

PATHWAYS TO PEACE
(Building Pathways to Peace for a Culture of Peace)

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BRIEFING NOTES ON UN-DPI/NGO

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by

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Sixty years ago when the United Nations was formed the founding Fathers solemnly affirmed that WE THE PEOPLES of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of WAR, which then – TWICE IN OUR LIFETIME – had brought untold sorrow to mankind.

When the Founding Fathers put their signatures on the document of the CHARTER they reaffirmed, on our behalf, FAITH in fundamental Human Rights; in the Dignity and worth of the Human Person; in Equal Rights for all men and women; and of Nations LARGE and SMALL.

These were the HOPES on which the United Nations were founded – conditioned by the realities of the decades of the FORTIES with PEACE among Nations as the cardinal desire of all peoples against the horrendous specter of the atrocities of the WAR that had just ended.

This then was the REALITY which formed the backdrop of the Organization and which saw its birth in this great city of yours – San Francisco – 60 years ago. Since then the United Nations Organization has been endeavoring to live its REALITIES OF TOLERANCE and PEACE, uniting our strength in the maintenance of International Peace and Security.

To what extent has the World been living out this REALITY? Not very successfully. And here lies the MYTHS. Largely responsible, is the exercise of the power of VETO in the Security Council by the FIVE permanent members (USA, FRANCE, BRITAIN, RUSSIA & CHINA). This situation – as it exists at the present

time has led to mini-wars; imminent threats of conflagration; nuclear capability sparing; the Arms race; Civil rebellions; and today – TERRORIST THREATS. In spite of these MYTHS which continually challenge the REALITIES of having the United Nations as a WORLD BODY whose central role is to maintain International Peace and Security, there still remains strong hope that the mission of the United Nations will prevail. Such hope is reflected in the role being played today by the Non-governmental bodies of the membership's population.

When we talk about the **Non-governmental Organizations of the UN** – to whom are we referring? This group in the UN membership – commonly referred to as **NGOs**, for short- are a group of dedicated men and women who valiantly contribute their expertise and service in complimenting Humanity's crucial needs in areas where governments fall short.

NGOs are, in the main, an affiliation with the Department of Public Information – DPI – one of the main departments of the Secretariat, presided over by an Under Secretary – General. The mission of the **Department of Public Information** is to help fulfill the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating its activities and concerns. To do so in the most effective manner and to the widest possible audience, it has been employing every available means at its disposal, including the latest innovations in Information and Communications technologies.

In its resolution 59/126/B of 10 December 2004, the General Assembly requested the **Secretary-General** to report to the **Committee on Information** at its twenty-seventh session and to the **General Assembly** at its current 60th session – i.e. the session just

started in New York – on the activities of **DPI** and implementation of substantive recommendations.

In September 2002, in his reform proposals – “Strengthening of the United Nations: An Agenda for further change” (A/57/387), the **Secretary-General** outlined a series of measures for repositioning **DPI**. This has led to **DPI’s** emphasis on enhancing its **GLOBAL** outreach through the strengthening of partnerships with Civil Society made up of NGOs, public and private sectors.

Since December 2004, **DPI** has associated 17 new NGOs and dissociated 47 that no longer meet the criteria for association. As of June 2005 there are **1,517 NGOs** in association with the **Department of Public Information** of the **UN**. In the last **DPI / NGO** annual conference which met in New York earlier this month, over 2500 representatives of **NGOs** and other Civil Society partners took part. The Conference was entitled: **Our Challenge – Voices of Peace, Partnerships and Renewal**.

In the **UN** system there are **TWO (2)** main **NGO** groupings. First, is the **UN – DPI / NGO** group – served by the **NGO / DPI Executive Committee**. This is a Liaison Committee that mediates between the various **NGOs** and **DPI** in connection with the provision of services, the production of materials, the use of **UN** facilities and all other matters that meet the Information – related needs of **NGOs** associated with the **UN**. The **NGO / DPI Executive Committee** is a service organization that helps **UN – associated NGOs** make effective use of the available information and material to increase knowledge about, and public understanding of, the **UN** purpose, structure, policies, actions, and programs.

Second, is the Conference of **Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship** with the **United Nations** in an Independent, International, not-for-profit membership association of non-governmental organizations that facilitates the participation of **NGOs** in the United Nations debates and decisions. Since its founding in 1958, **CONGO** has worked to ensure that **NGO** voices are heard throughout the International arena. **CONGO's** membership comprises, national, regional and international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the **United Nations Economics and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, as well as, **NGOs** associated with the **United Nations** system, but not holding consultative status. Members represent a vital range of interests, including human rights, gender, peace and disarmament, social justice, governance, environment and sustainable development.

Now to the question of becoming an NGO?

What are the Criteria? First and foremost, the would be **NGO** must support and respect the principles of the CHARTER of the **UN** and have a clear mission statement that is consistent with the following principles:

1. The **NGO** must be recognized Nationally and Internationally.
2. The **NGO** should operate solely on a not-for-profit basis and have tax-exempt status.
3. The **NGO** must have the commitment and the means to conduct effective Information programs, with its constituents and to a broader audience (about **UN** activities).

4. The **NGO** must or should have an established record of continuity of work for a minimum of **THREE** years and should show promise of sustained activity in the future.
5. The **NGO** should have a satisfactory record of collaboration with **UN Information Centers / Services** or other parts of the **UN** System, prior to association.
6. The **NGO** should provide an Audited annual Financial Statement, conducted by a qualified, independent Accountant.
7. The **NGO** should have Statutes / by-Laws providing for a transparent process of making decisions, election of officers and members of the Board of Directors.

What is the procedure for NGOs to become associated with DPI?

Interested would be **NGOs** that meet the criteria as listed, should send an official letter of request to be associated with **DPI**; provide a brief description of their organization and at least **SIX** samples of recent Information Materials. This should be mailed to the following address:

Chief, **NGO** Section
Department of Public Information
Room S – 1070 L
NEW YORK, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 963-8070
Fax: (212) 963-6914 / 2819
E-mail: dpingo@un.org

Processing of applications normally takes between three to six months. However, the **DPI / NGO** Section, upon receipt of the documents, will determine whether the formal application process for association can proceed. If the applying **NGO** is

determined to have met the criteria, an application form, summary of application documents, and other required materials will be sent to the **NGO** applicant for completion and return.

The required application materials sent will include the following:

1. A completed Application Form for **Non-Governmental Organizations**
+ Please note that this Form should be completed **TYPE WRITTEN**
2. A completed **SUMMARY** of Application
+ Please carefully go over this to avoid any errors

When you return the above, the following must be included in the package – **VIZ**:

1. A copy of your Organization's Constitution / Charter or By-Laws
2. Official proof of not-for-profit status, issued by Public Authorities, and **TAX EXEMPTION** Status.
+ Please note that this document should be on the official Letter-Head of the issuing Authority
3. A copy of your Organization's most recent **AUDITED** annual Budget or Financial Statement, conducted by a qualified and independent Accountant.
4. Documentary evidence of active information programmes relevant to the **UN**: at least (**SIX**) 6 different types of samples of the Organization's most recent information materials (e.g: newsletter, periodicals, tapes, audio-visuais, television programs, conference reports, website, and news clippings).
+ **NOTE**: Electronic materials such as a website or periodicals should be sent in hard copy.
5. **TWO (2)** letters of recommendation from Organizations (**UN** or others).
6. References: see question 21 in the Application Form

English or **French** must be used in completing Documents for Application.

Once all the required materials have been received and **ALL** documents have been found to be in order, the **DPI / NGO** Section will write to the **NGO** candidate informing them of the approximate date the **DPI** Committee on **NGOs** will meet to review the new

applications for that period. The **NGOs'** applicants will then be notified of the results of the meeting. The **DPI / NGO** Committee meets TWICE a year.

NGOs that have been approved for association by the **DPI** Committee on **NGOs**, will then be invited to designate their main and alternate representatives to the **UN** and will receive annual ground passes to have access to the **UN**; **DPI / NGO** briefings, the **NGO** Resource Center and the annual **UN – DPI / NGO** Conference.

The New **NGO** Representatives will be invited to attend the Annual Orientation Program to familiarize themselves with the **UN System**.

Recognizing **NGOs** as important actors in the International arena, **Secretary – General, Kofi Annan**, recently remarked...”Though much of my daily work involves contacts with Governments, it is with civil society that I feel a special affinity; particularly, when it comes to matters of the environment and development.”