

NGOCSD General Meeting Minutes:

Friday, February 25th 2015, 2 – 4:30PM
2nd Floor, UN Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza

Submitted by Modou Cham, Secretary

2PM -4PM

Co-Chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O'Neal welcomed everyone to our meeting.
We accepted the minutes from our January 30th NGOCSD meeting;
We accepted agenda for the NGOCSD February General Membership meeting.
The NGOCSD membership voted & accepted our new NGOCSD By-Laws.

The Co-Chairs elucidated that the NGOCSD Executive Committee is now officially the NGOCSD Executive Board.

Secretary Modou Cham gave his Report.

- New website under construction

- *NGOCSD is Co-Sponsoring the UN/DPI (Department of Public Information) the NGO led Briefing/Special Event during the UN 59th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) along UN/DPI, the Huairou Commission, International Council of Women, Global Family, Africa Development Interchange Network, World Federation of Ukrainian Women, International Council of Jewish Women and the Urban Design Lab of the Earth Institute at Columbia University on March 12 in Conference Rm (TBD) titled: “Women Taking the Lead: Designing and Monitoring Sustainable and Gender-Responsive Infrastructures.”

- NGOCSD meeting on March 20th will focus on “Raising Awareness of Human Trafficking and Violence Against Women for a Sustainable Future.”

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

Treasurer Martha Kebalo gave her report –

We have 11 new memberships. Our \$25 annual dues will increase to \$35 in June.

Our balance is currently \$5,435.17. Donations are welcome.

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

Co-Chairs Margo & Yvonne announced that H.E. Dr. Palitha Kohona & Mr. Steve Schwartz, International Director of Herzog Hospital have become an Advisers to the NGOCSD.

Margo & Yvonne welcomed Mr. Austin Schiano from the World We Want/My World Policy Strategy Group who gave us an update of the post-2015 political process. He explained that in the post-2015 SDG sessions, civil society have been given numerous opportunities to get their voices heard.

The Sustainable Energy for All Forum: Getting Civil Society Involved

Margo and Yvonne welcomed **Ms. Ornesha Reagan, Special Consultant for the UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General Sustainable Energy for All initiative – SE4All Forum**. Ms. Reagan introduced the Sustainable Energy for All Forum that will take place this upcoming May at the United Nations. The main objectives of the forum are to address universal access to energy, doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and doubling the share of renewable energy. The 2nd annual SE4All forum will be a 5 day event that will take place from May 17th – 21st. The forum will bring in government representatives, members of civil society and the private sector and this year, the plan is to improve NGO involvement and participation. In financing, they hope to report successes and progress of initiative by combining various partners, such as private sector (i.e. Bank of America), civil society (i.e. Energia, Self-Employed Women Association) and member states. Futhermore, report on countries’ level of progress will show what has been done and what needs’ to improve. Ms. Reagan ended her presentation by elucidating that at the core of empowerment and development is energy which is the link between climate change and economic empowerment, women’s health, water and stakeholders should focus on finding synergies where interests collide and work together. The SE4All forum will be a useful event to push the SDGs especially SDG 7. Ms. Reagan explained that we can feel free to share the information with our colleagues and more information on the SE4ALL forum is available at: se4allforum.org.

Investing in Eco-Tourism for Economic & Cultural Sustainability

Margo and Yvonne introduced **Mr. Patrick Sciarratta, Executive Director of Friendship Ambassadors Foundation (FAF), & Advisor to the Permanent Mission of Sao Tome and Principe.** Mr. Sciarratta discussed ecotourism and some of his involvement with FAF. Through his work, youth interested in activist movements and policy have been able to synthesize and join together on cultural experiences. He elucidated that in the past 21 years, he has worked under the assumption that tourism creates opportunity to promote Sustainable Development in local communities if and when tourism is managed properly. Tourism by nature is not ecofriendly, for example, touring, air travel, inappropriate use of hotel services, degradation of local cultures argue against ecotourism. He moved on and further explained that FAF engages youth to make these experiences ecofriendly and responsible while arts and cultural exchange, smaller footprint, promote homestays and reciprocal exchange to have people to people communication. FAF's first cultural exchange tour in 1973 brought reciprocal exchange, Americans to Africa. There was a young African boy by the name of Kofi Annan in that group who would study in America at McAlester College. As the executive director of FAF, Mr. Sciarratta has worked with numerous Ambassadors such as Ambassador Henry MacDonald, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nations for UN Women's HeforShe campaign.

Margo and Yvonne introduced **Mr. Richard Jordan, Representative of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust at the UN.** Mr. Jordan touched upon groups like the International Ecotourism Society that work to unite communities and promote eco-friendly tourism. He stated that people must respect the systems of foreign lands. He used the example of an American throwing away a film wrapper in a small Indian town. This one action can have ripple effects, as the foreign land may not be equip to further break down that material. In order to pursue sustainable livelihoods, individuals must develop platforms for educational purposes on fair trade, a mindset of less consumption, and land preservation.

Margo introduced - H.E. Dr. Palitha T.B. Kohona, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations. Dr. Kohona gave a historical presentation on Sri Lanka including its creation, purpose of the Cultural Triangle, Buddhism faith, endemic species, and a multitude of artifacts. Next, he explained that while tourism is rampant globally, Sri Lanka has worked hard to retain the natural beauty of its land. Currently, 22% of land mass is maintained forests, and the government is working to raise this percentage to 30%. In Sri Lanka, there are a few big hotels, they mostly have small hotels, but natural environment still dominates, beaches are lined with trees coconuts, mangos, tropical trees, greenery everywhere and there water is not polluted – tourism in Sri Lanka is not as it is in many other places.

Yvonne introduced H.E. Ms. Mary Flores Flake, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations. Ms. Flake discussed the endeavors of Honduras and support of sustainable tourism, as 80% of Honduras's economy is in the tourism sector. Honduras has a diverse ecosystem including the largest tropical forest in Central America, coral reefs, canyons, caves, parks, and protected areas. To uphold such rich biodiversity, Ms. Flake stated that governments must sign strategy instilling sustainable tourism.

Co-Chairs welcomed back to the podium Ms. Ornesha Reagan. In her second presentation, **Ms. Reagan spoke about her Independent Development Researcher on Eco-tourism.** She gave reflections from her research in Jamaica and Hawaii around commercialization on Rastafarian and hula culture. She further reiterated the importance of tourism as a means of cultural exchange and social responsibility.

There was a brief Q&A Session followed by **the special presentation of the First "Peoples Voices Champion" Acknowledgement by the members of the WorldWeWant/Policy & Strategy Group in partnership with the NGOCSO Executive Board presented to H.E. Dr. Palitha T.B. Kohona.**

Meeting adjourned at 4PM