

NGO Committee on Sustainable Development General Membership Meeting: Minutes

Friday, June 27th 2014, 12:00 – 2:50pm
Baha'i International, United Nations Office,
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120
Submitted by Modou Cham, Secretary

12 Noon: Lunch - Provided by FIA Foundation

General Meeting:

12:30 – 12:45PM

Welcome by the Co-Chairs: Ms. Margo LaZaro & Dr. T. Bella Dinh-Zarr.

Approval of the April & May NGOCS D General Meeting minutes: All in Favor

Approved our June 27th General Meeting Agenda: All in Favor.

Treasurer, Martha Kebalo, gave the Treasurer's Report – Martha encouraged everyone to join and/or renew their membership for the NGOCS D – May End Balance: \$6,382.76 – Deposit \$125.00 (5 memberships) – There were No withdrawals – June End Balance as of Monday, June 23 - \$ 6,507.76 –
Co-Chairs called for a Motion to Accept the Treasurer's Report – All in Favor

Secretary Modou Cham gave the Secretary's Report.
Co-Chairs asked for a Motion to Accept the Secretary's Report – All in Favor

Inspired by our Guest Speakers the Co-Chairs introduced us to a new NGOCS D motto:
“Turn your Passions into Actions for Change”

12:45 –1:30PM

Co-Chairs Margo and Bella welcomed Mr. Jeffery Huffines. Margo mentioned how great it has been to be working with “Jeff” on the Planning Committee for the Conference. Mr. Huffines is the Co-Chair of the 65th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference with the theme “2015 and Beyond: Our Action Agenda” at UN HQ (NY), 27-29 August 2014. He has served as UN DESA NGO Major Group Organizing Partner since 2011, responsible for guiding multi-stakeholder engagement of NGOs in sustainable development activities at the UN.

Mr. Huffines explained that he is delight to be with one of the most active NGO committees (NGOCS D) at the United Nations. He thanked the Co-Chairs for their Leadership and then he spoke about the theme of the 65th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference - 2015 and Beyond - Our Action Agenda. He mentioned the new motto from Co-Chair, Margo “Turn your Passions into Actions for Change” is a motto we can all follow. Further, he explained that we are at an historic enterprise to achieve the MDGs and we see the year 2015 as a point of transition to be bold new people centered for change. Also, we will strengthen and create new commitments to find a historic new social contracts for hope and transformation.

Moreover, the August conference is a chance to bring together a vast meeting of civil society and critical decisions will be made about the agenda “setting the stage” - set of the negotiations of the Post-2015 Agenda.

By the time we get to the conference there will be a report from the OWG and a report from the financial expert committee that will bridge the gaps and identify key demands we can present to member states and UN system.

In September, governments will be clear about what our demands are and we have selected 4 main themes: Poverty eradication, Sustainability, Climate justice and Human rights. The two themes beneath these are Partnerships and Accountability frameworks.

He explained that a business as usual approach is not sufficient and it's no longer enough just to decrease, but rather to eliminate extreme poverty. It is civil societies and faith based communities that can spark change. Discussion will continue on newer issues: infrastructure, employment, marine, oceans, climate change, and financial growth.

The Co-Chairs & Mr. Huffines welcomed: Mr. Richard Jordan, Co-Facilitator of the Conference Experts Sub-Committee.

Mr. Jordan gave a status report on the conference declaration. He elucidated that the first page will focus on ethics, values and principles that we are stressing so that equality and justice permeates all through the UN. Also, the Elements document – asking for inclusive in some way into the draft declaration.

There was a brief Q & A with both Jeff & Richard ~ Margo also mentioned the Exhibits for the Conference of which she is the Co-Chair & Mr. Aaron Etra, Co-Chair of the Resources Sub-Committee for the Conference was introduced, by Mr. Huffines in a pitch for funds to support the Conference.

Both Bella & Margo encouraged everyone to Register for the Conference and the Conference Reception. They called for a 10 minute Break so everyone could refill their plates before Ms. Slottje made her presentation & they also encouraged everyone to join or renew their NGOCSA Membership while we were on our break:

1:40 – 2:50PM

Co-Chair Bella Dinh-Zarr introduced Ms. Helen Slottje, the 2014 North American recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize for the USA for Banning Fracking. Ms. Slottje uses a clause in the state constitution that gives municipalities the right to make local land use decisions, Ms. Slottje provided pro-bono legal assistance and helping towns across New York defend themselves from oil and gas companies by passing local bans on fracking.

Ms. Slottje spoke about Banning Fracking: Clearing the way for Sustainable Energy and Local Bans New York. There are two cases at the Court of the Appeals right now and we are very optimistic that we will see changes in NY law to hold otherwise.

“What is fracking?”

“Fracking is the process of extracting natural gas from shale rock layers deep within the earth. Fracking makes it feasible to produce natural gas extraction by drilling into the shale rock that were once unreachable

with conventional technologies”. Further, industry drills horizontally through the shale and fracking through that rock. This shows how desperate we are – scrapping the bottom of the fossil fuel chain.

Issues with Fracking – it can create earthquakes underground and exploding material underground, send methane through these fractures, the gas being lighter than air will run up the tubes and rise to the surface

With Fracking, you end up with chemicals in the water – water contamination, toxic substances, and leakages to soil, wide-scale land clearing and negative health impacts.

Destruction of water supplies – water when used for fracking, is lost forever – fresh water is being lost in the hydrological cycle – at a time when water withdrawals will negatively impact – the cooling process – huge amount used is destroyed.

“Fracking can be well regulated?”

Even if the risk can be reduced, theoretically, in practice, many accidents can occur. It is very expensive to dispose of the water, that is returned – high in chloride and salt which can destroy fish, plants and animals. There are cases where they are literally dumping these into storm drains and allowing it to spill where it may. Serious fish kills and loss of habitat because of these “accidents”. “Injecting toxic chemicals in underground restricts later use of the contaminated layer and long-term effects are not investigated”

People want to live in green places – with social lives. The people behind fracking – don’t understand that the economic sense you leave behind is less – requires compensation – creates poverty, resource degradation, lining the pockets of the very rich at the expense of the very poor. Finally she explained that government have to listen when citizens are out of the streets yelling and we as people have to be unwilling to accept the status quo.

There were a series of great questions and answers between our members and Helen.

Co-Chairs Margo & Bella – again, encouraged everyone to join our NGOCS and to register for the Conference.

They wished everyone a great summer and said that we look forward to seeing everyone in September.

Everyone thanked Bella & FIA Foundation for the wonderful Lunch ~

Co-Chairs Bella & Margo asked for a motion to Adjourn – All in Favor

2:50PM: Meeting Adjourned ~