

**CONFERENCE OF INGOS
CONF/AG(2024)SYN1**

MEETING OF THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**Report
Hybrid meeting
(Agora G.03 / Kudo)**

Monday 8 April 2024

10:00-13:00 First Session of the first General Assembly open to CINGO members only

1. Opening of the meeting by Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference

- GE welcomes the members and announces the visit of the newly elected Human Rights Commissioner Michael O'Flaherty

2. Nomination of the Rapporteur of the meeting

- Monday 8 April: Geneviève Laloy & Simon Matthijssen
- Tuesday 9 April: Piotr Sadowski & Anna Sevortian (Except for the part concerning the elections). Introduction and general Information
- GE reminded everyone that this was a hybrid meeting.
- Reminder of election organization
 - o All online members had to register in order to vote online.
 - o For members in the room, elections will be held using paper ballots (also after registration).
 - o Other votes will be held and two types of vote will also be organised, as usual (online & with boxes in the room).
- GE informed members of changes in the administration of the CINGO
 - o New secretariat headed by Christoph Speckbacher GE welcomed his appointment.
 - o New member of the secretariat Fabienne Deyrolles (has already worked for the secretariat). We still have Lusine Sahakyan & Bénédicte Kern with us. Anu Juvonen has completed her term of office.
 - o This secretariat is now really that of the CINGO.
 - o The second mission of this secretariat is the Roadmap for Civil Society. More practical and more fluid than the previous structure.
- Harry Rogge (EUROGEO) provided maps highlighting the members of the CoE & those of the EU.
- **Comments :**
 - o Where and when are we going to talk about the various wars currently taking place and what the CINGO is doing? 2 moments: Tuesday's networking & time for debate with the Commissioner for Human Rights.

3. Draft agenda – for adoption

- Online vote: 18 For / 0 Abstention / 0 Against
- Indoor vote: 39 For / 0 Abstentions / 0 Against

4. Report of the meeting of 9-11 October 2023 – for adoption [CONF/AG\(2023\)SYN2](#)

- No comments
- Online vote: 17For / 1 Abstention / 0 Against
- Indoor vote: 43 For / 0 Abstentions / 0 Against

5. Communication by Mr Michael O’Flaherty, newly elected Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

- GE said that Michael O’Flaherty really wanted to work closely with civil society. He knows the CINGO well.

- [Communication by Mr Michael O’Flaherty](#)

Questions / Comments

- UWE :Question on equality. Asked whether MO would pay particular attention to gender equality during its term of office.
- LICRA: We are preparing a recommendation on AI. How can civil society be given more room to express its point of view, etc.? Will a consultation be organised?
- MIAMSI / CINGO Migration Committee: Request for possible participation in Refugee Day (21 June) . Respect for the rights of migrants. Important to make its presence known to civil INGOs.
- EBU : A large number of conflicts & wars including a series on tun religious background. Would like to see a platform for dialogue but the Committee of Ministers is blocking non-Abrahamic religious groups. At the end of May, invitation to dialogue but still only Abrahamic currents.

Responses:

- MO will really fight for women's rights. He will go further with a non-neutral women-oriented approach.
- AI: he will ensure that civil society is involved in all stages of AI regulation.
- Migration: he confirms that he is determined to work on these issues and the rights of migrants: denouncing pushbacks, protecting those seeking asylum, challenging the externalisation of decisions relating to migrants,
- Inter-religious dialogue: there's no need to be diplomatic, just clear. How to build a society that is open to all spiritual persuasions.

Further questions:

- CIVICUS: Please read the Exconlaw report on stigmatization: beware of stigmatising INGOs/civil society. Businesses are no civil society (look at the abuse of SLAPPS)
- VOLONTEUROPE / Mute: Question concerning the protection of those who are victims in disasters/war/... and the management/broadcasting of images that perpetuate the trauma for these people.
- CURE: The CINGO and the commissioner must support each other. How to organise relations between the commissioner and civil society defenders.
- Institute Robert Schuman / Interreligious Dialogue Committee: Question of international law: if it had been better respected we wouldn't have all these conflicts. How can it be enforced? The question of inter-religious and inter-faith

dialogue. How can we make it more effective, how can we develop it, in particular by setting up a common platform?

- FEDE: Comments on education. Draws attention to education & artificial intelligence. Wish (of educational associations) that this sector be more developed and taken into consideration in the defense of human rights.

- **Responses :**

- it is true that businesses are not the same as normal INGOs but we have to work with them.
- Images of child victims. Fully taken into account.
- interesting approach, the commissioner really appreciates this help.
- Strongly agree on developing mutual support and amplifying the voice of INGOs. We need to align the narrative and departments in the ongoing discussion he will come back to this point. The enforcement of executions of judgement is a top priority.
- Concerning Education, The Commissioner's priority is not to manage human rights in education but he is ready to remind other bodies of this.

6. Activity report of the Standing Committee and the President

- [Review of the tree years mandate from April 2021 to April 2024](#) by Gerhard Ermischer

7. Final reports of the Thematic Committees

7.1 [Action for Social Rights](#) - Cfr PP

Expected contribution for the European Social Rights Tracker

7.2 [Civil society Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)- Cfr PP

7.3 [Education for Democracy](#)- Cfr PP

7.4 Environmental and health crisis (Anne-Marie Chavanon and Elena Curtopassi)

8. Report from Jeremy McBride, President of the Expert Council on NGO Law

- The speaker drew attention to two studies: stigmatisation of NGOs and criminalisation of NGOs (foreign agents law). Survey sent to INGOs - 55 answers and 51(?) countries. Consistent and representative.
- These studies show that there is an additional problem for NGOs that denounce the treatment of minorities such as asylum seekers, migrants, LH BT I, Roma or address anti-corruption and domestic violence.
- The committee works with legal affairs committee of PACE. They cooperate with the EU commission.
- PACE's transparency register, is an administrative burden on NGOs: wrongly equating them with lobbyists working on behalf of business.
- Implementation of ECHR decisions should be high on the agenda and committee of ministers: firmer and more imperative action is needed.
- SLAPP proceedings should be fought more actively.
- In a live debate with experts from the room, the problems of funding NGOs by foreign entities are discussed. The lack of funding from home countries and or subsidy (which, incidentally, can also entail dependency) passes the floor. Evidently, the audience believes that NGOs should certainly not be treated the same as corporate lobbyists.

- The speaker concludes by promising to keep a sharp eye on what affects the position of NGOs and to bring the lessons of what happened with Moneyval (namely that regulations that were not intended for all NGOs are in normal circumstances strictly applied to all NGOs) from implementers.

14:30-16:15 Second Session of the first General Assembly open to CINGO members only

9. Final reports of the Thematic Committees (continued)

9.1 Human Rights and Artificial Intelligence - (Gilbert Flam)

9.2 Interreligious and interconvictional dialogue

([Powerpoint presentation](#))

9.3 [NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women's rights](#)

9.4 Rights of persons who are migrants (20 minutes)

([Powerpoint presentation](#))

10. End of mandate remarks by the President of the Conference of INGOs and information on the upcoming second General Assembly including presentation of the voting/election procedure (20 minutes)