

To: OSMTH Grand Master and OSMTH Magisterium

REPORT ON MEETINGS OF CoNGO ON SATURDAY 3 MARCH 2018

2018 CoNGO General Assembly

The 2018 CoNGO General Assembly met at the John Knox International Reformed Conference Center in Geneva over Thursday 1 to Saturday 3 March 2018.

Attendance

Owing to severe winter weather and consequent cancellations of flights into Geneva Airport, I was only able to join the CoNGO General Assembly meeting late on the Saturday morning.

At that point there were about 25 to 30 attendees, around half of whom represented the member NGOs which were seeking positions on the CoNGO Board. Numbers were fewer than originally expected, as the severe winter weather had prevented a number of other representatives from reaching Geneva.

Elections

The Reverend Dr Liberato (Levi) Bautista was elected to the position of President of CoNGO.

As there were only 18 Member NGOs seeking positions on the CoNGO Board, and the Board can have up to 20 Member NGOs, all 18 were elected "en bloc" by the General Assembly without individual presentations or votes.

The CoNGO Board Members for the coming 3 year term are therefore:

- Agrenska Foundation
- Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies
- Dianova International
- Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas
- Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer
- Global Foundation for Democracy and Development
- International Alliance of Women
- International Humanist and Ethical Union

- International Planned Parenthood Foundation - South East Asia Region
- International Union of Psychological Science
- Nonviolence International (*nominated by OSMTH*)
- OSMTH
- Soka Gakkai International
- Soroptimist International (*seconded by OSMTH*)
- The Psychological Study of Social Issues
- Union of International Associations
- Universal Esperanto Association
- World Student Christian Federation

There were changes made by the General Assembly to the CoNGO Rules (i.e. the Constitution), which mean that there are now 4 Vice President positions:

- First Vice President (*held by an individual personally*)
- Second Vice President (*held by an individual personally*)
- Vice President-at-Large (*held by a Member NGO*)
- Vice President-at-Large (*held by a Member NGO*)

The underlying concept is that the President and the 4 Vice President positions are intended to cover a wide geographic spread, with the President and the First and Second Vice Presidents, in particular, all expected to come from different locations. While this concept is not formally specified, in practice this is now likely to mean that one of each of these 3 senior CoNGO positions will be held by individuals in the major UN locations of Geneva, New York and Vienna.

The Vice President-at-Large positions are held by Member NGOs, rather than by individuals personally.

Closing Remarks by Cyril Ritchie, outgoing President of CoNGO

Key points from CR included:

- Sincere thanks to CoNGO's volunteer interns for their work.
- Thanks for all the messages of goodwill from Member NGOs.
- A sense of achievement that CoNGO is currently, visible, active and recognized across the United Nations system.
- The importance for CoNGO to "speak truth to power", even at the cost of individuals' personal advancement.

- The pivotal role of the President of CoNGO in responding to Member NGOs and in addressing their concerns.

Initial Remarks by Dr Liberato Bautista, incoming President of CoNGO

Key points from LB included:

- Thanks to his family for their "bedrock" support to him.
- A specific tribute of gratitude to Cyril Ritchie.
- Hopes to increase the membership and reach of CoNGO.
- The need to keep "topping up the oil" so that CoNGO works smoothly as a well-oiled machine.
- Periodic self-critical and reflective mode sessions for CoNGO, in order to avoid a "fossilized" system and procedures.
- LB to seek counsel from Member NGOs of CoNGO.
- Watchwords for LB's term of office: "Defining the present; and shaping the future".
 - Facing the challenges generated by: "illiberal" democracies; war; displacement of other spending by larger national military budgets; climate change; and potential pandemics.
 - Targeting matters such as finding partners who can help to deal with neglected tropical diseases.
 - Re-imagining international relations for the benefit of the voiceless "least and last".
 - Protecting human dignity.
 - Maintaining the diversity of languages, cultures and peoples.
 - Seeking to realize the Charter Objectives of the United Nations.
- Getting NGOs valued and respected, by nation states, as key players in solving crises and challenges.
- CoNGO to harness the power of collaboration by civil society bodies.
- Helping other bodies to navigate through the labyrinth of national and international organizational structures connected to the UN.
- LB to reactivate the Working Group on UN Access with other interested international bodies.

3 March 2018 CoNGO Board Meeting

The new CoNGO Board met at the John Knox International Reformed Conference Center in Geneva on the afternoon of Saturday 3 March 2018. In due course the CoNGO Secretary will, no doubt, send out the official minutes of the CoNGO Board Meeting. The following notes set out key points under the Agenda Headings that were provided for the meeting.

This Board Meeting dealt primarily with the governance and operational decisions necessary to set up the new Board and appoint new Officers and to effect a smooth handover from the previous Board and Officers.

AGENDA

1. Verification of representation of Board Members by Immediate Past President

Out of the 18 new CoNGO Board Member NGOs, 14 representatives were present in the meeting, with 2 other Board Member NGOs represented by proxy.

2. Statement by new CoNGO President

LB welcomed both the continuity and freshness on the Board, in the guise of the "old" and "new" Board Member NGOs.

He noted that the next CoNGO Board Meeting will cover the roles of the Board Members and the Officers in more detail.

He also asked that CoNGO Board Members be prepared to make a brief presentation on how the harness the "Power of Co" (i.e. consultation, cooperation and collaboration) at future CoNGO Board meetings. **Action by OSMTH required.**

3. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted.

4. Statutory Requirements: Elections (as per amendments to the Rules)

a. First Vice President

- Cyril Ritchie was elected, with his primary location as Geneva.

b. Second Vice President

- Dr Martina Graebler (from Soroptimist International) was elected, with her primary location as Vienna

c. Two Vice Presidents-at-Large

There was a contested election by secret ballot, with the results:

- Agrenska Foundation - 6 votes
 - Amman Centre for Human Rights - 8 votes
 - OSMTH - 9 votes
 - Dianova International - 11 votes
- Dianova International therefore now holds one of the two Vice President-at-Large positions and OSMTH holds the other, with BG Patrick E Rea named as OSMTH's principal representative in that position.

d. Treasurer

- The International Humanist and Ethical Union was appointed to provide the CoNGO Treasurer

e. Secretary

- The Global Foundation for Democracy and Development was appointed to provide the CoNGO Secretary.

5. Items from the Assembly requiring rapid follow up

a. Communicating the news of the CoNGO new President and Board

The meeting agreed that the news needed to be communicated within the next few days.

b. Communicating the Resolution on "Funding of our United Nations"

I assume this was a Resolution passed by the CoNGO General Assembly, but this was not included in any of the pre-meeting papers which were available to me.

c. Other

Board Member NGOs were requested to provide an official point of contact (email address) to which CoNGO Board and other communications can be sent. **Action by OSMTH required.**

6. Calendar perspectives for the remainder of 2018

a. CoNGO 70th Anniversary Event in New York; CoNGO Board Meeting in New York

CoNGO Board Meetings are held twice a year, generally linked to the timing of other UN meetings or events. The next Board meeting is therefore due in Fall 2018.

LB will be contacting all the Board Member NGOs within the next few weeks to identify potential dates for the next CoNGO Board Meeting. His current working assumption is that the Board Meeting will take place in New York, either sometime in the couple of weeks before the Opening of the 2018 UN General Assembly (*which occurs on Tuesday 18 September*) or else in the week or so after the date on which the General Assembly concludes (*which appears to be Friday 5 October*). **Action by OSMTH required.**

The CoNGO Board Meeting will be tied in with CoNGO's own 70th Anniversary Event.

b. Presidential Briefings in New York, Geneva and Vienna

LB will schedule these briefings as soon as possible.

He will also be attending a major meeting on the Global Compact on Migration due to take place in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 11 & 12 December 2018.

c. Other, including UN Events

Board Member NGOs are requested to indicate by the next Board Meeting which of the CoNGO Standing Committees they wish either to sit on or to chair:

- Finance, Fund Raising & Resource Development
- Membership Development & Services

- Post 2015 Agenda / "Agenda 2030" (*chair already agreed*)

Action required by OSMTH.

7. Any general administrative matters

The meeting noted that income generation and cost reduction need to be considered at the next CoNGO Board meeting in order to improve the effective functioning of CoNGO. ***Action required by OSMTH.***

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OSMTH Representative to the 2018 CoNGO General Assembly***