



## **Standing Committee**

CONF/SC(2020)SYN2

### **Meeting of the Standing Committee**

Draft Meeting report

Monday April 20, 2020

2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Digital meeting

Present: Anna Rurka, Gerhard Ermischer, Anne Kraus, Salomon Levy, Annelise Oeschger, Katarzyna Sokolowska, Christoph Spreng, Simon Matthijssen, Claude Vivier Le Got, Rares Craiut, Karl Donert, Anne Nègre, Iamvi Totsi, Luminita Petrescu, Richard Pirolt, Robert Bergougnan

Apologies for absence Excused: Thierry Mathieu, Miguel Cabral, Cyril Ritchie (for a part of the meeting)

1. Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs
2. Appointment of the rapporteur for the meeting  
Rares Craiut is appointed as the rapporteur for the meeting.
3. Draft agenda - for adoption  
Agenda adopted after discussion on the priorities
4. Report of the meeting of January 27, 2020 - for adoption
  - Modification requested: Karl Donert should be added to the minutes under "excused, with a proxy". Necessity to include in the French version of the graphic that was in English version.
  - In order to remain neutral, the decision not to mention the name of the INGO of the delegate who represents the Conference of INGOs to the steering committee(s) was adopted.
  - The items not discussed during the January meeting will be evoked at a later date. They were not planned for this digital meeting, because of its shortened time slot (3 hours). The context of the pandemic and the cancellation of the April session obliges Standing Committee to focus on other priorities.

The report of the meeting of 27 January 2020 was adopted with the modifications requested (points 1 and 2 above).

## 5. Update on the 2019 Conference of INGO Activity Report - for discussion

The first version of the Activity Report 2019 of the Conference of INGOs was sent to the Standing Committee. There is still time to send contributions to the report. Regarding the place for the “integrated approaches”, it was decided to maintain the separate chapters and to add the relevant footnotes and references in the paragraphs dedicated to Human Rights and Rule of law and Democracy chapters.

## 6. Information item on the 2016-2019 Quadrennial Reports

A quadrennial report is an obligation for each INGO granted with participatory status. The report needs to show the working relations between an INGO and CoE.

In this regard, a first announcement was sent out in December, followed by several reminders. The deadline was prolonged until 20 April. As of now there are still 35 reports missing (262 received out of 297).

The INGOs which have not met the criteria set out in CM Resolution (2016)3 during the years 2016-2019 will lose participatory status. A final list will be submitted to the SC by the Secretariat for opinion. At this stage a specific letter will be sent to INGOs concerned and they will have 30 days to reply. The Secretary General's proposals should be published by the summer.

Anna Rurka thanked the Secretariat for its flexibility and especially Ellsworth Camilleri for his work in trying to chase up the missing reports.

The Standing Committee members raised concern about NGOs dropping out and proposed to have a specific discussion about the reasons for this once the list has been sent to the SC by the Secretariat.

## 7. Information on the evaluation of the Conference of INGOs by the Directorate of Internal Oversight of the Council of Europe

Mary Ann Hennessey explained that this evaluation is based on a decision of the Council of Europe Directorate of Internal Oversight. The Committee of Ministers wishes to have a regular oversight of all the Council of Europe bodies. This decision to carry out the evaluation comes in a positive light following the 2016 Report on the contribution of the NGOs to the work of the Council of Europe steering committees. Over the last several years, there have been regular exercises and interesting discussions. In this whole process the Secretariat saw positive developments, for example, the adoption of the Code of Conduct by the Conference of INGOs. The Democratic Innovation Division thought that this was a good time to proceed to this evaluation, to inform on changes made and those which are undergoing. The Conference of INGOs should look at it as an opportunity. At this stage, the terms of reference have been published to recruit the consultant who will carry out the evaluation.

The inception phase will start at the beginning of May and the scoping interviews will be planned. The final Inception Report is expected in June. Data collection and analysis are planned between the beginning of May until the end of July, with the observation phase during the October session of the Conference of INGOs. A first draft report is expected in September and the final one in January 2021.

The Standing Committee decided to start without delay the preparation of the collective contribution to this process.

8. Calendar of the sessions of the Conference of INGOs, calendar of the process for adopting the draft rules of procedure and the transitional measures linked to the exercise of mandates.

In the current context of the pandemic and health regulations, it is not possible to organise a session in June. The Standing Committee nevertheless wishes to continue its work and remain connected with the Conference of INGO members. It was therefore necessary to think of a methodology and suitable tools and to define a clear, well-structured, thematic and efficient approach.

Democratic processes must be respected and therefore Conference of INGO members need to be consulted whenever possible. The use of digital tools could be seen as a good opportunity to involve members who are far away from Strasbourg. Tutorials on the use of digital tools will be necessary.

Considering the very difficult sanitary situation, it is proposed that the online discussion with INGO members concentrates on the transversal groups, especially poverty and digital issues. The Standing Committee needs to bring some answers regarding the broader crisis and its impact on human rights.

Decisions:

- The Standing Committee decided to adapt the “session” agenda in order to propose short digital communication units which thanks to the Council of Europe digital tool (KUDO) will allow interpretation.
- The discussion on the ongoing reform of the Conference of INGOs cannot be avoided and the reform process has to continue.
- Anna Rurka has started to consult the 4 Honorary Presidents of the Conference of INGOs regarding the draft rules of procedures and has invited them to accompany this process until adoption of the draft rules.
- Standing Committee members will propose a written proposal on the topics to discuss in the form of short digital meetings of up to 2 hours, with precise programming: who, when and how.
- Salomon Levy will analyse the current rules and say on which topics the Standing Committee may “react fast” like in the current context. Based on this analysis, advice will be given on how to handle things in a way so not to block but rather to support each other.
- The Standing Committee will have a second digital meeting via “Blue Jeans” on 4 May from 14.00-17.00

9. The draft rules of procedure (continuation of discussion)

- a) Number of sessions - article 5 of the draft rules

The regularity of 2 sessions / year, which is a minimum, is “breaking up” already today. The Covid19 crisis shows the need to integrate the digital component regarding online sessions / meetings and voting online.

Decisions:

- Request to the drafting group to include the appropriate provisions regarding the Conference of INGOs sessions / meetings by video-conferencing and digital components regarding its decision-making.

- The “digital sessions/ meetings” should not replace the “physical” sessions in Strasbourg but be used as an additional tool
- Remove the reference to 2 sessions / year in the article 5. Proposal “The Conference holds its Sessions each year, preferably during either the ordinary sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe or the Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities”.

b) Provisions related to the committees (articles 64 to 73 of the draft rules)

As decided by the Standing Committee in its meeting in January 2020 the initially proposed “working groups” were named “committees”.

A Committee will be established for two years with the possibility of a one-year extension. This focus oriented approach required that the committees work between the sessions in order to propose substantial work for adoption by the General Assembly of the Conference of INGOs (digital tools / meetings between the sessions).

The discussion focused on the issues related to the appointment / election of the Chair of the Committee. After discussion, a consensus was built on the fact that these persons should be elected by the General Assembly of the Conference of INGOs. This would give Committee’s Chairs democratic legitimacy and the Conference of INGOs will be able to promote its diversity and regulate the complex balance between the expertise needed and different profiles of its INGO members.

Decisions:

- The number of committees should not be mentioned in the rules but decided by the Standing Committee according to the context and priorities.
- Everyone is bound by the Code of Conduct, also in matters of conflict of interest.
- Art 68 of the draft rules was modified to say that the Chairs of the Committees are elected by the Conference of INGOs General Assembly. The rapporteur of each committee is appointed by the committees’ members.

The indicative vote: articles 63 to 73 were adopted with 1 abstention and 1 refusal to participate to the vote

The modalities and practicalities of this decision should be verified and discussed further.

10.Information item on the current work of the Expert Council on NGO Law (Jeremy McBride, Cyril Ritchie)

The Standing Committee took note of the current work led by the Expert Council on NGO Law

- Opinion on the compatibility of amendments to the Turkish NGO Law with international standards
- Guidelines for limiting the negative impact of criminal law on the work of NGOs supporting refugees and other migrants in Council of Europe Member States
- Study on the implementation of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe](#)

#### 11. World Forum for Democracy 2020 - for information and decision

Mary Ann Hennessy explained that for the moment the Democratic Innovation Division is still planning the WFD 2020. The concept note will be sent to the WFD Steering Committee as soon as possible.

Decisions:

- Propose ideas / send comments regarding WFD concept note
- Identify relevant citizen / public authority initiatives and invite them to answer the call for contributions which will be published soon on the WFD website.
- On the basis of the identified initiatives / partners, build a concept note for a Standing Committee lab. All initiatives presented in the SC lab should firstly be selected by the WFD jury.

#### 12. Support from University of Women Europe on biographies.

Anne Nègre explained the University Women of Europe Prize “Women’s Biographies” in the French language. She asked for the Conference of INGOs’ support in this regard.

Decision (no abstentions, no vote against): The Standing Committee agreed to support this initiative. UWE can use the Conference of INGOs logo in this regard.

#### 13. INGO-Service - For Information

Annelise Oeschger, President of INGO-Service, explained that the association will have to look at the new situation and will have to adapt to digital tools, as it is not clear when the “physical” meetings can be organized. There will be an online meeting with Secretariat on how to adopt the contract to this new context. The organization of the General Assembly of INGO-Service can wait until the October session.

#### 14. Any other business

15. The date of the next meeting: an additional meeting of the Standing Committee would be held on 4 May followed by the meeting on 22 June 2020.