



Channels for NGO Participation in International Organizations

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The following précis provides an overview of the different ways in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) gain involvement in international organizations. The headings represent different “channels” for participation, under which real-life examples are grouped. Annex A contains listings by various international organizations, elucidating (in their own words) their methods for civil society engagement.

1. Advisory Committee / Steering Committee set up by an institution

Committees typically consist of experts and high-level representatives from civil society organizations. They consult on specific policy issues. Some examples are:

- ECOSOC’s Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues – 16 expert members participate in their individual capacity, half appointed by council based on nominations from NGOs, half selected by council based on nominations from member states. Reports directly to the Council and advises on issues as they related to indigenous communities.
- UNDP CSO Advisory Committee to the Administrator – sets the context for policy partnerships with civil society. Composed of international al civil policy leaders who provide advice to administrator and senior management.
- UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters;
- IFAD Consultation Steering Committee;
- UN Department of Public Information (DPI) NGO advisory committee;
- Office for the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Inter-Agency Standing Committee – an interagency coordination structure that includes the leaders of five NGOs, heads of the UN humanitarian agencies, representatives of the World Bank and UNDP. IASC meets every three months to make policy recommendations on humanitarian issues and emergencies
- NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee – Elected by NGO International Conference, responsible for permanent coordination of NGO cooperation. Based at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.
- UN Commission for Sustainable Development: Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee: NGO Steering Committee to facilitate involvement of NGOs at the annual sessions

2. Dedicated Unit within the IGO

A mechanism created to disseminate information and to foster dialogue with NGOs.

- UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service(NGLS): mobilizes and administers resources for Southern NGO participation in conferences
- UNEP Civil Society and NGO unit in the Division of Policy Development and Law (DPDL)
- UNESCO Independent Evaluation Office: maintains contacts with active and involved NGOS
- UNCTAD Civil Society Outreach Unit (CSO): liaison between UNCTAD and NGO
- World Bank Civil Society Engagement Staff: Civil Society Country Staff working at the country level, Civil society Group (CSG) working at the Regional and Departmental Level, and Civil Society Team (CST) working at the Global Level to institute coordination via strategy, provide advice to senior management, research and dissemination.

3. CSO Advisors in national delegations

Representatives from CSOs may be included on a national delegation to an international conference. They may advise delegates from their government or conduct negotiations.

- Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade, Canada. Comprised of senior business executives, non-governmental organizations and academics. Members are appointed for a

two-year renewable term by the Minister for International Trade to whom they provide confidential advice on matters pertaining to the Government of Canada's trade policy agenda. Active in negotiation of the FTAA.

4. Participation in Official Conferences to draft a treaty

International Organization can give NGOs an opportunity to participate (not necessarily in a negotiating role) in official conference to draft a treaty.

- International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) 1992, involvement in the Ottawa Convention to Ban Anti-Personnel Landmines
- Jubilee 2000 initiative on debt relief
- Citizens against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment

5. Preparatory Committees for International Conferences

International organizations can give NGOs an opportunity to participate in preparatory committees for an international conference.

- Rio Earth Summit 1992, Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development 2002; OAS Special Committee on the Inter-American Summits Management CEGCI, UNCED two-year preparatory process
- NGOs were formally involved in the planning of the "Education for All" Conference

6. Presentations to Officials in special sessions

IGOs may hold special sessions to hear presentations from NGOs.

- General Assembly on sub-Saharan Africa 1986
- UNESCO General Conference, certain UNESCO meetings
- WTO: Symposia arranged by Secretariat for NGOs on specific issues of interest to civil society, informal opportunity for NGO discussion with representatives from WTO member countries.
- IMF: Meetings, seminars and consultations with IMF staff and Executive Directors are consultative in scope
- UNESCO Civil Society Dialogues: organized jointly with the World bank
- G8 informally receives delegations (FIM and Forum Civil G8 2006)
- UN Security Council Arria Formula Meetings: An informal, ad hoc and flexible meeting whereby CSOs can bring relevant information to the members of the Security Council who organize the meeting. The meeting is closed, there are no written records kept, and other Security Council members do not have to attend nor agree on the individuals consulted. Meetings are chaired by the delegation who invites the CSO guests. Guests are generally provided with interpretation and announced by the Secretariat.

7. Membership in International Organization

An international organization can include NGOs as members

- IUCN, International Commission for Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean Sea. In 2000, ICANN's At-Large Directors were elected via internet based global election.

8. Civil Society Representation on Executive Board

- Joint UNAIDS Program Coordinating Board (PCB) serves as UNAIDS governing body. Represented are countries, IGO co-sponsors, and NGOs.

9. NGO Forums

NGO forums exert influence on the evolution of policies, standards, guidelines. IGOs may participate in, attend, or hear advice from NGO Forums.

- UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- Online Forums are used to increase communications and visibility of NGOs and stakeholders
- UNESCO.org sub-portal “UNESCO Communities”
 - UN Industrial Development Organization CSO/NGO Resource Centre: Forum for all participating CSOs; internet node for collection/dissemination of information; virtual marketplace with business/technology opportunities; online knowledge base for sharing CSOs experiences.

10. Regular / Scheduled Consultative Meetings between CSOs and IGOs

- IFAD Consultation Forum takes place every two years.
- UNESCO NGO International Conference takes place every two years.
- UNHCR, Approx 200 representatives from over 150 organizations attend the consultation;
- UNEP annual Global Civil Society Forum (GSCF): main entry point for civil society participation at governance level
- UN Department of Public Information: Annual DPI-NGO meeting is the largest UN-NGO exchange through which DPI informs NGOs about UNS work and provides opportunities for interaction with UN staff.
- Regional Consultations – UNESCO, held at regular intervals in different regions to examine the state of cooperation with UNESCO, discuss programmes, regional priorities and promote development of regional cooperative networks

11. CSO Attendance in IGO Meetings

- **NGO Attendance at Council Meetings:** NGOs may obtain travel grants to participate in council meetings. I.e. Global Environmental Facility (GEF)
- **Participation in annual sessions of Board, Commissions, and Expert Meetings:** UN Conference on Trade and Development
- **Formal access to inter-governmental meetings**
International Organizations may allow CSOs formal access to their meetings. The extent of access can vary depending on the “consultative status” assigned. Ability to access particular meetings, propose agenda items, speak in the conference, have access to written materials, and circulate written materials may vary. Who selects the NGOs and the criteria for selection also varies.
- **NGO participation in the procedure for taking evidence**
Amicus Curiae Briefings - NGOs may submit amicus curiae briefs and in some cases participate in oral hearings (European Court of Human Rights, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, WTO). The WTO Dispute Settlement Panels may seek information from any relevant source.

12. Implementation/Service Provision/Operational Relations

NGOs enlisted to help implement programs (UN High Commissioner for Refugees channels 20-25% of its budget through approx. 500 NGOs worldwide; UNESCO)

- International Council of Voluntary Agencies and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
- Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization
- UNHCR Partnership in Action

Comparative Tables of NGO Participation in a Selection of International Bodies

1. NGO Participation in International Treaty-monitoring and Policy Making

	WTO	ECOSOC	UNCTAD	CBD	UNCED	World Bank	IMF
Form of participation	Ad hoc consultation	Consultative Status (General, Special, Roster)	Consultative Status (General, Special, Roster)	Consultative Status	Consultative Status	NGO Advisory Committee at global and regional levels	Accredited NGOs can access meeting venue during week of meetings
Who selects NGOs?	Secretariat + Member States consent	Member States on rec. of a Committee on NGOs composed of Member States	Member States of rec. or the Secretariat	Member States on rec. of the Secretariat	Member States on rec. of the Secretariat	External Affairs Department (EXT), External Relations Department (EXR), and home country of NGO	External Affairs Department (EXT), External Relations Department (EXR), and home country of NGO
Main criteria for selection	NGOs concerned with matters related to those of WTO	Expertise Representativity NGO supports UN's work and principles Democratic structure Accountability	Expertise Representativity NGO supports UN's work and principles International structure	Expertise May be admitted unless 1/3 of the Parties present object	Expertise Representativity NGO supports UN's work and principles Organic structure ECOSOC accreditation	NGOs elected by regional assemblies of NGOWB Expertise Geographical representativity International/National structure	Engage with IMF on broad range of operations and in policy dialogue at local/national and global level.
Who administers NGO participation	Secretariat	Secretariat (NGLS, UN Depart. Of Public Info...etc.)	Secretariat (NGLS, UN Depart. Of Public Info...etc.)	Secretariat (NGLS, UN Depart. Of Public Info...etc.)	Secretariat (NGLS, UN Depart. Of Public Info...etc.)	NGOs and Bank staff	External Affairs Department (EXT), External Relations Department (EXR)
Access to meetings of the org.	None except Ministerial Conferences	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Some Annual Meeting Sessions. Cannot attend IMFC or DC meeting.
Can propose agenda items	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Can speak at some meetings	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Crc. Written statements	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Access to information	NGOs only have access to derestricted documents	Secretariat is authorized to distribute docs as appropriate in its judgment	Secretariat is authorized to distribute docs as appropriate in its judgment	NGOs have access to official documents	NGOs have access to official documents	Bank may distribute docs as appropriate in its judgment	NGOs have access to BKG papers, statements by official delegates, and communiqués.

2. NGO Participation in International Judicial and Quasi Judicial Proceedings

	WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism	UN Human Rights Committee	European Court of Human Rights	Submissions on Enforcement Matters under NAAEC	World Bank
Complaints from individuals and NGOs	NO "WTO dispute settlement is not open to WTO observers, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, local governments or private persons. The dispute settlement mechanism is essentially an inter-governmental forum." ¹	Individuals may complain about a violation of which they themselves are a victim once all domestic remedies have been exhausted	NGOs may complain about a violation of which they themselves are a victim once all domestic remedies have been exhausted	NGOs may make a submission alleging a failure by a Party to enforce its own laws.	NGOs may denounce a failure by the World Bank to enforce its own policy and procedures
NGO participation in the procedure for taking evidence	Panel may seek information from any relevant source. NGOs may submit amicus curiae briefs	NGOs may submit the evidence to the Committee	NGOs may submit amicus curiae briefs and in some cases participate in oral hearings	Interested NGOs may submit relevant information to the Secretariat	The inspection Panel may request information from NGOs

Tables adapted from: International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development. "Accreditation Schemes and Other Arrangements for Public Participation in International Fora." November, 1999.

¹ http://www.wto.org/English/thewto_e/whatis_e/eol/e/wto08/wto8_62.htm

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Annex A

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

Provisions for NGO/CSO participation in the FAO are based on measures reached during the fifth session of the FAO annual Conference, as amended by Resolution No. 74/51 of the sixth session of the Conference, Resolution No. 37/53 of the seventh session and Resolution No. 39/57 of the ninth session. The arrangements for FAO consultation, cooperation and liaison with international non-governmental organizations shall be established and conducted in the following manner.

Such arrangements for consultation, cooperation and liaison are intended to enable FAO to secure expert information, advice, technical cooperation and assistance from international non-governmental organizations and to enable these organizations to express the views of their members to FAO. Arrangements made with such organizations are designed to advance the purposes of FAO by securing maximum cooperation from international non-governmental organizations in the execution of its programme. Formal relations with an international non-governmental organization take one of three forms according to the importance of its field of activity in relation to the activities of FAO. These are consultative status, specialized consultative status or liaison status.

In order to be eligible for consultative status, an international non-governmental organization must be:

- a. be international in its structure and scope of activity, be sufficiently representative of the field of interest in which it operates, and be of a recognized standing that renders its views on policy a matter of great interest to governments and to FAO;
- b. be concerned with matters covering a substantial portion of FAO's field of activity;
- c. have aims and purposes in conformity with the general principles embodied in the Constitution of FAO;
- d. have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures and machinery for communicating with its membership in various countries.

Organizations eligible for specialized consultative status shall:

- a. be international in its structure and scope of activity, and representative of the specialized field of interest in which it operates;
- b. be concerned with matters covering a particular portion of FAO's field of activity;
- c. have aims and purposes in conformity with the general principles embodied in the Constitution of FAO;
- d. have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures and machinery for communicating with its membership in various countries.

Finally, to be eligible for liaison status an international non- governmental organization must:

- a. be international in its structure and scope of activity and be sufficiently representative of the field of interest in which it operates;
- b. be concerned with matters covering a portion of FAO's field of activity and be in a position to give practical assistance in that field;
- c. have aims and purposes in conformity with the general principles embodied in the Constitution of FAO;
- d. have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures and machinery for communicating with its membership in various countries.

Mechanisms for deciding upon applications of international non-governmental organizations for consultative status are guided by the following principles:

- a. An organization whose primary objectives are related to those of another specialized agency of the United Nations may only be admitted to consultative status after consultation with such agency;
- b. Consultative status will not normally be granted to individual organizations that are members of a larger organization authorized to represent them; and, when such an organization is formed, its member organizations shall cease individually to enjoy consultative status.

An organization with consultative, special consultative or liaison status:

- a. shall be entitled to send an observer (without the right to vote) to a session of the Conference and Council, who may be accompanied by advisers; to receive from the Director-General, in advance of the session, all documents bearing on policy or technical questions; to circulate to the Conference its views in writing, without abridgement; to speak before the technical committees of the Conference but not to participate in discussions unless requested by the Chairman; and, upon request addressed to the Director-General and with the consent of the General Committee of the Conference, to speak before the Conference itself;
- b. may be invited by the Director-General to participate in experts' meetings, technical conferences or seminars on subjects which fall within its fields of interest, and if it does not so participate it may submit its views in writing to any such meeting or technical conference;
- c. will receive non-confidential documentation and information about meetings planned on subjects agreed upon with the Secretariat;
- d. may submit, under the authority of its governing body, written statements on programme matters, not exceeding 2 000 words, in one of the languages of FAO, to the Director-General, who may communicate them to the Council.

The Conference and Director General may terminate arrangements for consultative status, specialized consultative status and liaison status, which are no longer considered necessary or appropriate in the light of changing programmes or other circumstances. In special cases, which may arise between Conference sessions the Council is empowered to terminate such arrangements, subject to review by the Conference.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO):

The Aviation Medicine Section of the ICAO works in close collaboration with UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as international non-governmental organizations including the Aerospace Medical Association (AsMA) and the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (IAASM). It also cooperates and consults with the Chief Medical Officers of civil aviation authorities and the Medical Directors of airline companies.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD):

IFAD values NGOs/CSOs as players in the fight against rural poverty and hunger. NGO/CSO perspectives on policy issues are solicited in a number of ways. Since 1990, regular IFAD-NGO/CSO consultations have provided the opportunity for NGOs/CSOs and IFAD staff to discuss policy and operational issues. The Consultation in 2005 focused on how tripartite partnerships among IFAD, governments and NGOs/CSOs can be improved in practice in order to maximize impact on poverty.

A Consultation Steering Committee (former IFAD/NGO Advisory Group) facilitates preparation of the IFAD/NGO Consultation. Adequate geographical distribution and the presence of umbrella NGO networks, people's organizations and farmers' associations are taken into account. The Committee meets between Consultations and is responsible for presenting IFAD management with recommendations on a theme for the Consultation, as well as on the selection of the NGOs to be invited.

Efforts are also increasingly being made to draw on NGO/CSO knowledge and experience in the earliest stages of country strategies, when programmes and projects are being articulated and formulated. For example, in India and The Philippines, NGOs/CSOs were widely consulted during the preparation of the "country strategic opportunities paper" (COSOP). They also participate in the subsequent "reality check" workshops to review IFAD's country strategy.

Finally, a number of grants are extended to NGOs/CSOs to draw upon their knowledge and expertise in specific areas, such as microfinance. In addition, specific studies are commissioned with NGOs/CSOs to elicit their views on IFAD's regional assessments.

International Labour Organization (ILO):

Within the UN system, the ILO has a unique tripartite structure, with workers and employers participating as equal partners with governments in the work of the ILO's Governing Bodies. Provisions for the inclusion of civilian employer and worker representatives are also fundamental to the composition of the ILO's annual International Labour Conference. The member states of the ILO meet at the International Labour Conference annually in June in Geneva. Two government delegates, an employer delegate and a worker delegate represent each of the member states of the ILO. They sometimes vote against each other or even against their government representatives. Under the ILO constitution, the delegation committee is required to be entirely tripartite, meaning that delegates are able to act in full independence from one another. Therefore, every delegate is entitled to vote individually on all matters, which are taken into consideration by the Conference (See Article 4, ILO Constitution).

The Governing Body is the executive council of the ILO and meets three times a year in Geneva. It makes decisions on ILO's policy and establishes the programme and the budget, which it then submits to the Conference for adoption. It also elects the Director-General. It is composed of 28 government members, 14 employer members and 14 worker members.

Any international non-governmental organization (INGO) wishing to be invited and to have representation at the ILO's annual Conference should meet the following conditions. It should: (1) demonstrate the international nature of its composition and activities by proving that it is represented or has affiliates in a considerable number of countries and that it is active in those countries; (2) have aims and objectives that are in harmony with the spirit, aims and principles of the Constitution of the ILO; (3) formally express a clearly defined interest, supported by its statutes and by explicit reference to its own activities, in at least one of the items on the agenda of the Conference session to which it requests to be invited; (4) submit its request, in writing, to the Director-General of the International Labour Office at least one month before the opening of the session of the Governing Body preceding the session of the Conference.

In order for the Office to verify that the conditions set out in (1), (2) and (3) above are met by the organization submitting the request, an INGO must send with its request: (1) a copy of its statutes; (2) the names and titles of its Officers; (3) a description of its composition and the aggregate membership of the national organizations affiliated to it; (4) a copy of its latest report and (5) detailed and verifiable information about its sources of financing.

If, following the examination of the documents and information, the Office considers that the organization submitting the request meets the prescribed conditions, its request will be submitted to the Officers of the Governing Body for decision. Any request submitted less than one month prior to the opening of the session of the Conference will not be examined.

Organizations that have been invited to the Conference may appoint one representative only for each of the agenda items in which they have expressed a particular interest. The participation of INGOs in the work of the Conference committees dealing with the technical items in which they have expressed a particular interest is subject to a decision of the Selection Committee (Article 56.9 of the Standing Orders of the Conference).

International Monetary Fund (IMF):

When the IMF began to engage with NGOs/CSOs in the 1980s it was usually at the global level as a response to the economic and social justice advocacy efforts of these groups. Such engagement remains central to IMF-NGO/CSO relations today.

The IMF is committed to:

- Transparency in Dialogue with NGOs/CSOs is an important channel for communication.
- Fostering a culture of Listening and Learning. NGOs/CSOs can highlight important issues, offer information to supplement official data and provide insights that may differ from the perspectives of IMF members and governmental officials.
- Strengthening country ownership over policies is seen as essential to successful stabilization and reform. Constructive dialogue with NGOs/CSOs can help to build mutual understanding and to increase support for reform.

As a reflection of the importance of dialogue with NGOs/CSOs to the IMF's work, a Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations was distributed to IMF staff in 2003 by the Managing Director. The Guide encourages IMF staff to continue to increase outreach and provides practical advice on issues arising from interaction with NGOs/CSOs.

The IMF engages with NGOs/CSOs on a variety of issues including: IMF policy advice, especially to low-income countries; the social and environmental implications of IMF advice; debt relief; program conditionality; trade policy; governance and transparency; and the voice and representation of developing countries in the IMF and World Bank.

At the global level, the IMF's engagement with NGOs/CSOs takes a variety of forms:

- Contacts between IMF management and NGO/CSO representatives, in both small meetings and larger forums;
- Meetings, seminars and consultations with IMF staff—and Executive Directors—at Fund headquarters and worldwide on specific policy or country issues;
- Invitations extended by the IMF to contribute to reviews of its policies, by attending seminars or by providing comments to papers posted on its external website;
- A series of Civil Society Dialogues organized jointly with the World Bank cover a wide range of topics, including some organized by CSOs themselves.

The Independent Evaluation Office also maintains regular contacts with NGOs/CSOs, who have been among the most active providers of feedback, comments and suggestions to its evaluations.

At the national level engagement with NGOs/CSOs takes several forms, though all are primarily consultative in scope. The IMF Managing Director regularly meets with NGOs/CSOs when he visits a country. Staff surveillance missions make a point of meeting with NGOs/CSOs, such as labor organizations and think tanks. In the context of program design and negotiations in low-income countries, missions often meet NGOs/CSOs that are engaged in the consultative process of preparing poverty reduction strategies. Resident representatives also routinely engage in outreach to NGOs/CSOs.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD):

In 2004 at UNCTAD's Conference in São Paulo, Brazil, member states agreed that better integration of NGOs/CSOs, the private sector and academia into the work of UNCTAD would benefit both UNCTAD and its member states. UNCTAD has pursued a policy that allows cooperation with civil society actors by setting up formal and informal mechanisms for their participation in the activities of UNCTAD, including participation in conferences, workshops and seminars, producing co-publications, information-sharing and policy analysis through formal and informal exchange of ideas and implementation of technical cooperation programmes.

UNCTAD believes that cooperation with civil society can help organizations enhance their advocacy role in support of development and can add value to UNCTAD's work through partnership as well as through participation in joint meetings and discussion forums leading to concrete development outcomes.

The Civil Society Outreach (CSO) Unit is responsible for liaison between UNCTAD and NGOs/CSOs. UNCTAD has developed cooperation arrangements with civil society in respect of development-oriented research and technical cooperation in areas affecting international trade. NGOs/CSOs have also played an important and constructive role in furthering the purpose and principles of UNCTAD.

NGOs/CSOs with observer status with UNCTAD may participate in its intergovernmental meetings as observers. They may make oral statements on matters within the scope of their activities as well as circulate written materials on matters related to an item of the agenda of the meeting. NGOs/CSOs are encouraged to participate in the annual sessions of the Trade and Development Board (TDB), its Commissions and expert meetings.

Hearings are also held annually in connection with TDB sessions to debate issues before the Board. NGOs/CSOs accredited to the Hearings and those that have observer status with UNCTAD are able to participate in the Hearings.

Arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the activities of UNCTAD are governed by rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Trade and Development Board and its decision 43 (VII).

In order to be considered for status with UNCTAD, NGOs/CSOs must be concerned with matters falling within the scope of the functions being carried out by UNCTAD and meet the criteria set out in Board decision 43 (VII).

NGOs applying for status with UNCTAD are required to complete an application questionnaire that has been prepared on the basis of the criteria contained in Board decision 43 (VII). The questionnaire seeks information on the organization's aims and objectives; activities; membership; structure and sources of revenue and requests the provision of supporting documents such as its Constitution, annual reports and annual budgets.

The Trade and Development Board approve applications for observer status and distinguish between general and special category organizations.

- General category organizations are those NGOs/CSOs that are concerned with most of the activities of UNCTAD. Their representatives can participate in the public meetings of all the intergovernmental bodies of UNCTAD.
- Special category organizations are those that have special competence in a few fields of the activities of UNCTAD. Their representatives are entitled to participate in public meetings on specific matters falling within the terms of reference of the Board or of one or two of its subsidiary bodies.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):

UNDP works closely with NGOs/CSOs to promote the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and help people build a better life. UNDP encourages policy dialogues between governments, NGOs/CSOs and donors and advocates for legal and regulatory environments that enable NGOs/CSOs to contribute to the development process. UNDP also helps NGOs/CSOs to develop their own capacity by connecting them to knowledge, experience and resources from around the world, including to NGOs/CSOs in other countries and regions.

In the early years of UNDP engagement with NGOs/CSOs partnerships were primarily for implementation of projects and delivery of services. With the 1990 launch of the Human Development Report (whose inspiration was drawn in large part from civil society) UNDP partnerships with NGOs/CSOs increasingly became more policy and advocacy-based. Today partnership with civil society is centrally important to UNDP as it seeks to recast itself as the United Nations' global development network engaged in policy and advocacy work that creates "real choices" for decision-makers. As a largely decentralized organization, with a presence in 166 countries, UNDP faces the challenge of sustaining vibrant civil society partnerships across diverse country environments.

The CSO Champions' Initiative for Resident Representatives and Resident Coordinators was launched during the 2003 Global Resident Representatives Meeting. CSO champions were identified in consultation with the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and the Bureau for Development Policy. The CSO Champions' Initiative creates a core group to nurture, collect and promote innovative and dynamic models of engagement with civil society organizations at the national level. This group also advises the Administrator, senior management and the CSO Advisory Committee on how to deepen strategic partnerships at the country level. The goal is to make CSO engagement a generalized practice within all departments of the UNDP.

The Champions' Initiative follows on some key recommendations set forth at the fourth meeting of the CSO Advisory Committee (New York, April 2003), which identified five key areas for strengthened partnerships with CSOs.

- Advocacy on behalf of the Millennium Development Goals, including country-level monitoring and reporting.
- Addressing root causes, supporting accountability on human rights, and establishing an operational framework for engagement with CSOs in crisis prevention and recovery.
- Scaling up community-led energy and environment initiatives for greater policy impact.
- Advancing the content and space for debate of pro-poor macroeconomic policy choices at national and regional levels.

In recognition of the crucial role of NGOs/CSOs in development, UNDP has also developed a partnership agenda through a series of high-level meetings between senior management and CSO policy leaders (1999-2000), which culminated in the establishment of the CSO Advisory Committee to the Administrator in May 2000.

The Committee, which meets once a year in New York, sets the context for policy partnerships with civil society. It is composed of civic policy leaders from around the world who provide advice to the Administrator and senior management. The committee proposed the following priority themes for collaboration:

- Poverty reduction
- Inclusive globalization
- Crisis prevention and recovery
- Human rights and human development
- Engagement with the business sector

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

UNESCO functions due to a synergetic relationship between diverse stakeholders that together form an international community. These communities include governments; National Commissions; Parliamentarians and NGOs/CSOs. Together, they promote UNESCO's ideals and values around the world, at the local, national and international level. The UNESCO.ORG subportal "UNESCO Communities" offers these stakeholders a forum to enhance communication and increase their visibility.

UNESCO maintains official relations with approximately 335 NGOs/CSOs as well as the 21 foundations with established official relations in order to mobilize public opinion on the ground, notably in isolated or precarious regions in the world and to promote greater consideration of the geographic and cultural diversity of the nongovernmental community. They also act as relays for the implementation of UNESCO programmes. Comprised of people of all ages and nationalities from every walk of life, some 3600 UNESCO Associations, Centres and Clubs help spread UNESCO's ideals and give visibility to the values promoted by UNESCO within local communities.

In 1995 UNESCO's member states adopted a set of new Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations. The purpose of these Directives is to create the necessary conditions for a partnership that will ensure that UNESCO, in the preparation and execution of its programme, benefits from the broadest possible support from NGOs/CSOs with recognized capacity for reflection and mobilization on the ground. These Directives are also designed to encourage the emergence of non-governmental organizations in areas of the world where they are weak or isolated, with the aim of better taking into account the geographical and cultural diversity of the non-governmental community.

Relations between UNESCO and NGOs are essentially intellectual and moral. They take different forms:

- Exchange of information and documentation on questions of common interest. Consultations on draft programmes.
- Participation in sessions of the General Conference, in certain UNESCO meetings and in periodic conferences of non-governmental organizations.
- Different forms of moral support, on the basis of express request and authorization.
- Consultancies and participation of programme specialists, experts or lecturers in events of interest to UNESCO.

However, cooperation with UNESCO can also have financial and material aspects in terms of:

- Contracts
- Financial contributions
- Availability of administrative office space
- Use of conference rooms and equipment
- Miscellaneous services.

UNESCO also cooperates, on an ad-hoc basis, with many NGOs working in its fields of competence, before establishing "official relations" as defined by the aforementioned Directives.

Forms of relations with NGOs/CSOs and Foundations:

Operational relations - Established in response to the need to extend cooperation between UNESCO and NGOs and to back up the Organization's efforts to achieve a more active presence in the field, operational relations are aimed at achieving a flexible and dynamic partnership in the implementation of UNESCO's programmes. NGOs maintaining operational relations with UNESCO are valued partners owing to their active presence and concrete action in the field, the expertise they represent, and their ability to channel the concerns of the people. Requests for admission to operational relations can be made to the Director-General of UNESCO at any time and will be processed as quickly as possible.

Formal relations - Aimed at sustained cooperation with UNESCO in its fields of competence both upstream and downstream from the Organization's programming and priorities. Admission is granted to international professional NGOs that are widely representative and expert in their field of activity, and are recognized as having a genuinely international structure and membership. Formal relations are themselves sub-divided into two types, consultative or associate, depending on the role and structure of the NGO itself. The Executive Board, which is one of UNESCO's governing bodies, and more precisely its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, annually decides on requests for admission to one or the other type of relations, as well as on the development of such relations, on the basis of recommendations made by the Director-General.

On the national level, non-governmental organizations (including foundations and similar institutions) wishing to collaborate with UNESCO have two main partners to which they can refer:

National Commissions - are national cooperative bodies set up by each Member State to act as a liaison body for all matters of concern to UNESCO. Their task is to involve in the work of the Organization all the different ministerial departments, services, institutions, organizations and citizens in their country working for the advancement of education, science, culture and communication.

UNESCO field units - are responsible for developing cooperation between the Organization and the countries, which they cover and to which they act as the Organization's representatives.

National Commissions and field units are well placed to maintain close relations with organizations that are active on the ground, understand their structure, gauge their dynamism and vitality, vouch for their democratic functioning, inform them of available local possibilities for cooperation and bring their objectives and priorities more in line with those of UNESCO. In short, they are the guarantors of the quality of such cooperation, which seeks to be concrete and close to the concerns of the communities involved.

Apart from individual relations, UNESCO also promotes collective cooperation with NGOs/CSOs through different mechanisms: (1) The NGO International Conference, which takes place every two years and comprises all NGOs maintaining official relations with UNESCO. Theme-specific collective consultations, organized regularly in accordance with UNESCO programme implementation needs, sometimes in parallel with international conferences held under its auspices. (2) Regional consultations, held at regular intervals in the different regions, with a view to examining the state of cooperation with UNESCO, discussing the programmes of the Organization and regional priorities and promoting the development of regional cooperative networks. (3) The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committees, elected by the NGO International Conference, is responsible for permanent coordination and continuity of this collective cooperation. It is based at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

Since its inception, the United Nations Environment Programme has enjoyed a special relationship with civil society in tackling environmental issues. The Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, which led to the creation of UNEP in 1972, owed much to the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of NGOs/CSOs. Most of the multilateral environmental agreements (Basel Convention, Montreal Protocol, Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions, etc) were developed due to the lobbying efforts of NGOs/CSOs.

An effective engagement of civil society at governance and programmatic levels is believed by UNEP to be critical to strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development. In 1999 UNEP created a Civil Society & NGOs unit in the Policy Branch of the Division of Policy Development and Law (DPDL), to provide civil society with a chance for broad participation in environmental decision-making. By creating the Major Groups and Stakeholder Branch in 2004, UNEP continued to enhance the participation of civil society in its work. To achieve this goal UNEP developed and adopted a strategy based on three pillars:

- Strengthening institutional management, in order to facilitate transparent and meaningful communication between civil society and UNEP.
- Engagement at the policy level to take into account civil society expertise and views at the intergovernmental level.
- Engagement at the programmatic level, to involve civil society in UNEP's implementation of its work programme.

Since 2000, UNEP has also organized an annual Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF), in conjunction with UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. This forum is the main entry point for civil society participation at the governance level.

UNEP has also hosted events in collaboration with specific major groups such as the "Global Women's Assembly on Environment" in October 2004 and the "Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment" in January 2006.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees collaborates with hundreds of NGOs/CSOs to help carry out the agency's principal mandate – protecting refugees. Questions and answers on NGO Partnerships in Refugee Protection give further details.

NGOs/CSOs provide an array of services for vulnerable people including immediate relief – food, water and shelter – as well as legal assistance, education and health care.

Annually, UNHCR channels 20% – 25% of its entire budget through more than 500 NGOs/CSOs in some 1,000 contracts worldwide. These Cooperation Agreements include assisting refugees and other persons of concern in the areas of health; nutrition; water supply; sanitation; community development; education and site construction and maintenance.

UNHCR also cooperates with NGOs/CSOs through emergency response and standby agreements; protection capacity; joint training; advocacy and fund-raising. Some NGOs/CSOs undertake refugee-related activities largely or entirely with funds from other donors, while nevertheless working in coordination with UNHCR. In other cases, the refugee agency cooperates with NGOs/CSOs and other donors to secure rehabilitation or development funding for longer-term projects, which benefit a wider community as well as refugees returning to their homeland.

UNHCR maintains close working relations with numerous NGO/CSO coordinating bodies, including: the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), InterActions (American Council for Voluntary International Action), the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), and Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE). UNHCR participates regularly in a number of NGO/CSO forums, conferences and discussion groups that exert a considerable influence on the evolution of UNHCR policies, standards and guidelines.

An Annual Consultation with NGOs/CSOs has been running for at least the last 20 years, although it has evolved significantly in recent years. What was once a one-day meeting where NGOs/CSOs strategized over their interventions, the Annual Consultations with NGOs/CSOs now run over three days and involve dialogue on a wide variety of subjects of interest to NGOs/CSOs and UNHCR. Each year over 200 representatives from more than 150 organizations attend the consultations. Participants include representatives of small and large, national and international, UN, and assistance and advocacy organizations (including those specialized in resettlement). It provides an important forum for NGOs/CSOs to raise issues, network, and exchange views with UNHCR.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT):

UN-HABITAT has worked to develop closer relationships with civil society, parliamentarians, and the private sector around the world and within the United Nations system. UN-HABITAT now has links with 11 categories of Habitat Agenda partners in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America. In its work to improve human settlements, reduce poverty and create safer, more sustainable and environmentally friendly cities, UN-HABITAT has found it essential to work closely with governmental and non-governmental partners.

Accreditation to meetings of the UN-HABITAT Governing Bodies is granted to those non-governmental organizations by request that are registered with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which oversees the various UN agencies. Those accredited to the UN-HABITAT Istanbul conference and the Istanbul + 5 General Assembly conference in New York can also renew their accreditation to attend the sessions held every two years of the UN-HABITAT Governing Council.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO):

UNIDO's CSO/NGO Resource Centre provides tailor-made networking services to CSOs/NGOs to ultimately become:

- A forum for all participating CSOs;
- A main internet node for the collection and dissemination of specialized information related to CSOs;
- A virtual marketplace with concrete business/technology opportunities, tailored to CSOs and their members; and
- An online knowledge base for the sharing of CSOs' experiences, good practices and success stories between CSOs, their partners and affiliates.

The CSO/NGO Resource Centre is intended to increase the visibility of all involved and to seek to contribute to UNIDO's global forum function by allowing all participants to interact directly and to exchange views, suggestions and opinions online. Eventually, the CSO/NGO Resource Centre could also grow into a virtual community of like-minded participants that will immediately benefit from cross-linkages between themselves, and also through UNIDO Exchange.

UNIDO's mandate to cooperate with CSOs/NGOs is enshrined in Article 2 (p) of the Constitution of UNIDO, which states that UNIDO shall encourage and promote the establishment and strengthening of industrial, business and professional associations and similar organizations, which would contribute to the full utilization of the internal resources of the developing countries with a view to developing their national industries.

UNIDO General Conference resolutions GC.6/Res.16 and GC.7/Res.10 additionally emphasize cooperation with CSOs/NGOs and urges further mobilization of funds to cover related activities.

At present 135 CSOs/NGOs, mostly international, enjoy consultative status with UNIDO. Consultative status is granted by the Industrial Development Board in accordance with the guidelines adopted by the Board for the relationship with non-governmental organizations ("UNIDO Guidelines for the Relationship of UNIDO with Non-governmental Organizations" GC.1/Dec.41, annex, section B, adopted by the General Conference at its first session (1985)). This entitles them to participate in the deliberations of the Industrial Development Board and the General Conference, which provide a forum for CSOs/NGOs to express their common viewpoints. CSOs/NGOs with consultative status can have important advisory roles for UNIDO programmes.

In the field of technical cooperation, UNIDO cooperates in particular with national CSOs that do not have consultative status. The selection criteria for valid partners are therefore crucial. They are based on

questionnaires on support institutions (Guidelines for the Formulation of Integrated Programmes, Appendix to DGA/11). These questionnaires are a valuable tool to assess the capacity of potential counterparts and the needs of institutions.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):

NGOs/CSOs are important partners with UNODC in carrying out its global mandates. NGOs/CSOs, in consultative status with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), are systematically invited as observers to participate in the regular meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). Over the years, NGOs/CSOs have provided valuable contributions in the elaboration of major documents and subsequent decisions of the United Nations related to drug control. Recently, NGOs/CSOs participated in a survey posted on the web site about the future direction and priorities of UNODC. (See summary of NGO responses).

UNODC's dealings with NGOs/CSOs are guided by mandates from the international community. The Twentieth Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, held in October 1998, adopted a landmark political declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction. In conjunction with the adoption of these principles, NGOs/CSOs have been called upon to contribute to the goal of building a society free of drug abuse, emphasizing and facilitating healthy and innovative alternatives to illicit drug consumption, especially among youth.

UNODC welcomes the participation of NGOs/CSOs in its full range of activities at the international, regional and national levels. Specialized NGOs/CSOs aid UNODC in executing projects in all parts of the world and are especially involved in alternative development programmes in countries where illicit drug crops are cultivated. Advocacy activities and projects for the annual celebration of the International Day against Drug Abuse also require close collaboration between NGOs/CSOs and UNODC.

World Bank:

The World Bank first began to interact with civil society in the 1970s through dialogue with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on environmental concerns. Today the World Bank consults and collaborates with thousands of members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) throughout the world, such as community-based organizations, NGOs, indigenous peoples organizations, labor unions, faith-based groups, and foundations.

The World Bank has learned through these three decades of interaction that the participation of CSOs/NGOs in government development projects and programs can enhance their operational performance by contributing local knowledge, providing technical expertise, and leveraging social capital. Further, CSOs/NGOs can bring innovative ideas and solutions, as well as participatory approaches, to solving local problems.

An increased emphasis on the need to reach out to civil society in recent years has been reflected in at least 15 Bank operational policies or directives for staff: recent IDA Replenishment reports, the 2000 World Development Report on Attacking Poverty. This recognition also underpins the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes.

The breadth and quality of World Bank-CSO/NGO relations began to intensify in the mid-1990s when participation action plans were adopted at the regional level and civil society specialists were hired to work in Bank offices worldwide. Reflecting this greater appreciation for the role of civil society in development, projected CSO/NGO involvement in Bank-funded projects has risen steadily over the past decade, from 21 percent of the total number of projects in fiscal year 1990 to an estimated 72 percent in fiscal year 2003.

The World Bank engages CSOs/NGOs in three ways:

Voice of Global Civil Society Conference

Waterloo, Ontario 2006

First, it facilitates dialogue and partnership between civil society and governments by providing resources, training, technical support, and often playing a convening role. That type of engagement can be best seen in the process of formulation of the country poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs).

Second, the Bank dialogues and consults with CSOs/NGOs on issues, policies and programs, by listening to their perspectives and inviting suggestions. These interactions vary from consultations on global policies, such as social safeguards and adjustment lending, to discussions on local Bank-financed projects.

Third, the Bank partners directly with CSOs through contracting technical assistance and training services, funding civil society initiatives and managing joint programs. There are many examples of active partnerships in the areas of forest conservation, AIDS vaccines, rural poverty, micro-credit, and development of Internet and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

In order to carry out this growing level of engagement, the World Bank has adopted a new team approach, which involves 120 Civil Society Engagement Specialists working across the institution. These specialists are generally social scientists and communication officers with extensive knowledge and experience working with the civil society sector. The new structure, introduced in 2002, aims to both enhance coordination of the institution's civil society engagement work as well as provide greater civil society access to the Bank.

At the country level, there are over 80 Civil Society Country Staff (CSC) working in 70 Bank country offices worldwide to actively reach out to civil society and encourage CSO/NGO participation in Bank-funded projects and programs.

At the regional and departmental levels, the Civil Society Group (CSG) brings together more than 40 staff that work at World Bank Headquarters in Washington in various units, geographic regions, funding mechanisms, and with specific constituencies.

At the global level, the Civil Society Team (CST) provides institutional coordination by formulating institutional strategy, providing advice to senior management, undertaking research and dissemination, and reaching out to CSOs/NGOs at the global level.

World Health Organization (WHO):

Two types of relations are provided in current WHO policy for relations with NGOs/CSOs: formal and informal. Nongovernmental organizations and other civil society actors have engaged with WHO to implement health programmes at country level; made outreach to remote areas and populations possible; advocated public health issues to a broad audience; addressed sensitive issues and worked in alliance with WHO to raise funds more effectively.

There are two main paths to follow for establishing relations between NGOs/CSOs and WHO. Firstly, direct contact between an NGO/CSO and a WHO technical department. Secondly, an NGO/CSO may seek the help of the CSI or, as appropriate, its counterpart in a WHO regional office, to explore the possibility of mutually beneficial exchanges.

It is considered advantageous to have a short note on how an NGO considers its work relates to WHO priorities, as well as the following documents:

- a copy of the NGO's constitution and/or by-laws or equivalent document(s)
- membership lists, where appropriate
- list of elected officers or, as appropriate, members of governing body (for example Board)
- annual reports for the most recent three years and audited financial accounts
- publications/media catalogue, if any

- most recent scientific/professional journal, if any
- project/research evaluation reports, if any

The information, which should be transmitted either to CSI or the appropriate WHO regional office, is shared with relevant technical departments. Where appropriate, NGOs/CSOs are put into contact with interested departments to explore the possibility of informal exchanges

The Civil Society Initiative (CSI) fosters relations between WHO and nongovernmental and civil society organizations and is responsible for the administration of formal relations as set out in the Principles governing relations between WHO and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Counterparts at each WHO Regional Office serve in the same capacity. WHO country offices may also work with NGOs/CSOs at the national level.

The objectives of WHO's relations with NGOs/CSOs are to promote the policies, strategies and activities of WHO and, where appropriate, to collaborate with NGOs/CSOs in jointly agreed activities to implement them. WHO may also seek to harmonize intersectoral interests among various sectoral bodies concerned in a country, regional or global setting.

WHO recognizes only one category of formal relations, known as official relations, with those NGOs/CSOs, which meet the criteria described in the Principles. All other contacts, including working relations, are considered to be of an informal character.

For an NGO/CSO to obtain official relations (OR) the NGO/CSO generally must be international in its structure and/or scope, and must represent a substantial proportion of the persons globally organized for the purpose of participating in the particular field of interest in which it operates. When there are several international NGOs/CSOs with similar areas of interest, they may form a joint committee or other body authorized to act for the group as a whole. The NGO/CSO must have a constitution or similar basic document, an established headquarters, a directing or governing body, an administrative structure at various levels of action, and authority to speak for its members through its authorized representatives. Its members shall exercise voting rights in relation to its policies or action.

There must normally have been at least two years of successfully completed working relations, prior to an application for admission into official relations.

NGOs/CSOs with official relations enjoy privileges conferred by the official relationship that includes: (1) the right to appoint a representative to participate, without right of vote, in WHO's meetings or in those of the committees and conferences convened under its authority; (2) access to non-confidential documentation and such other documentation as the Director-General may see fit to make available through such special distribution facilities as WHO may establish; (3) the right to submit a memorandum to the Director-General, who would determine the nature and scope of the circulation.

NGOs/CSOs are required to utilize the opportunities available to them through their normal work to disseminate information on WHO policies and programmes. They are further required to collaborate individually or collectively in WHO programmes to further health-for-all goals.

The procedure for entering into an official relations (OR) system with the WHO can take INGOs 3-4 years. It has been described as "long," "bureaucratic," "demanding" and "formal." It has further been criticized for favoring NGOs from the North. NGOs/CSOs without OR status are only permitted to attend the Governing Bodies meetings of the WHO as part of the public or under the umbrella of other NGOs with OR status. As a member of the public, non-OR NGOs/CSOs are not permitted to wear an identification badge for the organization that they represent. In 2002, 189 NGOs/CSOs maintained OR with WHO with another 240 NGOs/CSOs with relations with WHO having non-OR status, meaning that 55% of all NGO-WHO relations are non-official.

World Trade Organization (WTO):

Although NGOs have been interested in the GATT since its inception in 1947, the period since the creation of the WTO has vividly demonstrated that the multilateral trading system is being scrutinized by public opinion like never before.

When Ministers adopted the Marrakesh Agreement they also decided to include a specific reference to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Article V:2. On 18 July 1996 the General Council further clarified the framework for relations with NGOs by adopting a set of guidelines (WT/L/162) that “recognizes the role NGOs can play to increase the awareness of the public in respect of WTO activities.” These guidelines are instrumental for both Members and the WTO Secretariat in maintaining an informal and positive dialogue with the various components of civil society. Since 1996 arrangements for NGOs have essentially focused on attendance at Ministerial Conferences, participation in issue-specific symposia and the day-to-day contact between the WTO Secretariat and NGOs. More recently, the Director-General has announced a number of new initiatives designed to improve the dialogue with civil society.

Immediately after adopting the guidelines for relations with NGOs WTO Members agreed on procedures for such organizations to attend the Singapore Ministerial Conference in December 1996. Hence, it was decided that (1) NGOs would be allowed to attend the Plenary Sessions of the Conference and (2) NGO applications to register would be accepted by the WTO Secretariat on the basis of Article V:2, (i.e. NGOs had to demonstrate that their activities were “concerned with matters related to those of the WTO.”)

The Singapore Ministerial Conference, thus, represented the first experience with NGO attendance at a major WTO meeting. In total 159 NGOs registered to attend the first Ministerial Conference of the WTO. The 108 NGOs (235 individuals) that made it to Singapore included representatives from environment; development; consumer; business; trade union and farmer interests. The NGO Centre in Singapore provided the NGOs with a large number of meeting rooms, computer facilities and documentation from the official event.

The Geneva Ministerial Conference and 50th Year Celebration of the multilateral trading system in many ways epitomized the evolving relationship with NGOs and underlined the growing interest of civil society in the work of the WTO. 152 NGOs registered for the Geneva event. In the end a total of 128 NGOs (362 individuals) came to the second Ministerial of the WTO. The NGO Centre, several meeting rooms and a computer facility were also reserved for NGOs in the Palais des Nations. Throughout the three-day-event NGOs were briefed regularly by the WTO Secretariat on the progress of the informal working sessions – a feature that was welcomed by NGOs as a genuine sign of commitment to ensure transparency and the recognition of civil society as an entity, which deserves attention in its own right.

Since 1996 a number of symposia have been arranged by the Secretariat for NGOs on specific issues of interest to civil society (i.e. three on trade and the environment, one on trade and development and one on trade facilitation). These symposia have provided, on an informal basis, the opportunity for NGOs/CSOs to discuss specific issues with representatives of WTO Member countries.