions to the United Nations System and to member governments.
3. The CSDF's main theme, while taking into account ECOSOC's central theme for its High-Level Segment (which, in 2009, was: *"Implementing the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in regard to Global Public Health"*) focused on: ***"Threats to the Health and Sustainable Development of Nations (Civil Society Proposals on Global Public Health in the Context of the Global Economic Crisis)"***.
4. The CSDF 2009 – Geneva Component was held from 2 to 4 July, the New York Component on 15 and 16 October 2009. The latter Forum examined ways and means for follow-up action to implement

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the earlier Geneva Outcome Document. It was attended by some 100 participants from civil society, the UN System and governments.

5. Both CSDF Components took place under the far-ranging hardship caused by ongoing multiple and interrelated world crises – food, energy, environment, finance, poverty and migration. The participants expressed deep concern that the failure to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) universally by their target date of 2015 was now a realistic threat. It was essential for civil society, the UN System, and, above all, governments to boost their efforts drastically and demonstrate unwavering commitment towards the attainment of the MDGs.

6. The President of ECOSOC, other senior government and UN officials reiterated the importance of civil society organizations as advocates for, and partners in achieving a more socially just and equitable world. CSDF participants pledged to give even more impetus to their actions to respond to these calls and to attain these objectives.

7. The participating civil society organizations agreed to advocate the implementation of the following **Action Points** at international and national levels in the coming months by civil society, the UN System and governments. The first follow-up for CoNGO will take place in Vienna from 9 to 11 November 2009, when the CoNGO Board will meet and the President conducts the CSDF Vienna Briefing.

#### Action Points for Civil Society

8. On the matter of global public health civil society will take accountable action in the following areas and strongly urges governments to include in their national budgets specifically earmarked supportive funding to:

- refocus national institutional health structures towards prevention measures, which includes actively promoting healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition practices,

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- promote human rights learning for all stakeholders involved in physical and mental health care service delivery,
- build and expand the capacity of health and mental health personnel, including local and grassroots community workers and traditional healers,
- collect gender-specific data to ensure and upgrade health services for women of all ages,
- leverage all forms of media, including traditional communicators, to educate communities and promote health and mental health,
- support the development and appropriate use of information and communication health technology and encourage related exchange programmes as means of training and familiarization, and
- provide prevention, education on and treatment of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and sexually-transmitted diseases, recognizing the social determinants of health that affect vulnerable populations, especially women and children living in poverty.

9. Dialogue must integrate older persons along with youth in order to achieve preventive health measures – to preserve traditional health care methods and adapt them in a time of changing technology. Dialogue is a means to bridge the digital divide, and should help encourage all stakeholders to revisit the outcomes of the two segments of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

#### Action Points for the United Nations

10. UN Systemwide communications and programmes should cover both physical and mental aspects of health. They should stress that physical and mental health are themselves rights and that access to them is also a right. The UN System should recognize that education and awareness-raising relating to the importance of health are broader than the traditional focus on health education. While primary health care should remain an essential priority, prevention of disease should be a principal focus of UN System health programmes. It is important to remember that while there are three specific

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health UN MDGs, health cuts across all eight MDGs. These considerations should be central to UN System campaigns to mobilize and educate public opinion on health issues.

11. The UN System should cooperate with academic institutions to enhance global youth dialogue on public health so that youth can educate themselves on the immediate health care crisis and take ownership of long-term solutions.

12. UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies should require States to include mental health aspects in their reporting. UN System programmes and projects should incorporate mental health considerations. The UN General Assembly should convene a Special Session on mental health and related issues.

13. The UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria must be strengthened. Civil society organizations must be given improved access and enhanced participatory roles. UN programmes to prevent early childhood diseases and address the causes of maternal mortality must be expanded. UN health programmes must address the entire range of all communicable and non-communicable diseases. They must bring together all stakeholders to end violence against women, cultural practices that are harmful to women's health, and all forms of sexual abuse.

14. Early adoption by the UN General Assembly of the draft resolution currently in circulation on "Mobilizing Public Opinion for the Health of Nations" is strongly recommended. The purpose of this resolution is to achieve "Healthy People on a Healthy Planet by 2020".

#### Action Points for Governments

15. Governments must give legitimacy to the voice of youth representatives by ensuring their full and unimpeded participation in the decision-making process on future health issues, including but not limited to the MDGs.

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16. As governments rebuild cities and urban centres, they must seize the opportunity to influence public health by, for example, creating spaces that foster physical activity, older persons' involvement, ecofriendly/green communities and social interaction. This facilitation of health through urbanization will require prospective planning and sustained leadership.
17. Governments should recognize the role that climate change plays in increasing global conflict (e.g. Darfur) and its associated disorders (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorders). They must also recognize the ensuing increases in global disparities/inequities and the grave impediments for states, especially fragile states, to create sustainable societies.
18. As part of their ongoing work on migration and immigration, governments need to investigate and document the role of climate change in influencing migration and creating new refugee flow patterns. Governments should accept their responsibility to guarantee the rights of those affected by climate change including the recognition of the resettlement rights of people who are becoming known as environmental migrants and climate refugees.
19. In light of the fact that 80 percent of the world's disease burden results from preventable causes, governments are strongly urged to shift their focus and resources from a preoccupation with the treatment of non-communicable disease to a focus on public health and prevention by enacting policies that directly target the root causes of non-communicable disease, which include physical inactivity, tobacco use and other dependencies, and inadequate nutrition.
20. In support of such policies, governments should mobilize resources for the promotion of health awareness campaigns. They should encourage their countries' parliaments to embed in their legislations and in their constitutions the concept of the right to health, and to legislate standards for informing and educating the public on the human right to health.



21. Governments should develop patient-centred national health legislation with the full participation of civil society, should work cooperatively with civil society to shift the impetus from health care to health promotion and disease prevention, and should provide constructive and financial support for family policy.

22. Governments should mobilize disease prevention and health promotion funding. They should reallocate resources foreseen for military expenditures for the development of poverty-stricken societies to help ensure an adequate level of economic development.

23. We call on governments to enhance accountability and implementation mechanisms to ensure allocations of resources in accordance with intended purposes. We adamantly call on governments to fulfil their obligations and commitments to ratify and act on international treaties. We lay particular focus on the universal ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and of all the principal international Human Rights Instruments. Governments are morally obliged to implement the Concluding Comments that are issued by the UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies after examination of each national report.

#### Conclusion

24. The Civil Society Development Forum participants were only too well aware that achieving any and all of the goals and aspirations set out in this document will require leadership, imagination, wisdom, courage, determination and resources. It will require political will, which is another way of saying “moral will”. Civil society is ready for the redoubled efforts that are required. We will work in partnership with the United Nations System and responsible governments to improve global public health today, tomorrow and for the years to come.

Adopted on 16 October 2009

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ACTION POINTS  
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ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters  
New York City

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<sup>1</sup> CSDF is a program of CoNGO (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations). This Action Points Document is the product of representatives of organizations participating in the CSDF, as well as online comments gathered worldwide, via CoNGO's E-Update, from CoNGO members and their networks, and is not an official statement of the worldwide CoNGO organization unless explicitly stated. Information about participating individuals, organizations and online comments may be obtained from [martin.andersen@ngocongo.org](mailto:martin.andersen@ngocongo.org).