



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**SUMMER SESSION  
CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
CONF/PLE(2014) SYN2**

Strasbourg, 22 July 2014

**MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOS**

**DRAFT SYNOPSIS  
Thursday 26 June 2014**

1. **Opening of the meeting:** Jean-Marie Heydt, President, welcomed the participants.
2. **Appointment of the Rapporteurs:** Alain Mouchoux, Vice-President and Maritchu Rall, Bureau Rapporteur

The members of the Conference:

3. **Adopted the agenda** with an addition to item 11, "Other business", on the situation of journalists in Ukraine.
4. **Adopted the synopsis** [\[CONF/PLE\(2014\)SYN1\]](#) of the meeting held on 30 January 2014 (with one abstention)

Before discussing the items on the agenda, the President gave a brief overview of the activities carried out over the previous four months, in other words:

- Discussions on work with the committees and working groups by e-mail, in particular with a view to preparing meetings and the round table on "Gender perspectives - security – peace" (24 June) at which contacts were made with the Parliamentary Assembly;
- Preparation of the thematic debate on "How to enhance civil dialogue? The contribution of the Conference of INGOs to an enabling environment for NGOs in Eastern Europe" (25 June);
- Numerous meetings involving representatives of the Conference of INGOs with: the President of the Parliamentary Assembly elected in January, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the President of the Court of Human Rights on the subject of the reform of the Court at which the President expressed the wish that the Conference be invited to take part in the meetings of the group of legal experts which meets once a year to study the implementation of decisions;
- Participation of the President of the Conference and of the President of Human Rights Committee in the thematic meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on 10 June on: 'the role

and functioning of NGOs in the Council of Europe' – [link to the President's contribution](#). The President informed the Conference that the Ministers' Deputies wished to have more contacts with NGOs and that he had invited them to attend the plenary meeting of the Conference on 26 June and the thematic debate on 25 June. The Conference welcomed these developments.

All meetings with the other pillars of the quadrilogue helped to strengthen the presence of the Conference in a very tense international situation.

## 5. Elections of committee chairs and vice-chairs

- The Conference thanked the three committee chairs and the vice-chairs for their work.
- Rémy Berthier, chair of the Verification and Dispute Committee, presented the procedure for the elections, which would be held simultaneously. The Committee had met on 16 May and had examined all the candidatures.

He underlined two main points:

- ✓ Article 5.1.3 of the new Rules of Procedure stipulated that "No INGO may simultaneously hold more than one elected office giving entitlement to vote on the Standing Committee";
- ✓ The candidature of representatives of an INGO which loses its participatory status just before the elections can no longer be accepted;
- **appointed** 4 tellers: Philippe Grolleau (Pax Romana), Gilles Bloch (LICRA), Anna Maria Corca (CPME), and Jack Hanning (European Movement International).
- The candidates for the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship of the committees were presented.
- **First round of the elections:**
  - ✓ Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee:  
Anne Marie Chavanon: 98 votes and 10 blank ballots, re-elected as Chair  
Karl Donert 88 votes and Thierry Mathieu 84 votes and 26 blank ballots. Elected as vice-chairs
  - ✓ Education and Culture Committee  
Sabine Rohmann: 103 votes, re-elected as Chair  
Roseline Moreau: 65 votes, elected vice-chair
  - ✓ Human Rights Committee  
Michel Aguilar: 97 votes – elected as Chair  
Gérard Gréneron: 89 votes and Iamvi Totsi: 77 votes – elected as vice-chairs
- **2<sup>nd</sup> round of the elections:**
  - ✓ Education and Culture Committee  
Didier Schretter: 44 votes - elected vice-chair

## 6. Participatory status

- The Conference called to mind that participatory status was granted to INGOs at the Council of Europe in the framework of Resolution 2003(8) so that new INGOs were aware of the many possibilities that existed to engage with the Council of Europe in general and with the Conference of INGOs in particular;
- Alain Mouchoux, Vice-President of the Conference, reminded members of several points:

- ✓ The Conference of NGOs was a member of the quadrilogue: 110 NGOs of the 320 holding participatory status were present at the meeting;
  - ✓ The NGOs worked to promote democracy, which comprised two inseparable aspects representative democracy and participatory democracy. Organised civil society therefore had a key role to play;
  - ✓ The Council of Europe was the only international organisation that granted participatory status. This was the outcome of considerable work and now helped to foster democracy;
  - ✓ The Conference of INGOs was represented on steering committees and bodies where policies and guidelines were identified and developed
- The President described the four main aspects of his hearing before the Ministers' Deputies on 10 June ([link to his statement](#))

A discussion ensued from which it proved necessary to:

- ✓ promote awareness of the Council of Europe and the Conference of INGOs;
- ✓ increase the visibility of the Conference's work;
- ✓ improve the links between the representatives of the Conference and the grassroots;
- ✓ hold an introductory meeting to help integrate new INGOs;
- ✓ appoint a reference person for practical issues and information;
- ✓ promote our work more effectively so as to obtain the necessary funding;
- ✓ undertake the PR work that had become essential;
- ✓ respond to requests, in particular at major events organised by the Council of Europe (for example the World Forum for Democracy, the questionnaire on follow-up to the Lanzarote convention, etc.)
- ✓ set up networks and underline the synergy between the various organisations.

## 7. Adoption of texts prepared by the Committees

- Annelise Oeschger, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, presented two draft recommendations, a draft declaration and a communication:
- ✓ the draft Recommendation "Combating anti-Semitism in Europe". The Recommendation had been unanimously approved by the Committee on 24 June 2014 and was unanimously adopted by the Conference;
  - ✓ the draft Recommendation "Gender based violence as a political weapon". This Recommendation had been approved with one abstention by the Committee on 24 June 2014 and was unanimously adopted with 4 abstentions by the Conference;
  - ✓ the draft Declaration "Protection of Human Rights Defenders", prepared by the Human Rights Committee on 24 June on the basis of the working group's work on this subject. Annelise Oeschger welcomed the release of Ales Bialiatski (Belarus) and underlined the need to protect human rights defenders. She recommended reading the text by Dmitri Makarov (International Youth Human Rights Movement). The Human Rights Committee proposed that the Conference approve the text, refer it to the Committee for further discussion and add concrete proposals in January 2015. Both the text and the procedure were unanimously approved by the Conference.
  - ✓ The communication concerned the organisation of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October, which this year would be celebrated in Turin. The Human Rights Committee, with the help of its Working Group on "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights", was organising this day to coincide with the High Level Conference on the European Social Charter to be held by the Council of Europe and the European Union on 17 and 18 October in Turin. The President of the Conference of INGOs had been invited to speak at this conference. He would deliver a message prepared by people living in poverty in Europe, and representatives of NGOs and the public authorities. The aim was to urge the European Union to comply with the rights set out in the European

Social Charter and to heed the needs of the poorest populations in all policies and measures concerning the eradication of poverty.

- Anne-Marie Chavanon, Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee, presented a draft statement:
  - ✓ the draft statement on “climate change and human rights” had been unanimously approved by the Committee on 25 June. It was presented by Edith Wenger, head of the corresponding working group, who said that it was a useful tool for NGOs which might have to comment on the issue of climate change. The effects of climate change would directly affect fundamental human rights and in particular the most vulnerable populations and the text provided ideas and proposals in this connection. It received the unanimous support of the Conference of INGOs.

## 8. Instruments of the Conference of INGOs: recent action and perspectives

### i. Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process:

The President talked about the importance of the **Code of Good Practice** for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process. The Code had been presented in several countries to encourage NGOs and the authorities to use this effective tool, which was only useful if it was used in interaction between the authorities and civil society.

#### **Seminar on “Civil society participation in decision-making: dreams, reality and challenges”, Chisinau, 12 and 13 June 2014**

Ivan Nikoltchev of the Civil Society Division presented the seminar in which Maria Pomazkova, member of the Expert Council on NGO Law, had represented the Conference of INGOs. Most of the forty or so participants were members of NGOs from the 6 countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). The aim was to find practical ways for the Conference of INGOs and the Council of Europe to promote civil society’s participation in decision-making processes in the region.

The main conclusions and Recommendations were to:

- set up pilot projects to test the concrete use of the Code or of the other documents of the Conference or the Council of Europe;
- organise and conduct full training programmes on civil society’s participation in decision making processes at regional or national level on the basis of positive experiences;
- help NGOs to develop their analytical and promotional skills;
- systematically use the networks existing in the region, for example political schools or the network of civil society leaders (CSLN) and set up new ones if necessary. Co-operation with the Conference of INGOs and the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership was strongly recommended;
- develop and support programmes which contribute to dialogue and confidence-building measures in post-conflict and “frozen conflict” areas;
- prepare analytical reports evaluating the state of regulation and implementation of laws on civil society participation in decision-making processes;
- develop programmes which improve co-operation between NGOs and the media;
- develop support programmes at local and regional level;
- organise a ‘side-event’ during the meeting of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership to be held in Tbilisi (Georgia) in November;

The full report of the Chisinau seminar is available online. [[link](#) to Igor Kohut’s report in English and Russian]

Christophe Spreng (Initiative of Change – International) proposed including the toolkit for intercultural dialogue in the process ([link to the website](#)).

- **Debate organised by the Conference of INGOs: “How to enhance civil dialogue? The contribution of the Conference of INGOs to an enabling environment for NGOs in Eastern Europe”, held on 25 June 2014 ([link to the programme](#)).**

Hanna Hopko from Ukraine pointed out that civil society was playing a key role in transforming the political system and encouraging the government to conduct reforms.

The President pointed out that, despite considerable tensions, discussions were still taking place between the different member states of the Council of Europe.

- **Work with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**  
Anne-Marie Chavanon said that a more appropriate version of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process was being prepared for local elected representatives. The question was whether a new version of the Code should be written or whether new elements would be incorporated into the existing code.
- **Use of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process in countries in the Southern Neighbourhood**  
The President talked about the use of the Code in countries in the southern neighbourhood, in particular Tunisia and Morocco. Morocco had particularly appreciated being able to consult the code in the context of the reform of relations between civil society and the public authorities. Among other things, it was suggested that the Expert Council should provide a legal view on civil society and its organisation in these countries.

Anje Wiersinga reported on the third international conference of the North-South process to strengthen the role of women on the subject of “Women’s participation in political life in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries: challenges and opportunities”, which she had attended in Rabat (Morocco) on 17-18 June 2014. ([link to the conclusions – in English only](#)). She also informed the Conference of INGOs that a new joint Council of Europe/European Union programme concerning Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan was being prepared for 2015-17 and proposed that the Conference of INGOs should be involved in its implementation.

The President reminded members of the ‘the strategy for concerted and consistent action by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe in the Mediterranean neighbourhood countries approved by the Conference of INGOs of 19 January 2013, which still corresponded to the current situation ([link to the strategy](#)) and explained that the work of the Conference in the southern neighbourhood countries would take the form of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process and the advice offered by the Expert Council on NGO Law.

## ii. Expert Council on NGO Law

Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council on NGO Law ([link to the website](#)) presented the work of the Expert Council. He reminded members that the Expert Council spoke on behalf of the Conference in matters concerning the rule of law at the Council of Europe.

Following the work carried out in 2011-2012 in close liaison with the Venice Commission on NGO legislation in Azerbaijan, the Expert Council was conducting a study on these amendments and the way in which the legislation was being applied in Azerbaijan following the amendments to legislation adopted in December 2013.

The Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation had found the law on ‘foreign agents’ to be compatible with the Russian Constitution. The Expert Council was trying to clarify the concept of ‘political activities’ in the Russian Federation by studying the concept in other countries such as Azerbaijan, Slovakia, Croatia, the United Kingdom, etc. ([link to the Expert council’s Opinion on the legislation in the Russian Federation – in English](#) + [link](#)

[to the study on regulating political activities of non-governmental organisations – in English only](#)

- The Conference of INGOs welcomes these initiatives and confirms its support for the work undertaken by the Expert Council.

Cyril Ritchie said it would be a good idea to study the legislation of other countries such as Hungary, Turkey and Ukraine and regretted that there was no funding for such work.

9. **Unanimously approved** the President of the Conference's proposal to nominate 5 new members of the Verification and Disputes Committee for a three-year term of office (after consulting the outgoing members of the former Committee), i.e. Philippe Grolleau (Pax Romana), Martine Schmelck (Médecins du monde), Salomon Levy (N' B'nai B'rith) Jack Hanning (European Movement) and François Dobrovolska (Miamsi).

10. **No open questions to discuss**

11. **Other business**

Several points were raised:

- the need to ensure compliance with Article 79 of the additional Protocol of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions on measures to protect journalists. The President of the Conference took note of the specific situation of journalists in Ukraine and drew attention to the Council of Europe's position on the subject of journalists in conflict areas;
- the North-South Prize of the Council of Europe North-South Centre in Lisbon had been awarded to his Highness Aga Khan, founder and President of the Aga Khan Network for Development, and Suzanne Jabbour, human rights activist;
- the extraordinary General Assembly of INGO-Service had been postponed until January 2015;
- the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) would come into force on 1 August: the event would be celebrated in Rome on 18 and 19 September 2014;
- In response to the question concerning the representation of the Conference at events, the President said that availability was a major factor, given the very short time given to decide. He called on all members to indicate their availability to attend events relating to their specific field of competence and their language skills.

12. **The next meeting would take place on 29 January 2015**

One item on the agenda would be the election of the Bureau of the Conference of INGOs and its Chair. Candidatures could be submitted in November 2014.