



**CoNGO BOARD MEETING**  
**23 - 25 February 2009**  
**Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand**

1. The President signalled that this was a historic meeting for CoNGO, being the first Board meeting held outside the traditional UN Centres. He thanked the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) for their gracious hosting, and for facilitating all the planning. He identified AIT personnel who had been particularly helpful.

2. Roll Call

The Secretary conducted the Roll Call (Attendance list attached – Annex A). Sympathy was expressed to Conchita Poncini of IFUW, currently hospitalized.

3. Agenda

The agenda was approved with adjustments on scheduling

4. Welcome Remarks

Dr. Peter Haddawy, Vice President for Academic Affairs of AIT, conveyed welcoming greetings from the AIT President who would be hosting dinner for the Board that same evening. AIT is an autonomous post-graduate institute which this year was marking its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There were 2,000 graduate students and 130 faculty members. A new Charter for AIT was being finalized, giving AIT intergovernmental status, and it had been designated by the UN as a Centre of Excellence for the MDGs. New programmes were now being launched at the undergraduate level. A (Mohammed) Younis Centre was being opened later this year to focus on agriculture as another contribution to sustainable development in Asia.

5. Minutes

The Minutes of February 29/March 1, 2008 were adopted.

6. Matters arising

All matters arising were covered in the Officers' presentations and the current Board agenda.



## 7. Leadership Outlook

The President, First Vice President, and Vice President Vienna presented overview reports (texts circulated). Highlights included:

- a. The re-imagining of CoNGO in the President's 14 months since taking office, with a view to making CoNGO increasingly relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- b. The Consultative Relationship with the UN had to be cherished and guarded, but also utilized to the maximum as a two-way process. Civil Society was much larger than CoNGO membership, but CoNGO had to protect and advance civil society's access to and influence on UN processes. We were all concerned to promote sustainable development, the rule of law, social justice; civil society often took the lead in promoting relevant international conventions and instruments.
- c. CoNGO had celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the same time as the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UDHR. Much work remained to be done to achieve and expand all human rights for all. International human rights law must be incorporated in all national legislation, to make HR the hallmark of good governance. One area for further progress was the elimination of patriarchal vestiges that impede equality between men and woman.
- d. Hitherto the international system was based on nation states, but the revitalisation of civil society was changing that, including through the expansion of regionalisation and regional inputs to global decision making. These who toiled daily to ensure their survival were operating on a different level from those who laboured over commas in international documents, but their voices should be brought to the debate too.
- e. The President's reforms within CoNGO were intended to focus on the needs of the members as they work to transform society. He asked all to continue to define the present in order to design the future on the basis of accountability, transparency, responsibility, and solidarity.
- f. The President expressed appreciation to his fellow Officers and the staff. In 2009 he anticipated i) implementation of the CoNGO Assembly decision on creating Standing Committees ii) drafting revisions of the CoNGO Rules; iii) strengthened financial bases

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and accounting mechanisms; iv) consolidating personnel structures and competencies; v) rebranding CoNGO on the basis of the values of consultation, collaboration and cooperation, illustrated by writing the logo in future as CoNGO – co-NGOs together.

- g. The CoNGO Substantive Committees were very diverse and some did not adequately relate to the relevant UN processes. There would be a review of the entire Substantive Committee mechanism so basic to CoNGO's purposes and to the advocacy work of the members. CoNGO and its Committees needed to put greater emphasis on working together, irrespective of their locations, and on youth participation, building on structures already in place.
- h. The Vienna Office had established contacts with the new EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, particularly its Civil Society Platform.
- i. Tribute was paid to the CoNGO staff who had taken on the many challenges of the new International Secretariat.
- j. The 2008 DPI Conference on the UDHR had heard some traditional, but also some new, ideas on what human rights included. CoNGO remained fully committed to the universality of human rights. In this context, it was important to note that CoNGO had played a role in the Geneva ceremonies honouring Eleanor Roosevelt as a major pioneer of the UDHR.
- k. The Board paid warm tribute to Anna Biondi as outgoing First Vice President, upon her employment by ILO.
- l. The Board thereupon unanimously appointed Cyril Ritchie as the new First Vice President.
- m. To fill the post of Secretary thus vacated, the Board subsequently unanimously elected WFUNA. Cyril Ritchie agreed to continue to act as Secretary until WFUNA could take over these duties.

## 8. Finances

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The Treasurer presented the 2008 accounts and 2009 draft budget (see written report) indicating that new systems, staff, and a new accountant on a consultancy basis were now in place. Funding was heavily dependent on the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA), which underlines the need to diversify income sources and for members to all pay their fees in full and on time. The Board adopted the following decisions:

- a. “The Officers were authorized to decide follow-up action with regard to the sum of CHF 48,323 owed to DEZA from the settlement of the 2007 CSDF project accounts.”
- b. “The Board of CoNGO
  - i. noting CoNGO Rule 67 requiring the General Assembly to elect two members of the Conference as auditors, to submit a report to the next Assembly;
  - ii. noting the decision of the 2007 General Assembly to authorize the Board to create a Standing Committee on Finance, and that this Committee had been established on March 1, 2008;
  - iii. requests that the Standing Committee on Finance take the responsibility to designate two of its members, exclusive of the Committee Chair, as the auditors foreseen in Rule 67.”
- c. The Board established an ad hoc committee to draft proposals for closing the membership income gap arising from the fact that 153 of the 602 members have not paid fees since 2004, and that only 221 paid in 2008. The ad hoc committee should also look at what could constitute in-kind contributions.

The committee reported the following day (see Annex B). The Board welcomed its recommendations in principle, and referred them to the Officers for review and action.

In approving the Finance Report and the draft 2009 Budget, the Board expressed the wish that members in arrears be given a warning on the possible loss of their membership status and its attendant benefits.

### 9. Secretariat outlook

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- a. Werner Schleiffer reported on the activities of the staff in the Geneva, New York and Vienna offices (texts circulated). The election of a new President in December 2007 had led to a significant reform of the management structures, taking also into account that, after seven years in Geneva, the leadership was now based in New York. This new leadership required greater attention to transparent financial management, staff competence, and user-friendly communication tools. It also gave a special focus to the input from the NGOs in the global South. CoNGO's fund-raising efforts had to take into account that our major donor (DEZA) was putting in place more stringent funding conditions. The world financial situation also made fundraising more difficult. Nevertheless, the Secretariat had done substantial work on the CSDF 2008, on support to and interaction with Substantive Committees, on training and advocacy relating to the UN Human Rights Council, on tracking and updating membership data, on improving the website and communications practices – the weekly E-update was work-intensive and increasingly appreciated. Joseph Kim (Secretariat) made a power-point presentation on the website and E-update. The President added that he was requiring a Secretariat inventorying of assets and liabilities, together with adequate referencing and archival systems. He also planned to give more information on the CoNGO – related activities of Officers, since this reflected on the proper use of resources.

It was agreed by the Board that information placed on the website by member organizations must be in the framework of CoNGO Rule 2, notably that CoNGO provides “a forum.....on strengthening of the relationship between NGOs and the UN, including the contributions which NGOs can make to promoting the principles, purposes and effectiveness of the UN.”

- b. The Board noted CoNGO activities in 2009 around several events
- the Durban Review Conference (Geneva April 20-24)
  - CSDF 2009 Geneva Component July 2-3-4; New York Follow-Up October 15-16; Vienna Briefing November 19. The ECOSOC HLS (Geneva July 6 - 9) would receive CSDF input
  - UNFCCC.COP15, a Climate Change Conference (Copenhagen, November 30 – December 11).

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Two actions had been taken by the Officers in the context of Rules 17,42, 44 and 51; these were confirmed by the Board :

- to create an International Steering Committee for the CSDF with representatives from all three Centres
- to facilitate NGO activities around the Durban Review Conference, without there being a CONGO Steering Committee, based on input from the relevant Substantive Committees.

These actions were seen as means to strengthen relationships of NGOs, but also of CoNGO as such, with the UN and its organs.

- c. The President presented an organigram of the International Secretariat and took note of comments by members in view of issuing a final version.

The Board, in the context of Rules 52-54, confirmed that the President in addition fills the role of Chief Executive, supervising the Executive Management Team.

### 10. CONGO Programmes and Services

The Board reviewed (documents circulated) the following:

- CSDF 2008 and 2009 (The President signalled that the Officers had asked Cyril Ritchie to co-chair the CSDF 2009 International Steering Committee on behalf of CoNGO)
- Human Rights Council (see point 9.B above re Durban)
- 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UDHR: A statement had been prepared to mark CoNGO's relationship with UDHR and comments had been received from some Committees. A consolidated future-oriented version was reviewed by the Board for wider circulation.
- Financing for Development Conference, Doha: The Board received Margaret Blamberg's report (circulated) with appreciation, recognizing that the views of the wider NGO constituency, including CoNGO members, were considerably more

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complex and diverse than were reflected therein. The Board noted that a Substantive Committee could not sign statements within UN meetings, and agreed to review this issue at the next Board meeting, in the context of the collection and representation of CONGOs views (see also Rules 8 and 50).

- Human Rights Learning and Education (HRLE) (proposed Geneva Civil Society Forum): In reference to the 2008 February/March Board Session, item 15.C, it was noted with regret that the questions posed to the Geneva WG had not been answered. The Geneva WG was now considering organizing in 2010 an International conference on HRLE. The President was requested to energetically follow up in seeking complete clarifications, recalling Rules 41 and 43.
- Proposed UN Decade of Interreligious Dialogue: An ad hoc committee of four CoNGO members is relating to the Steering Committee for the proposed UN Decade, and is attending a planning meeting in New York in March together with the CONGO President. The objective was to facilitate NGO discussion and participation in the Decade.
- World Transformation Initiatives: The President of CoNGO had joined several high level personalities for a world consultation on global transformation. The President will report on outcomes to the next Board meeting, including on how individual NGOs might be involved.
- UBUNTU, Barcelona: CoNGO would be represented at a consultation in March to determine if it could have a future role in UBUNTU proceedings.
- European Womens Lobby: The Vice President Vienna was increasingly involved in EWL and undertook to inform the three Substantive Committees on the Status of Women.
- Kyung Hee University (KHU): KHU was now furnishing CoNGO with a flow of carefully selected interns. CoNGO was co-sponsoring the KHU World Civic Forum in Seoul (May 3 – 8, 2009) at which the President would be one of the keynote speakers.

#### 11. CONGO Standing Committees and Working Group

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- a. The Board noted these organs were preparing their work with a view to reporting at the November 2009 Board meeting.
- b. The Governance Committee (Chair Ilona Graenitz) would be joined by Chris Ferguson (WCC) and Richard Amalvy (WOSM), and would focus on required changes to the Rules and procedures at the General Assembly. It would also look at how CoNGO is represented at world conferences, the role of spokespersons, and relations with other organizations. The Committee plans to meet in Geneva in early May.
- c. Regional Committee for Asia (RCA): Following the recognition by the Board in December 2007 of the establishment of an RCA, in accordance with rules 32-36, an inaugural meeting had been convened for February 25 at the Asian Institute of Technology. The Board agreed on the following basic point:
  - The region would be the entire geographical area of Asia, including the Asian Pacific, and the body would therefore be named **The CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP)**

GCS International offered to provide an office for the Regional Committee, and to launch a regional MDG-promoting process; this was taken to be a subject for subsequent discussion by the RCAP itself. Terms of Reference were provisionally accepted, to form a pattern for other Regional Committees to be formed. The ToR are on the website and are being communicated to all members of CONGO (under Rule 33) as part of the notification process.

A provisional Steering Committee was designated:

Forum Asia  
Amman Centre for Human Rights  
International Federation of Women Lawyers  
GCS International  
Salvation Army, Australia  
GBCS for Southeast Asia  
A.P.A. representation in Thailand  
Youth representative organization

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The President of CoNGO

12. Substantive Committee reports

- a. The Board received with appreciation 28 written reports (list and texts circulated) from the three Centres. It was noted that the three Committees on Ageing were cooperating to the extent of having a common brochure.
- b. Two Committees in Vienna had voted not to be CoNGO Committees (Crime Prevention and Trafficking; Narcotic Drugs). This will also be looked at in the Governance Committee.
- c. Alan Saunders, Chair of the New York Committee on HIV/AIDS, gave an illustrative report on the work of his committee and the context in which Substantive Committees function vis-à-vis the UN Secretariat and governmental missions. The President underlined that the Substantive Committees had the responsibility to report to the Board (see Rule 40) and this was a major opportunity to bring their concerns to the wider community.
- d. The New York Committee on Human Rights has submitted a recommendation on further work on HR Learning and Education, which was welcomed.
- e. The Geneva NGO Committee on Racism raised a matter on defamation standards within the CoNGO membership.
- f. The Board took note with regret of an incident concerning interaction among participants in a meeting of the Geneva CoNGO Sub-Committee on Racism, an incident that departed from CONGO's ideals of respect, tolerance and courtesy among members, and had consequences for the further functioning of the Sub-Committee. It
  - regrets particularly that the incident encompassed a non-member of CoNGO
  - draws from this the lesson that a code of conduct on appropriate behaviour should be considered by the CoNGO Board
  - charges the Officers with examining the situation and making proposals to the Board on standards for the future.

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- g. The New York Committee on the Status of Women raised an issue on the CSW registration form, which now requires information on country of birth; this information is patently not relevant to attending a UN meeting.
- h. The Board agreed to ask all Substantive Committees to adopt a common title “The CONGO Substantive Committee on XYZ in NY/GVA/VIE”.

13. Matters arising from the General Assembly

Richard Amalvy (WOSM) has succeeded Arturo Romboli and accepted responsibility for follow-up to the implementation of the Assembly “Call to Action”. He presented his analysis and identification of the opportunities and problems inherent in the document, seeking indications to measure outcomes in time for reporting to the next Assembly. (The full presentation is on the CoNGO website). The Substantive Committees have a primary role in follow up , provided they could absorb the variety of inputs arising from the “Call”. The Board had established a Monitoring Committee for the “Call to Action”; there would be additional members from New York and Vienna, together with a staff member and an external participant.

14. Next CoNGO Board

This will be in Vienna for three days (including a day for the Briefing on the 2009 CSDF), planned for the week of November 16-20.

NB: A consultation is taking place on alternative dates, namely November 23,24,25.

15. “Branding” of CoNGO

Richard Amalvy presented an analysis (circulated, available on the website) of the image, or images (past, present, potential) of CoNGO. This covered how CoNGO reflects the NGO world and how the NGO world is reflected in CoNGO. CoNGO is based on communication and on the spirit of cooperation, collaboration and consultation. Board members made comments on aspects of the new text and logo that will be taken into account, as further consultation includes the wider membership, thus reshaping the ideas to submit for debate at the next Assembly. This will be prepared by exchanges among members in the three Centres, to bring out CoNGO’s comparative advantage(s).



#### 16. UN Relationships

- a. The Board expressed its deep appreciation to Hanifa Mezoui, leaving her post this week as Head of the NGO Section of UN.DESA, and who had so positively transformed relations between NGOs and the UN. The President would convey our warm thanks and good wishes in person this very week.
- b. The Chair of the UN.DPI Executive Committee, Jeffrey Huffines, sent a message of good wishes to the CONGO Board, looking forward to continually enhanced cooperation.
- c. Greetings were brought to the Board on behalf of the International Labour Office (Anna Biondi) and the UN World Food Programme (Peter French).

#### 17. Closure

The Board thanked the Asian Institute of Technology for their generous hosting of the Board meeting and for many courtesies. The President thanked participants for their involvement and invited everyone to attend CoNGO's first Academic Symposium on the MDGs the same afternoon.

Minutes by Cyril Ritchie, then Secretary of CONGO

Cyril Ritchie

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Annex A : Attendance list

Annex B : Report of an ad hoc committee established under point 8.C



**CoNGO BOARD MINUTES, February 2009 – ANNEX A**

ATTENDANCE LIST

Officers:

President	Liberato Bautista
First Vice President	Anna Biondi (on February 23) Cyril Ritchie (on February 24 and 25)
Vice President Vienna	Ilona Graenitz
Vice President	WOSM – Richard Amalvy
Vice President	FAS – apologies
Treasurer	WFM-IGP – Staci Alziebler
Secretary	ELCI – Cyril Ritchie (on February 23). Acting as Secretary on February 24-25

Board Members:

American Psychological Association	Ben Weinstein
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia)	Bernice A. See Yap Swee Seng
Association for Progressive Communication	apologies
Commission of the Churches on International Affairs – WCC	Chris Ferguson



United Methodist Church / GBCS	Marie Sol Sioco-Villalon / Chris Pierson
Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices	apologies
International Council of Women	apologies
International Federation of University Women	apologies
International Federation of Women Lawyers	Sheela Anish
International Islamic Relief Organisation	apologies
International Trade Union Confederation	Anna Biondi
Lutheran World Federation	apologies
Womens International League for Peace and Freedom	Krishna Ahooja Patel
World Alliance of YMCAs	apologies
World Association of Girl Guides and Girls Scouts	Valaikoru Phromyothi
World Federation of UN Associations	Sundeeep Bhutoria
Immediate Past President	Renate Bloem – apologies
Immediate Past First Vice President	Jackie Shapiro (February 23)- apologies Anna Biondi (February 24- 25)

Observers :

CONGO MEMBERS AND COMMITTEES

Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies	Valentine Pomatto
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Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population & Development	Shiwei Ye
Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia	Marlene Ramirez
Christian Conference of Asia	Carlos Ocampo
Church World Service	Emeline Managbanag
Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry	Amador Honrado Jr.
GCS International	Jaesuk Bae
International Federation of Business & Professional Women	Naphaphen Vejjajiva Chonchanok Viravan
Korea Institute of Brain Science	Yu Jung Lim
NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS	Alan Saunders
Salvation Army	Geanette Seymour
Soroptimist International	Kathy Barnett
Universal Peace Federation	Alan Saunders
Women's Federation for World Peace	Delia Javanasundara Panida Duangchinda
World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women	Chita R. Millan

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UNITED NATIONS AND GUESTS

International Labour Office	Anna Biondi
World Food Programme	Peter French
Asian Institute of Technology	Said Irandoust
	Peter Haddawy
	Jayant Routray
	Mohammed Siddique (doctoral student)
Siam University	Nimnuan Srichad
	Yhing Sawheny

CONGO STAFF

Geneva	Werner Schleiffer
New York	Joseph Kim



**CONGO BOARD MINUTES, February 2009 – ANNEX B**

1. In the discussion on Finances (Point 8), “The Board established an ad hoc committee to draft proposals for closing the membership income gap arising from the fact that 153 of the 602 members have not paid fees since 2004, and that only 221 paid in 2008. The ad hoc committee should also look at what could constitute in-kind contributions.”
2. Five members constituted the ad hoc committee, and came to the following conclusions/recommendations, which were reported to the Board the following day.
3. Membership is not only about money, but money is essential to the functioning of the organization.
4. The President should send an early and warm reminder letter to those organizations that have not paid, enclosing the CONGO Rules and a bill, and setting a deadline for payment. To make this a relational approach, the letter should offer a) a 50% discount for those who bring themselves fully up to date by June 30, 2009; OR b) the opportunity to pay in instalments.
5. As part of this mailing, or separately, a limited survey could be conducted, asking those who have economic difficulties to let us know. Board members should be asked to take responsibility for contacting groups of the “delinquent” members for follow up.
6. It is recognized that the above steps may lead to some members withdrawing officially. The Board should discuss a standardized CONGO response.
7. The Secretariat should provide each member – upon payment of the annual fee – an annual attestation/certificate of membership. There should be a membership kit, linked to the CONGO rebranding exercise (v. item 15 of the Board Minutes).
8. When a CONGO Assembly is approaching, Members’ attention should be drawn to Rule 10 (eligibility to send delegates to the Assembly), and Rule 56 (eligibility to vote at the Assembly).
9. Over years the question of having multi-tiered membership fees resurfaces regularly, with more or less the same arguments being advanced for and against. The Finance Committee should revisit this issue in depth.

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10. The question has arisen of whether NGOs with Consultative Status can be “members” of CONGO by “piggybacking” on a network or umbrella body. The Standing Committee on Governance should examine this issue.
11. When the ad hoc committee presented the above report to the Board, the following individual comments or questions were made before the Board took action :
  - a. Should CONGO offer lifetime membership? What is lifetime for an organization?
  - b. Should every NGO in Consultative Status *automatically* be a member of CONGO? If so, would the corollary be two categories of member: Corresponding and Paying?
  - c. Should organizations newly acquiring Consultative Status be given one-year free membership?
  - d. CONGO itself has Consultative Status, and for that reason some organizations have declined to join it. This raises the question of what consultative process is required when CONGO makes a formal statement at the UN. The President recalled that CONGO does not sign statements. The Substantive Committees are one vehicle for gathering consensus, but not the only one.
  - e. It was noted with pleasure that the UN.DESA website specifically asks NGOs if they are members of CONGO.
  - f. One way of increasing income might be to admit to a new “Partner” category rich NGOs without Consultative Status, charging a fee of US\$ 500 or more.
12. In conclusion, the Board welcomed in principle the ad hoc committee’s recommendations, and referred them to the Officers for review and action.

**Summary prepared by Cyril Ritchie**

**On behalf of the ad hoc committee**

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