



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Standing Committee

CONF/SC(2017)SYN2

29 May 2017

MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT Monday 24 April, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm and 2 – 4 pm Agora – Room G 05

Present: Anna RURKA, Michel AGUILAR, Jean-Michel CAUDRON, Jessica CHAMBA, Anne-Marie CHAVANON, Antonina DASHKINA, Karl DONERT, Anne KRAUS, Simon MATTHIJSEN, Oren GOSTIAUX, Salomon LEVY, Roseline MOREAU, Anne NEGRE, Maritchu RALL, lamvi TOTSI, Cyril RITCHIE, Thierry MATHIEU, Didier SCHRETTTER.

Apologised for absence:

Antonina DASHKINA, Laura FRATI-GUCCI, Sabine ROHMANN, Jean-Marie HEYDT

1. Opening of the meeting by Anna RURKA, President of the Conference of INGOs

The President of the Conference informed members of the latest news, including the fact that she had sent a second letter to the President of the PACE concerning alleged corruption in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This time, the letter had been about interaction between parliamentarians and NGOs.

2. Agenda:

Adopted unanimously.

3. Report on the meetings of 24 and 26 January 2017:

Adopted unanimously, subject to certain technical adjustments to the report dated 24 January 2017.

4. Appointment of the meeting rapporteur:

Jean-Michel CAUDRON was appointed as rapporteur.

5. Review of the INGO Conference's Action Plan (Jessica CHAMBA):

In view of the poor response to the questionnaires (*15 action sheets received in the test version*), Jessica CHAMBA asked the chairs of the thematic committees and the INGO Conference contact persons to send out the link to the questionnaire again, with replies to be submitted by 20 May 2017, so that this qualitative and quantitative review could be completed over the summer, and the report on the INGO Conference's Action Plan drafted and approved in time for the winter session.

6. Preparations for the June session of the INGO Conference (26-29 June 2017):

- Election of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic committees (29 June 2017):

Salomon LEVY went over the procedure for these elections and the deadlines (*closing date for candidatures: 29 April; verification of the deadline for receipt of candidatures: 3 May*).

- Expiry of terms of office of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic committees and handover of responsibilities (work cycle, roadmaps and working groups):

The working groups' term of office ended with that of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic committees. It seemed there was a need to rethink the number, form and output of the working groups, based on the new roadmaps for each committee and the INGO Conference's Action Plan. The new working groups could be set up after first seeking approval from the committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs followed by the Standing Committee. The aim was not to increase the number of groups but to make them operational and more short-term, with the focus on specific projects. The process of drawing up the roadmaps would begin at the first meeting of the Standing Committee with the newly elected representatives, on Friday 30 June.

- Texts to be adopted:

The draft recommendation on human rights and business was postponed until June.

- Events to be held during the session:

- *Side event* on the mobilisation of women on 27 June with the participation of activists and MPs from Ireland, Turkey, Poland and Iceland, organised in partnership with the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination;
- Debate on populism – in order to provide input for our contribution to the 2017 World Forum for Democracy, a debate would be held on populist rhetoric: hate speech and discriminatory speech in order to provide INGOs with decoding tools and enable them to share their initiatives;
- Event to mark the 40th anniversary: the Blue Room had been booked but the arrangements were now threatened by financial problems. The organisers would try to find external sources of funding.

7. Ad hoc committee on representativeness within the INGO Conference:

The initial findings and recommendations of the ad hoc committee "Representativeness and impact of the INGO Conference" were presented by Anne KRAUS and endorsed by the Standing Committee.

As a network of international NGOs with different areas of expertise, and in line with its action plan, the Conference was eager to play its part in protecting the democratic space necessary for any civil society activities and in stabilising the democratic process. The idea was to provide the INGO Conference with an effective, operational framework satisfactory to everyone, so that all member INGOs could readily contribute to the Conference's work and come together to shape policy at European level. This was a key challenge.

It was decided to prioritise four measures for the June session of the INGO Conference, so that implementation could begin in January 2018:

- create a database on INGO expertise;
- improve communication;
- provide the Conference with the necessary resources (*organisation and co-ordination*) for managing projects that afforded opportunities for coherent, visible team work with greater impact;
- identify key themes linked to the activities of the Steering Committees, intergovernmental committees and the committees of the parties.

8. Information on the role of the Secretariat vis-à-vis the INGO Conference

A text would be drafted this summer in order to make some adjustments to co-operation between the Secretariat and the INGO Conference, and what they expected from each other in terms of the Secretariat's administrative and logistical support for the Conference.

9. Ad hoc working group on an anti-corruption and ethics mechanism:

The terms of reference of the ad hoc group were adopted unanimously.

10. 2017 World Forum for Democracy:

The INGO Conference suggested a new Lab for the World Forum for Democracy (*theme for 2017: "Is Populism a Problem?"*), entitled "Participatory democracy tools, a safeguard against populism?"

11. Granting, refusal and loss of participatory status:

In a letter from its Chair dated 17 February 2017, the Standing Committee had responded to the first list prepared by the Civil Society Division regarding the granting, refusal and loss of participatory status, in the light of the conditions laid down in Resolution (2016)3.

In her letter, the Chair had:

- welcomed the nine INGOs which were on track to obtain participatory status without any problem;
- noted the involvement of three INGOs in the activities of the Council of Europe and its bodies, which would pave the way for the granting of participatory status;
- explained the difficulties which a number of INGOs had had in submitting their four-yearly reports despite several extensions of the deadline.

The Secretariat outlined the choices made by the Secretary General. Under the tacit accession arrangement, the Secretary General submitted his list to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. These bodies then had 60 days within which to comment. The deadline, therefore, was 24 June 2017, enabling the new INGOs to attend the summer session.

12. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Standing Committee would be held on Tuesday 27 June 2017.

13. Other business