

THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

61ST ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE

(The DPI/NGO Section is part of the Department of Public Information's Outreach Division and acts as its liaison between the United Nations and NGOs and other civil society organizations).

INFORMATION BULLETIN # 1 - 26/12/07

(Information bulletins will be produced and distributed periodically by the Co-Chairs of the Planning Committee with a view to provide updates on the 2008, 61st Annual DPI/NGO Conference)

Basic Facts

1. Topic:

61st Annual DPI/NGO Conference commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

2. Dates:

3-5 September 2008

3. Location:

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

Overview

1. Background:

For the past 60 years, the DPI/NGO Conference has been held at the UN's New York Headquarters; in recent years, the event has welcomed up to 2000 participants.

The 61st Annual DPI/NGO Conference is being planned for 3-5 September 2008 in Paris, France, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It will mark the first time in the Conference's history that it will be held outside of New York.

2. Goals:

- To provide a forum for diverse actors, including civil society, governments, media, academia, and the private sector to discuss timely human rights issues and their role in addressing them;
- To reflect on the challenges confronted by human rights organizations at the international, national and local levels and articulate measures to address those challenges;
- To identify the most effective ways in which civil society is yielding a positive impact on the respect for human rights, and acknowledge those contributions;
- To engage human rights defenders, victims of human rights violations, members of socially and economically marginalized communities, civil society from regions that are often under-represented in UN fora, as well as youth, in informing the discussions around human rights;
- To underscore the gap between existing policies for the protection and promotion of human rights and their implementation, and recommend ways to advance accountability;
- To impact the awareness about human rights issues today among various sectors, including academia, media, the private sector and the broad public, targeting groups that are typically not informed by UN and NGO activities.

3. Participants:

Participation is open to all NGOs in association with the Department of Public Information, in consultative status with ECOSOC, or accredited to another UN system entity. Member State representatives, UN System representatives and UN accredited media correspondents are also welcome to attend.

Efforts will be made to involve the participation of academic institutions and students, as well as the private sector, and other constituencies whose participation is relevant in addressing human rights today.

Due to limited availability of space, restrictions will apply as to the number of representatives per organization.

(more)

4. About the NGO Planning Committee:

The NGO planning committee is co-chaired by the Chief of the DPI/NGO Section, Mr. Juan Carlos Brandt, and the Chair of the 61st DPI/NGO Conference, Ms. Shamina de Gonzaga.

The NGO planning committee will meet from January to August 2008. Its primary mandate is to recommend themes and speakers for the Conference, organize NGO workshops, and support outreach to diverse constituencies, including by working with the media, and supporting the Conference website. In addition to the New York based planning committee, NGOs in Paris and in Geneva, as well as in other regions, will be invited to contribute actively to the planning process.

The first planning committee meeting will be held on Friday, 4 January 2008, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in Conference Room 8 at the UN in New York. NGO consultations are being tentatively scheduled for January 2008 in Paris and in Geneva.

A paper outlining the time frame of the planning process, the subcommittees of the planning committee and various opportunities for involvement in the organization of the Conference will be made available at the 4 January meeting and electronically in French and in English. Minutes of all planning committee meetings will also be circulated for those who are not available to participate in person.

5. About the Chair of the 61st Annual DPI/NGO Conference:

Shamina de Gonzaga is a representative for the Fundación Cultural Baur, a Mexico-based NGO focusing on human rights education, and a Vice-Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee. She serves as Special Adviser on NGO relations in the Office of the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim, a role to which she was first appointed in 2005 during the 60th Session of the GA. She has facilitated the involvement of civil society in various high level meetings of the General Assembly including on HIV/AIDS, International Migration and Development, Least Developed Countries, and Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, and organized numerous interfaces between NGOs and the President of the General Assembly, as well as with Member States around issues on the agenda of the GA.

Shamina was the editor of *Centerpoint Now*, a commemorative journal for the UN's 60th Anniversary; producer of the *No Excuse Concert and Information Fair*, the first public outreach event and NGO fair for the MDGs in New York in 2004; and is co-founder of *what moves you?*, an organization dedicated to educating the public about global issues and inspiring action for social change. In 2001 Shamina initiated the youth committee for the DPI/NGO Conference. She has served as a NGO representative to the UN since 1996 and was a participant in the 1990 Children's Summit. She received her Bachelors of Arts and Masters of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania in 2003 and is fluent in English, French and Spanish. (E-mail: 2008conferencechair@ngodpiexecom.org)

6. About the DPI/NGO Section:

The DPI/NGO Section is part of the Department of Public Information's Outreach Division and acts as its liaison between the United Nations and NGOs and other civil society organizations. It oversees partnerships with associated NGOs and provides a wide range of services to them, including the organization of the annual DPI/NGO Conference. The Chief of the DPI/NGO Section is Mr. Juan Carlos Brandt. (E-mail: brandt@un.org)

The 61st DPI/NGO Conference involves the joint efforts by key elements within the UN system such as UNRIC Brussels, UNESCO and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The

Government of France -- through its Ministry for Foreign Affairs -- is scheduled to become a principal partner.

7. About the NGO/DPI Executive Committee:

The NGO/DPI Executive Committee is the official liaison between UN-associated NGOs and the UN's Department of Public Information. DPI works closely with the Executive Committee as it assists with the provision of services, the dissemination of materials, and the use of UN facilities to increase public knowledge of UN purposes, policies, programmes, actions, and structure. The Committee appoints the Chair of the Annual DPI/NGO Conference and develops outreach campaigns and fundraising efforts for the Conference. The Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee is Mr. Jeffery Huffines, UN Representative for the Baha'i of the United States. (E-mail: jhuffines@ngodpiexecom.org)
