We had a very successful ECOSOC High-Level Segment (ECOSOC-HLS) 2008 and I would like to seize this opportunity to underline the importance of MDG Goal Number 8: “Develop a global partnership for development”.

Since 1998, my role as a Chief NGO at the United Nations has been to innovate, promote and foster the creation of such Global Partnerships in civil society, through UN-NGO-IRENE. This powerful initiative, composed of 3170 NGOs accredited by ECOSOC, led by very committed NGO Coordinators with the purpose of finding and creating synergies to leading to MDG implementation. Seven years after, we celebrate a new anniversary in this special issue of “UN-NGO-IRENE Update”.

Focusing on the special celebration organized last July, we go over the main progress and challenges we faced at the global and regional level. I hope you enjoy it and I would like to thank you all for your support in helping achieve these extraordinary results with very few resources and on such a short time frame.

Looking forward to a continued healthy and prosperous partnership, and more achievements toward the MDGs.

Ms. Hanifa Mezouli
Chief of NGO Section
UNDESA

On July 2, 2008, in the context of the Economic and Social Council High-Level Segment (ECOSOC-HLS), regional representatives gathered together to celebrate and review the progress of seven years of intensive work at the United Nations NGO Informal Regional Networks (UN-NGO-IRENE). The meeting, entitled “2001-2008: Consolidating the UN-NGO-IRENE within the United Nations”, consisted of an opening statement by Dr. Deisi Kusztra, President of the World Family Organization, followed by a panel discussion composed by experts and regional coordinators of the network.

In her statement, Dr. Kusztra highlighted that the success of the UN-NGO-IRENE network is an achievement made possible by the celebrated vision of former governor and current member of the National Parliament of Brazil, H.E. Dr. Albano Franco, who was a guest of honor to this celebration.

The UN-NGO-IRENE network was created in response to the Secretary-General Report of 1999 to the Assembly underlining that...
the United Nations Secretariat NGO Section should establish non-governmental organization regional networks to improve the exchange of information.

Ms. Hanifa Mezoui, Chief of the NGO Section at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and UN-NGO-IRENE Central Coordinator, explained that the purpose of the UN-NGO-IRENE network is to improve the partnership and sharing of information between the UN and NGOs, while she also emphasized the responsibility that the NGOs share for their commitment to positive work for ECOSOC.

As a result, the exchange of information through informal networks of country or regionally based NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC has improved, as well as helped as a way of establishing a link between the UNDESA NGO Section and NGOs in each region.

There is no doubt that coordinating the work of the United Nations with 350 NGOs involved in UN-NGO-IRENE presents a significant challenge. In order to tackle it, the network has appointed regional coordinators to help convey and communicate issues to ECOSOC, as well as mechanisms for engaging governments and academia to implement a shared language to address and spread knowledge regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Another important aspect in establishing a global network is to have a balanced regional representation, specially when it refers to the current sizable gap between NGOs from the South and NGOs from the North. Although it is still a work in progress, the network and the outreach activities organized through it have already made a measurable difference in the geographical distribution of the NGOs in status with the Economic and Social Council and in achieving greater representative party as envisaged in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

Ms. Mezoui remarked that due to the UN-NGO-IRENE outreach programs, the
number of civil society organizations in consultative status with the Council originating from the South now comprised 31%; an increase from 15% from the period 1996 to 2008.

An important action taken to achieve this progress was the establishment of a number of NGO coalitions from Africa, Europe, the Middle East and India since the creation of IRENE seven years ago. These coalitions have developed a range of operational projects through the advisory and capacity-building functions of UN-NGO-IRENE. The Network also fostered sharing of experiences and best practices among NGOs from different regions and countries for sustainable development and peace, as well as providing policy guidance, advisory services and training, and adapted innovative experience to their specific context. In other words, they took the maximum of benefit from the networking possibilities.

Finally, though not less important, is the role that information technology had in strengthening and sustaining UN-NGO-IRENE. The technical cooperation activities for capacity-building programs for and with policy makers and NGOs at the country level that were carried over in this period, where only possible through the deployment of efficient information-sharing and communication systems in developing countries, small island states and countries with economies in transition.

In addition to that, the
There is a steady increase in the number of NGOs involved with the UN-NGO-IRENE network in this region. In 2003, there were 60 NGOs from these regions participating in the network and attending meetings; by 2005, this number had increased to 120 NGOs. The UN-NGO-IRENE meetings in Central Asia and Eastern Europe revealed the attempts to share MDG knowledge and demonstrated the beginning of NGO networking. The opportunity for progress is possible now that the structures have been established. Moreover, none of these successes would have been possible without the firm commitment of individuals.

Mr. Nedim Kaya, UN-NGO-IRENE Eastern Europe Coordinator

have you submitted your quadrennial report

This year the committee discussed measures related to quadrennial reports and adopted an oral decision to have a letter sent to the 169 NGOs that had failed to submit their quadrennial reports for more than 2 reporting periods. Remember that suspension or withdrawal of consultative status might be applied if your organization fails to submit the quadrennial report on time.

EDITORIAL NOTE

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Contact: United Nations Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, NGO Section, New York, NY 10017, USA, Email address: desangosection@un.org or visit our website at http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/