



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**WINTER SESSION
CONFERENCE OF INGOs
CONF/PLE(2015)SYN1**

Strasbourg, 20 April 2015

**MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs
of Thursday 29 January 2015**

DRAFT SYNOPSIS

1. Opening of the meeting by Jean-Marie HEYDT, President of the Conference of INGOs

The president commented on the terrorist attacks that had occurred in France, other Council of Europe states and elsewhere in the world. He asked participants to observe a minute's silence in memory of the victims but also for Marc LEYENBERGER, who had died suddenly in July 2014.

2. Agenda: for adoption

Two questions were submitted under agenda item 17: "Other business".

3. Synopsis of the meeting of 26 June 2014 [[CONF/PLE \(2014\)SYN2](#)]: for adoption

The synopsis was approved unanimously (0 votes against; 0 abstentions)

4. 2014 activity report of the Standing Committee for approval and reports of the thematic committees for information

There was a need to step up our efforts to get the various actors in the committees and working groups working together in a more streamlined and mutually supportive way, and to increase the number of co-ordinated transversal groups focusing on issues facing society. It was important to encourage a more comprehensive approach, with greater emphasis on consistency and co-ordination. In addition, we must seek to improve communication, not only horizontally between the organisations themselves but also between organisations and their people on the ground.

To conclude, we must continue our efforts to raise our profile. To do that, we needed civil society and well-organised, representative INGOs. We needed to build more partnerships and to convince people of the need to rally round to create a better integrated society.

Vote

- 0 against
- 0 abstentions
- The report was approved unanimously

5. Election of the President of the Conference of INGOs

There was only one candidate (Anna RURKA) for the post of President of the Conference of INGOs.

- Speech by Anna RURKA
- Opening / close of ballot
- Result: Anna RURKA elected President of the Conference of INGOs with 84.21% of the votes cast.

6. Expert Council on NGO Law: recent activities and outlook

There was a need to improve co-operation with the partners in the quadrilogue in order to give the Council a greater voice and enable it to adopt a more intelligent approach in international affairs. The Expert Council had been working with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission). The Expert Council also represented the INGO Conference on various committees and was closely following the work done on human rights.

With regard to Recommendation (2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe, much still remained to be done in terms of implementing this text and disseminating it.

Alongside the Venice Commission, the Expert Council had published an opinion on INGO legislation in Azerbaijan. The Expert Council condemned the human rights abuses taking place in that country. It was also deeply concerned about the situation with regard to NGOs in the Russian Federation, where the law made it difficult for civil society organisations to function properly.

In 2014, the Expert Council had continued its co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly and had worked with all sectors of the Council of Europe.

The Expert Council was the political arm of the INGO Conference, helping to reinforce the key values of the Council of Europe.

9. World Forum for Democracy (18-20 November 2015)

The Scientific Council was currently working on the theme for the Forum, which would be connected to recent events. The title had not yet been decided, but one possibility was: "Strengthening democracy, embracing freedom". The idea was to examine the risks to democracy, between those who favoured tight controls and those who advocated freedom.

The hope was that the INGO Conference would offer assistance and funding to encourage the participation of civil society, beyond the Council of Europe's borders.

7. Handover from the outgoing President to the new President

- Handover
- Speech by Anna RURKA, thanking Jean-Marie Heydt
- Speech by Annelise OESCHGER on Mr Heydt's work over the years; in expressing her appreciation to Mr Heydt for his contribution to the Conference, Ms Oeschger proposed that he be awarded the title of Honorary President. This proposal was unanimously approved by the Conference.
- Thank-you speech by Jean-Marie HEYDT

8. Election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference of INGOs

Presentation of candidatures. There were six candidates, one of whom was absent. There were three Vice-Presidencies to be filled.

- Opening / close of ballot
- Results : 96 registered voters and 92 votes cast. The following persons were elected by an absolute majority:

Israël MENSAH	79.35%
Laura FRATI GUCCI	59.78%
Antonina DASHKINA	57.61%

10. Feedback from the thematic committees and adoption of texts

- Human Rights Committee: no text to be adopted. The highlight of the year was the event in Turin to mark International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October 2014.
- Education and Culture Committee: joint conference and drawing-up of a Manifesto on thinking in the formal and non-formal education sector with a view to reshaping education in Europe. This document was to serve as a basis for discussion with practitioners, policy makers and INGOs. The committee was continuing its work through three groups: "Teachers in interaction with their environment", "History teaching" and "Proper use of new media in intercultural education".
- Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges: The charter on democracy adopted the previous year remained central to our activities. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was to be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015. The committee had already produced a draft statement. Further efforts must be made to ensure due attention was given to human rights at this conference.

As a follow-up to the debate on 'Inclusive societies', three types of activities were under way: promoting a solidarity week, creating places for the development of European cultural ties, and creating platforms for publicising "good deeds". Anyone wishing to join the various working groups could do so via the committee's website.

Distribution of the draft [resolution](#) on the terrorist attacks in Paris.

- Discussions with the Assembly
- New draft text in the light of the comments made
- Reading with the amendments
- Vote: 58 votes in favour; 7 votes against; 12 abstentions.
- Draft resolution adopted by the plenary conference.

13. Exchange of views with a delegation from the Ministry for Relations with Parliament and Civil Society of Morocco

The Kingdom of Morocco wished to increase civil society participation in Morocco with the help of the Conference of INGOs. A working meeting had been held on 28 January 2015 to consider how such co-operation might work.

The Ministry's delegation apologised for its absence and wished to express its deep respect for the work done by civil society within the INGO Conference.

With regard to civil society, Morocco was currently endeavouring to introduce reform and promote reconciliation with civil society, including by legislating on the right to petition and the right to participate in public policy making. The aim was to put in place the necessary legal instruments so that civil society could make full use of its rights.

A nationwide project to promote civil society had run from March 2013 to March 2014. 10,000 members of civil society had been involved. The Moroccan Ministry for Relations with Parliament and Civil Society was working hard to introduce a participatory approach. To this end, the Ministry was making use of all available means of communication. The consultation process had been open to all sections of civil society and a website set up for anyone unable to be present.

A national forum on civil society was to be held in Rabat on 13, 14 and 15 March 2015. Morocco was looking to the INGO Conference to provide it with technical support, expertise and guidance in implementing the new legislation.

Screening of a 12-minute film charting the progress made by Morocco.

14. Strategic priorities for promoting civil society in decision-making in Ukraine

Presence of a delegation representing policy makers and civil society in Ukraine. The delegation told the Conference that Ukraine needed Council of Europe experts in order to introduce a strategy in support of civil society, in particular to enable it to participate in decision-making in Ukraine.

State of play and outlook for the future: the delegation said that over the past 18 months, Ukraine had drawn up a map of legislation connected with INGO activities in Ukraine, in a joint exercise with representatives of civil society, local and central government, etc. The priorities, which had been agreed collectively, were very precise and carefully targeted (legal environment, review and monitoring of the situation with regard to existing advisory bodies, creating a culture of participation: information and media coverage).

Two avenues were being jointly explored: what lessons could civil society draw from other countries in order to move forward and what could be done to enhance the capacity of NGOs, officials and government (training in order to increase participation)?

It was planned to pass a new law so that civil society could fully participate in the legislative process. If civil society was to participate, however, it needed to understand the purpose of government policies. Hence the need to raise awareness among civil society (through dialogue, education, etc.). It was planned to conduct a major information campaign, change attitudes and demonstrate the benefits to be gained from interaction with the general public.

An action plan was going to be introduced for the next three years. Ukraine had no time to lose and the justice ministry was eager to start working with civil society straightway on the draft legislation. The delegation stressed that Ukraine could not afford to wait years for things to improve. Progress needed to be achieved in the next few months.

The standing committee had prepared a draft resolution in support of these changes "[civil society, peace and democracy in Ukraine](#)"

- Reading of the resolution by Anna RURKA
- Spelling corrections
- Approval of the text: 0 votes against / 0 abstentions / approved unanimously

11. Election of the Rapporteurs of the Conference of INGOs

There were four rapporteur posts to be filled, but only three candidates. The 4th rapporteur would be elected the following June.

- Presentation of candidates
- Opening / close of ballot
- Results : 97 registered voters; 85 votes cast
 Jessica CHAMBA 91.76%

Jean Michel CAUDRON	81.18%
Oren GOSTIAUX	63.53 %

12. Election of the Gender Equality Expert of the Conference of INGOs

There were two candidates for the post of gender equality expert.

- Presentation of candidates
- Opening / close of ballot
- Results: 97 registered voters; 78 votes cast

Anne NEGRE	48.10 %
Rosa-Anne WEISS	46.43 %
- Second round
- Neither candidate withdrew
- Opening / close of ballot
- Anne NEGRE elected 57.69 %

Rosa-Anne WEISS	41.03 %
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16. Open questions from INGOs – see “other business”

17. Other business

- Michelle OBAMA had chosen not to wear the headscarf while visiting Saudi Arabia for King Abdullah's funeral in January 2015.
- From 27 to 29 April 2015, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom would celebrate its 100th anniversary.
- What could be done to enhance the role of women? Our working group had been operating for two years and would make proposals in June.
There had also been talk of setting up a “watchdog” (monitoring unit). What would its role be and would the members be elected or appointed? The document had not been adopted.
Reply: The monitoring unit had not been set up. With regard to the question about women, that was a matter for our expert.

15. Exchange of views with Snezana Markovic, Director General of Democracy

Ms MARKOVIC congratulated Anna RURKA on her election and thanked Jean-Marie HEYDT.

The killings in January had shown us just how vulnerable our society and democracy were to terrorist acts of this kind.

The guidelines submitted to the Committee of Ministers were designed firstly to improve legal action and secondly to enable practical measures to be taken to prevent and combat radicalisation. The Committee of Ministers invited the Secretary General to clarify his proposals. The Committee of Ministers would highlight terrorism and radicalisation at its session on 19 May 2015 in Brussels. During the session, a draft action plan would be submitted for adoption.

Ms MARKOVIC wished to revive the No Hate Speech campaign and possibly to extend it, creating a system of key competences for learning about democratic citizenship and combating radicalisation and terrorism. Competences for intercultural dialogue.

Education ministers from all the member states would be invited to gather to discuss this issue.

Ms MARKOVIC confirmed that both she personally and the Council of Europe were determined to work on prevention and that education was something we needed to invest in.

It was important to develop a thematic action plan on “living together” in diversity. Until now, we had had geographical action plans, but none that focused on particular topics. What was required now was a thematic action plan. This was a new challenge.

2015 World Forum for Democracy: democracy was in danger. Freedom versus control was one of the themes proposed. Ms MARKOVIC hoped that the INGO Conference would be fully involved.

We needed to find an appropriate way of dealing with events while at the same time preserving our shared values and combating radicalisation. That in turn required the participation of civil society. Ms MARKOVIC then turned to the participants and asked them what they could do, collectively and individually, to tackle situations that were conducive to terrorism and radicalisation. What could be done to improve education policies? And to promote intercultural dialogue?

Anna RURKA gave the floor to Michel AGUILAR, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, who wished to comment on Ms MARKOVIC’s use of the terms “immediate action” and “education”. He told Ms MARKOVIC that within the committee, there was a working group on youth and human rights education. In addition, in partnership with Licra, a symposium for pupils from France, Germany and Switzerland was to be held in May over a period of two and a half days to discuss hate speech. The pupils would hear from experts in various fields, including the internet, and there would also be a presentation on existing good practice, as well as round tables. The focus was on practical measures, and dealing with the problem of hate speech as soon as it arose.

Anna RURKA began discussing the functioning of the future Bureau with participants and elicited the following suggestions for improvements:

- Devise a strategy for monitoring all the work (resolutions, statements, etc.) in order to make it easier to disseminate the relevant documents among the Council of Europe’s political bodies.
- Refer back to the list of nine things to do that appeared in the June 2014 synopsis.
- The resolution passed that morning had been adopted too quickly. There was a need to take account of the work that was being done and perhaps to set up a working group for these resolutions.
- Rather than reading the working group reports, which could be found on the internet, it would be better to address topical issues via the three committees. That way, not only would we be more in tune with what was being done on the parliamentary side, but we would also have the opportunity to talk more with the parliamentarians and to gain a broader perspective on what was happening in the world.