



CoNGO E-Newsletter February 2018

Newsletter

February 2018

I. MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CoNGO

1. MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CoNGO

This week I will complete 2,605 days as President of CoNGO and hand over the responsibility to the person that the General Assembly will have elected that day, March 3, 2018. I shall regret the end of this all-encompassing and extenuating adventure. At the same time I shall be relieved at the thought of no longer being "on duty" day and night to respond to the hundreds of messages that the CoNGO constituency send from all corners of the world, from all time zones, and on all imaginable (and sometimes unimaginable) topics.

CoNGO Members have kept me on my toes, have kept me on orange alert, and have occasionally shown such understanding and support that I have been moved to depths of appreciation, gratitude and humility. Thank you. Thanks also to those whose interventions reminded me that it is no sinecure being Number One!

I have been "Number One" for 10% of CoNGO's existence, for in 2018 CoNGO celebrates its 70th Anniversary. We began the commemorations with an excellent advance Ceremony in Vienna in October 2017, well organized by our Vienna colleagues. Mr Thomas Gass, at that time UN Assistant Secretary General, came from New York to give us an inspiring message on the Sustainable Development Goals and the opportunities they provide for universal engagement and cooperation.

The 70th Anniversary of CoNGO will be further marked on the morning of Thursday March 1, 2018, the opening day of the CoNGO General Assembly, at the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG).

We cannot overlook the fact that 2018 is also the 70th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the foundation stone of democracy and the rule of law, and a guiding light for many generations past and future. If there is one thing I have understood from my years with CoNGO (not only as President but previously as First Vice President and earlier Secretary of the CoNGO Board) it is that human rights, democracy and the rule of law are indissociable, and that we must defend and promote them at all times and in all places.

In too many countries, governmental attacks on the press, the judiciary, academia, civil society and outspoken individuals are symptoms of the shrinkage of the civic space where each of us can exercise our rights as citizens. We must speak up untiringly and courageously for our rights before they are further eroded by short-sighted governments, fearful of their own citizens. It is a calamity that the current untiring and courageous UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Jordanian Zeid, does not feel able to stand for a second term – the real reason being that he has in his current four-year term spoken blunt truth to so many governments that do not honour their commitments to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Zeid has been an exemplary spokesman for UN and human values: civil society is deeply indebted to him for so clearly and consistently enunciating the principles that should govern the world.

So we associate these two 70th Anniversaries – CoNGO and UDHR – in 2018, starting with March 1. We must continue for many more years to work TOGETHER.

And – be warned – the Immediate Past President of CoNGO remains on the CoNGO Board, so I fully intend to continue doing whatever I can, for as long as I can, to promote our constructive Togetherness!

Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO

II. CoNGO SECRETARIAT

This issue of the CoNGO E-NEWSLETTER has been processed by Adriana Seefried. While she was a student in Germany, Adriana was a much appreciated programme assistant in the CoNGO Geneva Office from May to September 2013 and has remained in interested contact ever since. Although full-time employed in Berlin, Adriana generously donated her time and competence to the production of this NEWSLETTER, including coming to Geneva for the purpose. I state loudly our deep gratitude to her: this type of exemplary volunteer service is a foundation of the non-governmental world, of exceptional value particularly to those NGOs – such as CoNGO – that are constantly living under financial constraints. THANK YOU, ADRIANA! CR

III. CIVIL SOCIETY NEWS & UPCOMING UN EVENTS

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND SPECIALISTS PLEDGE TO ADDRESS THE PLIGHT OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN EUROPE AND THE MENA REGION THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF A GENEVA DECLARATION

In response to the protracted migrant and refugee crisis that has affected primarily Europe and the MENA region, a coalition of international organizations took the initiative to adopt the 2017 Geneva Declaration entitled "Mobility and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and

the MENA region" pledging for increased cooperation between decision-makers to address the adverse impact of the crisis.

The Geneva Declaration is the fruit of a panel debate entitled "Migration and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and the MENA region" that was organized on 14 December 2017 at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The panel debate addressed the adverse impact of cross-border movement resulting from war-related insecurity and climate change. Violence and insecurity as well as climate change induced migration have adversely affected millions of people in the MENA region and have become issues of high importance for the countries in that region and in Europe. The debate offered a timely opportunity to address these issues in its Europe-Middle Eastern interactive dimensions rather than through focusing on the two regions separately.

The Geneva Declaration was signed by the Geneva Centre for human rights advancement and global dialogue, the International Catholic Migration Commission, the European Centre for Peace and Development, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Sovereign Order of Malta, the International Press Syndicate, the European Public Law Organization and the African Centre against Torture.

The United Nations Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order Dr. Alfred de Zayas and the Norwegian author and journalist Mr. Halle Jørn Hanssen also signed the Declaration.

The objective of this declaration is to highlight that States and decision-makers in the Arab region and the West are morally and legally bound to enhance human mobility. It calls for the need to respond with an unified voice to the tragedy of those millions of people on the move in the Middle East and North Africa region. It also makes good economic sense.

Among main topics are:

- **MULTILATERALISM AND CONSENSUS BUILDING AT A CROSSROAD**
- **POPULISM AND RIGHT WING EXTREMISM IS ONCE AGAIN REARING ITS UGLY HEAD**
- **THE FORGOTTEN ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE MIGRATION**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE 14 DECEMBER PANEL DEBATE AND THE GENEVA DECLARATION, PLEASE CONSULT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

* Concept note of the panel debate [1] "Migration and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and the MENA region"

* 2017 Geneva Declaration [2] "Mobility and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for

Europe and the MENA region"

Links:

[1]

http://www.gchragd.org/sites/default/files/Concept%20Note_Migration%20and%20Human%20Solidarity_FINAL.pdf

[2]

http://www.gchragd.org/sites/default/files/Geneva%20declaration%20mobility%20and%20human%20solidarity_0.pdf

[3] <http://www.gchragd.org/>

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) 2016: The NGO think-tank "Development Initiatives" has produced the following information.

* Net ODA from OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors rose in 2016 by over 10% to a new record high of US\$145 billion

* Part of the rise was due to a continued rapid increase in in-donor refugee costs reported as ODA.

* Even if increases in refugee costs are excluded, total net ODA still grew by US\$10 billion (in real terms) compared with 2015.

* Other factors driving the rise in ODA were: increased core multilateral ODA, a rise in support for specific-purpose funds and increased debt relief (due mostly to Spain's rescheduling of Cuba's debt).

* Ethiopia has replaced Afghanistan as the single largest recipient of total ODA from DAC members and multilateral institutions, while Afghanistan remains the largest recipient of bilateral ODA.

* Non-transfer ODA - which includes in-donor refugee costs - was the modality that increased the most between 2015 and 2016.

* Recipient governments continue to be the largest channel of delivery for ODA, accounting for over half of total ODA from DAC members and multilateral institutions. Private sector institutions (a new channel reporting code) accounts for 4% of bilateral ODA from DAC members and multilateral institutions (US\$6.6 billion).

* DAC members spent US\$4.7 billion of their ODA through private sector institutions - of which the majority was channeled through private sector institutions in donor countries.

Further information:

Development Initiatives, North Quay House, Quay Side, Temple Back,
Bristol, BS1 6FL, UK

Development Initiatives is the trading name of Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd, registered in England and Wales, Company No. 06368740, and DI International Ltd, registered in

England and Wales, Company No. 5802543.

Source: <http://devinit.org/post/final-oda-data-2016-initial-analysis-key-points/>
<http://www.devinit.org/>

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (FRA)

"Challenges facing civil society organizations working on human rights in the EU"

On 18 January, 2018, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published the above report [1] It reveals how across the EU civil society faces various threats.

Given the vital role civil society plays in upholding democratic processes and in promoting human rights, the report calls on decision makers to ensure the important work of civil society is not undermined through policy and legal changes and funding cuts.

The report explores how these challenges vary across the EU. Some of the challenges covered include:

- Threats, physical and verbal attacks against activists, as well as smear campaigns;
- Legal changes that negatively affect civil society, such as freedom of assembly restrictions, often a by-product of counter-terrorism laws;
- Shrinking budgets and increased difficulties in getting funding;
- Lack of appropriate involvement of civil society in law- and policy-making.

To address these challenges the report suggests that EU Member States should abide by international standards that recommend civil society participation in policy cycles. Due attention must also be paid to ensure that new or redrafted laws and policies do not undermine the work of civil society. Civil society funding also needs to be protected. In addition, channels of dialogue between civil society and the EU need to be strengthened to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed. This includes finding ways to collect comparable and reliable data on the challenges civil society face, such as threats, intimidation and attacks.

This report also contains promising practices that are being used to address these challenges.

Links:

[1]

<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/challenges-facing-civil-society-orgs-human-rights-eu>

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR AGING CARE'S GUIDE ON ELDER ABUSE:

Every month, one in 10 older adults worldwide experience some form of abuse. But with only 1 in 24 cases of elder abuse reported, the true figures are likely to be much greater. And with an increasing aging population in the United States and beyond, so will be the problem. By 2050, the global population of people aged 60 and older is predicted will more than double, from 900 million in 2015 to about 2 billion.

Experts report that knowledge about elder abuse lags as much as two decades behind the fields of child abuse and domestic violence. Limited past research means limited data to guide practitioners, policymakers, and trainers. What we do know now is alarming: elders who experience a form of abuse, even modest abuse, have a reported 300% higher risk of death. Even verbal abuse has been linked to seniors' physical health issues and well-being.

With resource constraints in a constantly aging population, a once-hidden problem will be impossible to overlook. But as more studies come to light – and as state Adult Protective Services data show an uptick in the reporting of incidents – elder abuse has emerged as an important social public health issue. But whatever the statistics for the U.S. and beyond, researchers do agree that elder abuse is an epidemic.

What Is Elder Abuse?

Specific definitions vary on what elder abuse really is, and those definitions continue to evolve. The WHO calls elder abuse “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”. It can be verbal, physical, psychological or emotional, sexual or financial. It can also be neglect – either intentional or unintentional.

Who is at risk at Elder Abuse?

Even with imperfect statistics on elder abuse, we do know that social isolation and lack of social support is a significant risk factor. Losing friends and family members, as well as their own physical and mental capacity, often isolates elderly people. This can place a burden on the nearby relatives who are available to tend to their care...and who become isolated themselves. Historically, children shared the responsibility for the care of aging parents. Today, migration of young families means that many elderly are left alone with inadequate funds to pay for outside care...and limited options for care at home.

Abusive home caregivers, like their victims, come from all walks of life. They range from the cruel and uncaring to the well-intentioned and overwhelmed. Many factors come into play: mental health, finances, lack of respite from constant responsibility, dysfunctional family dynamics, even lack of certainty about what an elderly family member wants.

How Prevalent is Elder Abuse?

One U.S. survey of nursing home staff reported that 36% of respondents witnessed at least one incident of physical abuse of an elderly patient that year. Forty percent stated that they themselves had psychologically abused patients, while 10% admitted to physical abuse. This can mean physical restraint, restricting patients' choice over daily affairs, depriving them of dignity (e.g., not replacing soiled clothes); intentionally providing substandard care (such as allowing sores to develop); over- or under-medicating patients; as well as emotional neglect and abuse.

Even in community settings, it is impossible to know for sure how many seniors are being victimized. Some professionals miss signs of elder abuse because of lack of awareness or limited training on detecting abuse. The victim may not speak up for fear of retaliation, because they do not want to cause trouble for a relative, or due to a lack of physical and/or cognitive ability to communicate.

This is particularly problematic with dementia patients. Research indicates that this population is at greater risk of elder abuse. Impaired in memory, communication abilities, and judgment, they often cannot or will not report problems. Among studies of cases that are reported, the figures of dementia sufferers who experienced abuse range from 27.5% to 55%. One 2010 study found that 88.5% of participants with dementia experienced psychological abuse, 29.5% were neglected, and 19.7% suffered physical abuse. Several other studies confirm that as dementia progresses, so does the risk of all types of abuse.

GLOBAL SOCIAL OBSERVATORY (GSO) HAS CLOSED DOWN

The GSO, a Geneva-based think-tank since 2004, has closed its doors.

- Contact@gsogeneva.ch
- www.gsogeneva.ch

The new website of the (now former) GSO Executive Director is www.katherinehagen.net

IV. UN NEWS & UPCOMING UN EVENTS

Consultations with NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC regarding the evolving relationship between the NGOs and the United Nations

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of ECOSOC is planning to organize consultations with NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC regarding the evolving relationship between the NGOs and the United Nations, in pursuance of paragraph 61 (a) of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

The Chair of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations has provided the following questions and is inviting NGOs to consider them and to prepare contributions.

–"How can the process of applying for consultative status be facilitated and improved? How can it be made more open and transparent?

– How can we increase the participation of NGOs from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the UN's work? How can the UN, the Committee on NGOs and civil society at large join forces to ensure, as agreed in ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, a wider dissemination of the work of the UN and that organizations are encouraged to apply for status ?

– Once consultative status is granted to organizations, how best can ECOSOC and its subsidiary mechanisms, the Committee on NGOs, the UN Secretariat and civil society itself facilitate the process of familiarization with and access to the opportunities given to NGOs to take part in UN processes ?

– How can the contribution of NGOs to the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies be best used? What are the most efficient modalities for NGOs to contribute to policy-making, be recognized and be influential in these processes? "

The Chair has indicated that a meeting will be organized for a half-day (date not set, but seemingly between February and May 2018). It will take the form of hearings by the Committee on NGOs of representatives of NGOs in consultative status. Members of the Committee will react to the observations made by NGOs and will engage in discussion.

Comment from Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO: This initiative is so evidently directly relevant to CoNGO's historical and current concerns that CoNGO will seek every opportunity to prepare, encourage and facilitate input from its members. More information will be forthcoming. CR

INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION "WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT" - 2018-2028

"Water is Life" The UN Water Decade Resolution [1] Water is life, cutting across all global goals and 2030 agenda: water and sanitation are vital to sustainable development for all human beings. As climate change is aggravating increasing water-related challenges, causing natural disaster, financial loss, casualties, and even conflicts, it is essential to prioritize water and sanitation and mobilize commitment, cooperation and coordination to ensure implementation.

The International Decade for Action – Water for Sustainable Development [2] was adopted in December 2016. Three Decade objectives are ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT; ENERGIZE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS; INSPIRE ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA.

The Water Decade will promote implementation of the water-related SDG 6 (WATER AND

SANITATION), SDG 7 (ENERGY) and SDG 11 (SUSTAINABLE LIVING). A series of events and forums on the issue will be forthcoming. The SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation will be published in June 2018, ahead of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development where the UN Member States will review water-related goals in depth.

Links:

[1]http://feedproxy.google.com/~r/unsdn/~3/w25jWolhw6g/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email

[2] <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/849767>

INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

The Internet Governance Forum, a UN-based mechanism that brings together multiple Internet stakeholders (intergovernmental, governmental, business, academia, civil society) held its 12th annual meeting in Geneva in December 2017. The Forum is an "extra-budgetary project" of the UN Secretary-General, dependent on funding and donations to its trust fund.

The Forum called for the inclusion of all in Internet governance, especially the under-represented such as indigenous people and the unconnected.

The Forum adopted non-binding "Geneva messages", emphasizing that the ideal future digital governance should be value-based, inclusive, open and transparent. Core Internet values need to stay human-centered. Furthermore, the dependence of the digital economy on the free flow of information should be balanced with data protection and the privacy of individuals.

Youth voices recalled that youth were "digital natives", the largest end-users, and the Internet's future leaders. Business voices urged restraint on adopting national regulations on issues such as privacy of data flows that would constrain Internet's interconnecting and global character.

V. FROM THE ARCHIVES

The following extracts from a speech in 2005 by the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to the UN 2005 World Summit are just as relevant in 2018. CR

"Two years ago, speaking from this podium, I said we stood at a fork in the road. I did not mean that the United Nations was in existential crisis. The Organization remains fully engaged in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, defence of human rights, and development around the world.

No, I meant that deep divisions among Member States, and the underperformance of our collective institutions, were preventing us from coming together to meet the threats we face and seize the

opportunities before us.

The clear danger was that States of all kinds might increasingly resort to self-help, leading to a proliferation of ad hoc responses that would be divisive, destabilizing, and dangerous.....

Whether our challenge is peacekeeping, nation-building, democratization or responding to natural or man-made disasters, we have seen that even the strongest among us cannot succeed alone.

At the same time, whether our task is fighting poverty , stemming the spread of disease, or saving innocent lives from mass murder, we have seen that we cannot succeed without the leadership of the strong, and the engagement of all."

How very true in 2018 too. CR

VI. Publications

"Turning Strangers into Friends: hospitality, mercy, justice"

Edited by Liberato C. Bautista, Church and Society - the United Methodist Church. 2017. 92pp

"A workbook on the framework documents of The Churches Witnessing With Migrants (CWWM)"

ISBN 978-971-8548-88-2

Information: cwwm2013@gmail.com

VII. CALENDAR

NOTICE:

1. The CoNGO Calendar is a service to the NGO constituency to enable each individual organization to determine, in good time, its possible or desired involvement in the event mentioned, in accordance with the organization's own statutory or programmatic focus.

2. The conferences and meetings listed in the CoNGO Calendar are not under the convening or invitational or access responsibility of CoNGO. They are listed for the information of readers, and any queries about any event should be addressed solely to the organizer of the event, not to CoNGO.

Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO

2018

CoNGO's 70th Anniversary!

March

- **March 1-3:** 26th CoNGO General Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland)
- **March 12-23:** UN Commission on the Status of Women, 62nd Session (New York)
- **March 19-22:** World Summit on the Information Society – WSIS Forum (Geneva)
- **March 18-23:** 8th World Water Forum (Brasilia, Brazil): www.worldwaterforum8.org
- **tbc:** UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament
<http://www.2020visioncampaign.org/en/action-alerts/high-level-nuclear-disarmament-conference.html>

May/June

- **May 28 – June 8: International Labour Conference 107th Session (Geneve)**

July

- **July 4-7:** Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development (Dublin, Ireland)

Theme: "Environmental and community sustainability: Human solutions in evolving society"
(Also marking the 90th anniversary of the first international conference on social work, Paris, 1928)

Information: szelenev@icsw.org

- **July 9-18:** UN High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (New York)
- **July 12-14:** "Human rights, migration and global governance". Academic Council on the UN System (ACUNS).

Annual Conference, LUISS University, Rome.

Information: www.acuns.org

- **July 29 - August 1:** "Reimagining Interfaith Cooperation". 35th World Congress of the International Association for Religious freedom (IARF).

Partner organizations: Unitarian Universalist Association, United Religions Initiative, United Church of Christ, Religions for Peace.

Washington DC. Information: www.reimagineinterfaith.org. www.iarf.net

December

- **December 3-14:** UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 14th Conference of Parties (Katowice, Poland)

2019

- 100th Anniversary of the International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Centenary of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (founded as the League of Red Cross Societies)
- Centenary of the founding of the League of Nations (Société des Nations)
- March 11-15: United Nations Environment Assembly, 4th Session (Nairobi, Kenya)

2020

- **200th Anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale** ("The Lady with the Lamp", inspirer of modern health and nursing services)

NB: The Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH) has proposed a "Nightingale 2020 Vision" linked to the SDGs.

E-mail: NIGHinfo@gmail.com

- Date TBD: Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Japan. Information: ngo.unit@unodc.org