



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

STANDING COMMITTEE CONF/SC(2017)SYN1

SYNOPSIS OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24 JANUARY 2017

Present: Anna Rurka, Michel Aguilar, Anne Kraus, Jessica Chamba, Anne-Marie Chavanon, Karl Donert, Simon Matthijsen, Oren Gostiaux, Salomon Levy, Israël Mensah (absent from 10.45 am), Anne Negre, Maritchu Rall, Iamvi Totsi, Cyril Ritchie, Jean-Marie Heydt, Thierry Mathieu

Present (until 12.45 pm): Jean-Michel Caudron, Antonina Dashkina, Sabine Rohmann, Didier Schretter

Apologies for absence: Roseline Moreau, Laura Frati-Gucci

1. Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs
2. Agenda: adopted
3. List of the decisions made by the Standing Committee on 10 October 2016 – adopted
4. **Exchange of views on the exercise of the office of Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs by Israël Mensah.** This exchange of views took place after Israël Mensah had spoken at the beginning of the meeting and at the meeting of the Bureau which had preceded it. He was then asked to leave the meeting room.

Factual information points:

- The IOCE, the INGO which had submitted Israël Mensah's candidacy for the position of Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs did not renew his delegation from 1 January 2017;
- Israël Mensah had informed the President and the Secretariat that he was now a member of the delegation of the European Association of Teachers (EAT);
- The Verification and Dispute Committee and the Council of Europe's Legal Department had given separate opinions which stated that in the event of a change of INGO during an elective office, an elected person could not continue with his/her term of office without a new election. Accordingly, this change of INGO had broken the continuity of the exercise of his/her office. The two opinions, which had been formulated separately, stated that there was a functional link between the elected person and the INGO which had presented his/her candidature. The legal opinions

stressed that it fell to the Standing Committee to decide whether or not to organise elections at the next session (June 2017) to fill position which had become vacant;

- It was also pointed out that the Verification and Dispute Committee had presented its conclusions and that the terms of reference given to it by the Conference of INGOs was to settle any disputes which might arise within the Conference of INGOs and which were closely linked to compliance with the Rules of Procedure;
- Discussion/Problem: The Rules of Procedure do not explicitly deal with the case of an elected representative having his/her term of office withdrawn by the INGO which had submitted his/her candidature during elections. In that case:
 - a. It was necessary to interpret the existing provisions in the Rules of Procedure and reach a conclusion on the consequences for the new situation as rules of procedure can never cater for every situation;
 - b. And/or look for previous practice in identical situations. Those present stated that there had been no previous case which was exactly equivalent.

N.B.: The previous case of Alain Mouchoux (at that time Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs) was different in that his INGO had become a member of another one which also had participatory status. In that case it was a merger of INGOs.

Decisions:

- The Standing Committee took note of the legal opinions received;
 - The Standing Committee noted that this case should be specifically catered for in any future reform of the Conference of INGOs' Rules of Procedure. The Standing Committee recommended that a study group be set up in order to propose amendments at its next meeting and at that of the Bureau;
 - Israël Mensah told the Standing Committee that in view of the context, he was tendering his resignation. The Standing Committee took note of Israël Mensah's resignation following the whole debate;
 - The Standing Committee took note of the opinions of the Verification and Dispute Committee and the Council of Europe's Legal Department and of Israël Mensah's resignation. The position of Vice-President which had been filled by Israël Mensah was therefore vacant;
 - The vote (by secret ballot) on whether or not to organise elections for the position of Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs in June (that person's term of office would therefore be six months) ended with the following results:
 - In favour: 3
 - Against: 7
 - Abstentions: 3
- 13 out of the 16 people with voting rights took part (3 apologised for their absence during the vote). Those sitting in an advisory capacity only did not take part (four persons in this case).
- Following the vote, the Conference would therefore not organise elections in June and the position of Vice-President would remain vacant until the election of the new Bureau scheduled for January 2018.

(The Standing Committee's meeting continued beyond the time initially scheduled and, accordingly, without any interpreters. Four persons had to attend other meetings (see the list of those present)).

5. **Opinion of the Standing Committee on the INGOs to which the Secretary General wished to grant, withdraw or refuse participatory status.** Information on the procedure regarding quadrennial reports: Jane Crozier
- The Secretariat presented the report and the arrangements for renewing participatory status;
 - At the expiry of the official deadline for replying, nearly 100 organisations no longer met the criteria for having participatory status. The Secretariat had then issued several reminders and carried out many consultations, including internally within the Council of Europe, to ensure that no activity had been omitted. Following this exercise, the list had been considerably shortened;
 - Following a letter by the Secretariat informing the INGOs concerned that they were on the list of organisations which could potentially be removed, they were able to send their comments;
 - The organisations had until 18 February to complete their report.

Decision:

- At the end of January, the members of the Standing Committee could contact the relevant INGOs for which withdrawal of participatory status was a possibility to enable them to still send their report in case the withdrawal was due to the fact that they had not sent the report;
- The members of the Standing Committee were invited to send their comments to Anna Rurka on the cases of INGOs for which they felt that the withdrawal of participatory status was unjustified (deadline: 13 February);
- Anna Rurka would forward the Standing Committee's opinion to the Secretariat on 18 February.

6. Preparation of the Conference of INGOs' meeting of 27 January:

6.1 The 2016 activity report of the Conference of INGOs was **adopted** with minor changes;

6.2 The 2016 activity report of the Council of Europe. At the President's request, the Conference of INGOs had once again a separate chapter in this report, just after the one for the Commissioner for Human Rights. The Conference had therefore regained its place as an independent institution;

6.3 Meetings of the thematic committees and progress in the work within the working groups (Chairs of the thematic committees)

It was pointed out that all the documents adopted by the Conference of INGOs were sent, after each session, by the Secretariat of the Civil Society Division to all the bodies and operational directorates of the Council of Europe.

6.4 Welcoming meeting for the new INGO representatives (Anne Kraus, Antonina Dashkina)

Proposal to create a USB flash drive/ backup to be distributed to new members which would help them understand who does what within the Conference. The organisers indicated that they wished to create a pool of persons within the Conference to welcome and introduce new representatives. Those who were interested were kindly asked to contact Anne Kraus.

It was also necessary to publish clear information on the website for those wishing to attend the INGOs' dinner in order for them to understand that they were registering and not being invited.

6.5 Meeting on the communication strategy (Didier Schretter) *Deferred item*

7. Election of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic committees, 29 June 2017 – information on the procedure (Salomon Levy)

The call for candidatures would be sent to all INGOs on 29 March (Article 5.2.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference). The deadline for sending a candidature was 29 April (Article 5.2.2 of the Rules of Procedure).

NB: No candidate could apply for more than one position. For any questions on the validity of candidatures, please contact the Verification and Dispute Committee or the Secretariat.

8. Evaluation of the Action Plan of the Conference of INGOs' (Jessica Chamba)

There was interest in the initiative and in reflection on this matter, but also fear that this tool would not give a sufficiently qualitative overview of the action taken. It was pointed out that it was a working tool which would make it possible, first and foremost, to provide statistics and could merely serve to provide input to a more qualitative discussion and evaluation which must take place at a later stage.

Decision:

- Jessica Chamba would consult the members of the Standing Committee by the next meeting in order to propose a more detailed version of the tool and examples.

Decision:

- a Standing Committee seminar would take place on Sunday 8 October;
- items 9-13 would be discussed at the Standing Committee's meeting of Thursday 26 January 2017.