

NGOCSD

General Meeting Minutes: Friday, January 30th 2015, 2-4:30PM

UN Church Center, 2nd Floor at 777 United Nations Plaza

Submitted by Modou Cham, Secretary

- Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne welcomed everyone to the meeting and elucidated that this month's meeting is Themed: **“The Importance of Empowering Youth to Become Entrepreneurs”** and **“The Emerging Frontiers in Agriculture.”** We approved the December 15th Meeting Agenda and the Minutes from the Nov. 13th Meetings Minutes.

The Co-Chairs introduced and welcomed our new Member-At-Large, Ms. Sally Kader, Founder & President of the World Federation for Middle East Peace.

Secretary Modou Cham gave his report.

Co-Chairs called for a Motion to Accept the Secretary's report – All in Favor.

Treasure Martha Kebalo gave her report.

Co-Chairs called for a Motion to Accept the Treasure's Report – All in Favor.

Representatives of the UN Millennium Campaign and the World We Want Platform, Mr. Juan Chebly, Coordinator and Mr. Papa Dembele, Research and Support, gave us an update of their recent work. They explained that the MY World survey and The World We Want platform are built for social participation. Participation and openness are at the core of accountability. Further, they explained that it is up to civil society to hold the UN system accountable. Brief update of UN Events: Mr. Chebly explained that the post-2015 political process discussion will give all stakeholders an equal chance to be a part of the committee in influencing discussion. The call is to be aware of what is happening. Most importantly, the Beijing+20 conference about gender issues and a follow up to the Beijing conference 20 years ago. There will be a chance for civil society to participate in this too, they also explained that it is up to civil society to hold the UN system accountable.

The Importance of Empowering Youth to Become Entrepreneurs – Via Skype Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced **Ms. Jennifer Kushell – CEO of Young & Successful Media and Founder of Your Success Now (YSN.com)**. She elucidated that she is happy to be presenting at the NGOCSD meeting because the UN is very much involved in promoting youth, and that is such an important initiative. The 3 biggest topics on the global stage are very often employment, enterpenensruhip, and security. Today's focus is on entrepreneurship. Youth unemployment is huge, so empowering people to create companies and employ themselves is very important, young people who are unemployed are turning to extremists, so it is also a matter of security. Talking about the rise in youth entrepreneurship—the movement has exploded on a global basement. Young people are hungry to engage with their peers today and become involved in bigger networks. Moreover, YSN is in 160 countries now and social impact is a model relied on— it is an opportunity for a great amount of young people. YSN helps governments, educators and big companies connect with youth on a global scale—all around empowerment, employment, entrepreneurship. Ms. Kushell further explained that she wants to be action-oriented; nobody should be contented by talking. We need to ask: what are we going to do about it? The US government has created an office for youth issues at the state department and official at that office aim to work on youth development initiatives. Next, she explained that Subway is the biggest restaurant chain in the world (40,000 units in 107 countries)—one problem they have as a company was how to grow around the world. She said that youth are great candidates for franchising because of their excitement and energy. She ended her presentation by saying that we must stop talking and start acting, ask yourself at all meetings: what have we learned, what can we share? We all have an obligation to make a difference in the world. She also asked that we must look at the range of opportunities for all young people, let's support them and help them grow, and change the entire world in the process.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced our theme: **“The Emerging Frontiers in Agriculture”** and welcomed **Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Senior Programme Management Officer on Intergovernmental Policy Co-ordination, United Nations Environment Programme-NY Office (UNEP)**. Mr. Laguna-Celis focused on the new frontiers and agriculture and how opportunities and issues can be engaged with at the grassroots level and how this connects to the post-2015 agenda. What is a frontier? Concept of planetary boundaries –that there are actual physical limits to our ecosystems—that we are entering into a phase that can be described as anthropogenic, where the effects of humans on the planet is actually shaping the development of the natural ecosystem. These notions are directly linked to the most common human activities, and agriculture is one of them. In the last 30 years, there has been an intensification of agricultural production, medicine development, etc., and we also see the downsides in terms of environmental degradation. Moreover, soil carbon benefits: what we have realized is that, to keep producing as we have been, and to fulfill the agricultural needs of the

world, we have to manage and completely alter the way we manage soils in order to integrate economic, societal, and environmental benefits and concerns. Fisheries: one of the major advances of intensification of fisheries is the development aquaculture. We have to understand the environmental impacts of the production of food from the oceans. Further excess nitrogen in the environment: the transformation of global agriculture has been possible thanks to the discovery of the nitrogen cycle. Food losses and food wastes: one of the major trends, by assessing the global production of food, is that there is enough calories being produced to feed the global demand, but there is around 30% of loss in developed markets like the U.S. and these are losses created after the consumption (meaning at the supermarkets or at your own house). In developing countries that lack infrastructure, this same percentage is lost on the way to markets. We need to make this more efficient. Mr. Laguna-Celis ended his presentation by explaining that the UN is very limited in what it can really do. It can provide assessments, and it does that. But it is limited in what it can do regarding: changing lifestyles and changing perceptions. Civil society has an important role because of its unique connection with the community in terms of changing perception. Civil society can also pool resources.

Margo and Yvonne welcomed **Ms. Zubaida Rasul-Ronning, Vice President Business Development/Strategic Operation of Green Grow Ventures Inc.** She explained that there has been a price increase for fertilizers and pesticides and there has been a multiplication of producers and decrease of quality of fertilizers and pesticides. There is very little mass regulation of these products. Technology and Agriculture allow for an expansion of production, so we can produce more in a concentrated space. There is a decreased in investment and valuation of agriculture as an economic activity, 50 years ago, it was a main economic activity in most countries. Now, people don't see agriculturalists as a valuable profession and added to that is the evolution of taste in traditional markets. Furthermore, the disparity between developing agricultural communities and developed ones has increased dramatically and there is now a perceivable gap. Genetic modification has been pushed through various companies. In 2014, the Moroccan government realized that they'd been inundated by fertilizers being produced globally. They have no evaluation of how those fertilizers act on soil and on produce, and also no evaluation of the content of those fertilizers. So Morocco set up an institute to monitor them. Large agribusiness must be promoted while small agriculturalists are still organized and sustained. Large ones can push out smaller ones. We need both, but we must figure out how they can coexist. There's a big gap between the codes countries have and how they're applied. The investment required to produce organic fertilizer locally is far greater than what it is for chemical fertilizers. Ms. Rasul-Ronning also explained that Africa has the largest female agricultural population of any continent and the "feminization of agriculture in developing countries" is accelerating. Next she explained that environmental degradation: chemical fertilizers are the most prevalent fertilizers in the world (85-90%)—they drain the soil, degrades the environment, takes away the heritage of agricultural communities by destroying the soils. The complexity of challenges includes social changes, urbanization, and decreasing role of governments, non-response from the private sector, and unpredictable weather swings and climate change.

Margo and Yvonne introduced **Mr. Ben Flanner, CEO/Co-Founder and Head Farmer of the Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm, New York City.** Mr. Flanner explained that the Brooklyn Grange's farms include two rooftop vegetable farms, totaling 2.5 acres and producing over 50,000 lbs of organically-grown vegetables each year. They also operate New York City's largest apiary, with over 30 naturally-managed honey bee hives. Mr. Flanner explained that in 2009, they started the first ever plot of its kind, a 6,000 sq. ft. green roof in Brooklyn. They filled it with all vegetables, laid out like a farm. They used kick starter and eventually built a 1 acre rooftop farm in Long Island City. The company expanded to Brooklyn Navy Yard in May 2012 (1.5 acre) and used a grant from the DEP (department of environmental protection), which funded about 75% of the cost. He explained that a green roof is a covering of vegetation and a growing medium that is on top of the existing waterproof membrane of an existing roof. Benefits include: storm water capture, which reduces severe overflows and increased insulation to the building below – during hot summer days, the plant canopy emulates nature. This can reduce the problem of overheated urban centers and can reduce carbon emissions by reducing the power necessary to cool the building. He also stated that there are associated non-profit organization that brings children in to visit the rooftop farms. Over 10,000 have participated. Community partnerships - Refugee Immigrant Fund works with asylum seekers and helps them out with paperwork, legality, etc. The woman that runs this organization came to Mr. Flanner and explained the stressful nature of the lives of the people she tries to help—she asked to set up a partnership with these asylum seekers to go and work at the rooftop farm. Mr. Flanner gave out his email address (ben@brooklyngrangefarm.com) so individuals at the meeting can contact him.

Following the presentations, there was a brief Q&A moderated by the Co-Chairs.

Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne encouraged everyone to join our NGOCSD

4:30pm – Meeting Adjourned.