Annex 5
A Study of Formal Relationships between Civil Society and Multilateral Bodies: Accreditation and Other Consultative Modalities

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A Study of Formal Relationships between Civil Society and Multilateral Bodies: Accreditation and Other Consultative Modalities

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List of Acronyms

CONGO:	Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations
CS:	Civil Society
CSO:	Civil Society Organization
CW:	The Commonwealth of Nations
CWF:	Commonwealth Foundation
DESA:	Department of Economic & Social Affairs (UN)
ECOSOC:	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EESC:	European Economic & Social Committee
EU:	European Union
G8:	Group of eight leading industrial nations
GA:	General Assembly of the United Nations
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IMF:	International Monetary Fund (UN specialized agency)
NGO:	Non-governmental Organization
OAS:	Organization of American States
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development
OIC:	Organization of the Islamic Conference
UN:	United Nations
UN-NGLS:	The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
UNCTAD:	United Nations Conference on Trade & Development
UNESCO:	UN Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
WFTU:	World Federation of Trade Unions
WTO:	World Trade Organization

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Executive Summary

This study is a working paper prepared to inform strategy development for civil society organizations seeking enhanced engagement with multilateralism. Specifically, this study is designed to contribute to discussions by Civil Society Organizations from Muslim states and communities toward furthering engagement with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a key multilateral institution for civil society in that region. It offers key features of civil society engagement, strengths and weaknesses, and lessons learned drawn from existing models. Three multilateral organizations selected for focused discussion: UN ECOSOC, The Commonwealth, and UNCTAD. Three modalities for civil society engagement were identified: Institutional, Accreditation, and Operational/cooperation. Though more difficult to identify, emerging informal modalities were also seen to be an important engagement modality. Within all modalities, three distinctive, formal levels of civil society engagement were identified: access, influencing, and decision-making. All modalities were found to have strengths and weaknesses depending upon the level of civil society engagement possible. The most empowering modality is the Institutional modality, which brings decision-making powers, voting rights, and responsibilities. The primary focus of this study was on the Accreditation modality. Civil society's level of engagement with multilateralism through accreditation has effectively stagnated at the level of influencing. It is important for civil society wishing to engage more formally and effectively with multilateral institutions to plan carefully, build trust and credibility, work at local and regional levels, and do the necessary homework. Importantly this study concludes that, in general, existing modalities do not fully serve today's complex regional and global realities. New ideas are needed to develop new, more inclusive, engagement modalities allowing, for example, for the participation of parliamentarians, academia, and the business sector.

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1. Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Muslim states and communities are exploring ways to enhance their engagement with multilateral bodies. The purpose of this working paper is to contribute to discussion and strategy development toward this goal of engagement. Specifically, this paper will contribute to discussions on the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as a key multilateral organization for civil society influence.

Civil society's (CS) engagement with multilateral bodies today is complex, confusing and dispersed. While recognizing that the details and complexities are relevant, non-negligible elements of an overall picture, this working paper is not intended to be a comprehensive or theoretical treatment. It examines three existing models of CS engagement with multilateral institutions in order to illuminate some key elements, features and issues from the point of view of CS. Questions that will be addressed in the paper:

- Are existing modalities of CS-multilateral relations effective?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses or limitations of these modalities?
- What lessons can we draw from CS' interactions with multilaterals to date?

The primary focus here is on accreditation, which is an official, formal, and established CS modality of engagement in multilateral processes. There seem to be some innovative initiatives in operational cooperation types of modalities but they are beyond the scope of the study.

The terms "civil society" and "civil society organizations" have been in use since the 1990's. They have been subject to continued discussion and often heated debate. The term "civil society organization" implies a broader concept than "non-governmental organization (NGO)." Yet, CSO and NGO are often used interchangeably. Multilateral organizations mostly exclude the business sector when they talk about CSOs. However business associations are sometimes included by multilaterals. At this point, no clear definition or consensus has been found and no attempt will be made to define these terms here. For the purposes of this study, CSO and NGO will be employed as they are used in the relevant literature and by multilateral bodies. The term "non-state actor" is used for CS and the business sector.

Research for this paper included consulting the relevant literature and reviewing the websites of multilateral bodies. Interviews were conducted with key CS leaders and resource persons.

This paper has six sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 looks at issues of representivity and the OIC context. Section 3 examines existing relationships between multilaterals and CS and identifies distinctive modalities and key features of each. For a more focused discussion, three snapshots of selected existing modalities are presented in Section 4. Section 5 examines strengths and weaknesses of each of the selected modalities. It also draws lessons from CS experiences with multilateral bodies. Section 6, offers some concluding remarks.

2. Issues of Representivity and the OIC Context

The world has changed dramatically since the 1990's. The Information and Communication Technology Revolution, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the subsequent changes in Eastern Europe, the increased power and role of multinational corporations, and China and India on the way to becoming economic super powers, are just a few indicators of change.

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Facing this rapidly changing global reality, the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral bodies have been pushed to re-examine their mandate or even their very raison d'être. A number of multilateral bodies beyond the UN system have also become more prominent. In particular, financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF (International Monetary Fund), and WTO (World Trade Organization) have increased their power and influence in the international scene. With other powerful multilaterals such as the G8, OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development) or the EU (European Union), international governance has become diverse, complex, and diffuse.

The explosion of CSOs has profoundly changed the global community. One UN document indicated that over 20,000 international NGOs emerged in the 1990's (Foster, 1999). It is not just the number but also the wide variety of NGOs at various levels that make this sector extremely complex and diverse.

There are three distinctive types of CSOs from the point of view of their representivity (who they represent) (Alhadiff & Wilson, 2002). These are: (1) Organizations that represent the views of their members, (2) Organizations that represent the rights of those voices that are not heard, such as children, the poor, and refugees. In other words, they defend the interests of society's under-served population, and (3) Organizations that address wider issues such as the environment and human rights.

Type 1 has a clear-cut constituency, namely their members. "Constituency" in its traditional sense however does not so clearly apply in the cases of Type 2 and Type 3. In particular, the constituency of Type 3 is difficult to define. We have witnessed a dramatic increase in the second and third types of CSOs. For this reason, representation issues have become contentious. In order for CSOs to be recognized in policy-making processes, it is critical to clarify on whose behalf CSOs are speaking. CSO engagement with multilateral bodies has increased to an unprecedented degree. A number of international conferences as well as violent confrontations in the streets increased CSO visibility and influence significantly. In response, multilateral bodies have undertaken reform and have been creating new approaches to enable CSO involvement in their work.

Representivity is a very different issue within the OIC context. CSOs, as defined within Western contexts, are new to many Muslim countries. In this part of the world, CSOs have emerged fairly recently and under challenging situations such as years of violence, conflict, instability, under-development, and repressive regimes. The OIC, which unites member states in the Islamic religion, is today the second largest multilateral body after the United Nations. The OIC launched its "Ten Year Programme of Action" in 2006 outlining its reform initiatives. Also in 2006, the OIC drew up draft rules and bylaws for accreditation of NGOs to the OIC. While CSOs have been involved to some extent[1], thus far an official and structured model of engagement has not been established.

3. Existing Modalities of CSO Engagement with Multilateralism

As described in the previous Section, the proliferation of international gatherings since the 1990s resulted in a surge of interactions between civil society and multilateral bodies. The increased diversity and complexity of relationships is overwhelming. This section presents a fairly broad and simplified conceptual framework in order to grasp the current complex situation.

[1] CSOs have been involved significantly in the Committee for Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation and in emergency relief initiatives.

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First, different levels of CS engagement with multilaterals are identified. Then, various CS-multilateral relationships will be broadly grouped together by type. Distinctive features of each will be highlighted. While there are exceptions and grey areas, the purpose of this section is to view the bigger picture without being caught up in too many details. Throughout this section reference will be made to Table 1: "Level and Nature of Civil Society Engagement".

Table 1: Level and Nature of Civil Society Engagement

Levels of CS Engagement	**Modality**		
	Institutional	**Accreditation**	**Operational/cooperation**
Decision-making	- Voting rights		- CSOs on the Governing Board
Influencing	- Mandatory consultation	- Participate in discussion - Place items on agenda - Deliver written or oral statements - Attend formal meetings - Interact with delegates etc.	- Project/field operation specific - Little system-wide engagement - Influence through monitoring, evaluating, etc.
Access		- Seating during meetings - Meeting space for CS meetings - Access to documents - Access to facilities	- Project/field operation specific
Nature of relationship with multilateral	- Equal partner - Rights and responsibilities	- Host and guest - Privileges and obligations	- Contractor and service provider - Service provision and Remuneration

3.1 Levels of CS Engagement with Multilateral Bodies

This study has identified three distinctive levels of CS engagement with multilaterals: access, influencing, and decision-making (see Table 1: Level and Nature of Civil Society Engagement). Access is an entry level of CS involvement in multilaterals. CS wishing to get involved in multilaterals initially struggles at this level for access and information. At this level CS can expect access to: facilities, documents, meeting space for CS meetings, and seating arrangements during meetings. The host multilateral determines which of these access privileges are granted to which CSOs. Within the access modality interaction between CS and multilaterals is minimal and CS is often simply tolerated by the host.

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At the level of influencing, CS is actively involved in multilateral activities and functions. Through these activities, CSOs have opportunities to influence the host multilateral's decision-making process. They may be allowed to attend formal meetings, interact with delegates and officials, deliver written or oral statements, place items on the agenda or participate in discussion, etc. As with the access modality, it is the host who determines which of these influencing activities will be granted to which CSOs.

Decision-making is the highest level of CS engagement with multilaterals. At this level, CS is on an equal footing with the multilateral and exercises its voting rights in the multilateral's policy setting processes.

3.2 Existing CS Multilateral Relationships

CS may engage with multilaterals in many different ways (See Table 1: Level and Nature of Civil Society Engagement). In any organizational interaction, there are two distinctive relationships: informal and formal. Within formal relationships, three broad groupings of multilateral-CS relationship modalities seem to be operating: Institutional, Accreditation, and Cooperation agreement. Following is a discussion of these three formal relationships. The major focus of this study is on the Accreditation relationship. Due to its importance, informal relationships will be touched upon at the end of this section.

3.2.1 Institutional Modality

In the Institutional modality, a non-state actor plays a direct part in the political processes of the multilateral concerned with voting rights (see Table 1: Level and Nature of Civil Society Engagement). This modality is not a recent creation. Rather it was a creation of a different era. Key features of this modality include:

- A non-state actor has its own governing body and organizational structure and interacts with a multilateral as one collective organizational entity;
- A non-state actor is fully integrated in the multilateral body's organizational structure and governance;
- The non-state actor is on an equal footing with the multilateral body;
- The non-state actor has rights and responsibilities.

An example of the institutionalized modality is the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO, created in 1919, is both an example and a special case. It is the only tripartite institution within the UN system with governments, employers, and workers' organizations as its constituencies. There are other examples, such as the OECD and European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) (created in 1960 and 1957, respectively). They have the same kind of institutionalized modalities with a lesser level of rights than the ILO. In these two cases, CSOs have rights to be consulted (mandatory consultation) unlike CSOs with the ILO which have voting rights.

3.2.2 Accreditation Modality

In the Accreditation modality, non-state actors acquire consultative or observer status through officially defined criteria and procedures. Key features of this modality include:

- The multilateral body concerned defines criteria of non-state actor engagement and it grants a prescribed status;

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- The relationship between the two parties is unequal in that the multilateral organization defines the relationship;
- The non-state actor interacts with the multilateral body individually, as an individual entity. Non-state actors do not have an official collective entity;
- The non-state actor is not integrated into the multilateral body's structure;
- The non-state actor has privileges (benefits) and obligations as defined by the host multilateral body.

Fourteen key elements or components for accreditation have been identified (see Annex 1: Key Elements / Components for Accreditation). A large number of multilateral – CSO relationships fall within this Accreditation modality; UNESCO, the Commonwealth, and the Organization of American States (OAS) to name just a few. Accreditation enables CSOs to exert influence on the multilateral organization through officially recognised processes.

3.2.3 Cooperation Agreement Modality

Multilateral organizations that have any kind of field operation, technical cooperation, and programme delivery fall within the Cooperation Agreement modality. In this modality, a contractual agreement defines the relationship between CS and the multilateral concerned. Key features include:

- The multilateral body draws up a contractual agreement, defining selection criteria, the nature of activities, as well as administrative and financial procedures;
- The relationship is an unequal, contractor and service-provider relationship (though their relationship is often called a "partnership");
- Non-state actors interact with the multilateral body as an individual entity (individual organizations apply or bid for contracts);
- Non-state actors are not an integral part of the multilateral institution;
- Non-state actors provide certain services under specific terms and conditions and are remunerated as prescribed by the multilateral body.

Many UN specialized agencies with field operations such as the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other multilaterals, such as the European Union (EU) and OAS, have this modality.

3.2.4 Informal Modality

This type of CS-multilateral relationship is difficult to define exactly due to its informal nature. The boundary between formal and informal is also not always clear and becoming even more blurred with the proliferation of international gatherings of all sorts since the 1990s. The power and potential of an informal modality cannot be overstated. For CS, this informal modality can be an important first step toward more formal, established relationships with multilateral bodies.

4. Selected Modalities: Snap Shots

For our focused discussion, the Commonwealth (CW), ECOSOC (United Nations Economic and Social Council) and United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) were selected. This selection was made after reviewing a number of bodies and within strict time and resource constraints. These three bodies were selected in part because their structures and features were seen to be pertinent to the OIC context and also based upon the availability of

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information and CS resource persons with relevant experience. (Please see Annexes 2- 4: Snap Shots of Selected Modalities).

5. Selected Modalities: Discussion and Analysis

In this Section, strengths and weaknesses of ECOSOC and the Commonwealth modalities will be examined. Due to the unavailability of CS resource persons with relevant experience, a more detailed analysis of UNCTAD is not included here (see Annex 4 for a Snap Shot of UNCTAD).

5.1 CS Relations with UN ECOSOC (See Annex 2)

The foundation of the UN-civil society relationship is set out in Article 71 of the UN Charter and ECOSOC is mandated as a vital link between the UN and civil society. It is worth noting that the draft UN Charter had no provision for NGOs. Led by the World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU), Article 71 was a hard won result of US and international NGOs' lobbying efforts. It is said that WFTU also demanded a voice in the General Assembly with a permanent seat and the right to vote. However governments resisted these demands and decided that NGOs would be kept out of the General Assembly and would not have equal status with governments in any UN forum (Willets, 2002)[2]. Since then, despite a dramatic increase in CSO involvement in the work of the UN, their fundamental relationship remains unchanged. CSOs have, for the most part, been operating on the periphery of the General Assembly and have not gained equal status with governments. Following are strengths and weaknesses of CS relations with UN ECOSOC.

5.1.1 Relationship Strengths

a. Well Laid Out Accreditation Scheme

ECOSOC has two types of accreditation; one is temporary (or conference specific) and the other is ongoing (referred to as consultative status). In the latter, there are three categories for NGOs depending on the NGO level and range of involvement in ECOSOC work: general, special, and roster. Each category of NGO enjoys different degrees of privileges as well as obligations. Accreditation-related rules, procedures, as well as functions of ECOSOC's 19-Member NGO Committee are all clearly defined and spelled out. NGOs with consultative status with ECOSOC are usually invited to UN conferences.

b. Inclusion of National and Southern NGOs (NGOs in developing countries)

The current ECOSOC modality is derived from the 1996 review (adopted as Resolution 1996/31). Its two major outcomes were: admission of national NGOs to consultative status and an emphasis on the need for increased participation from developing country NGOs (Adams, 1999). After the Resolution, national and Southern NGOs' direct or close to the field experience started to reach to the international level. Previously national and Southern NGOs were (and still are) represented through mostly North-based international NGOs. Because international discussions are conducted away from the field, they are often abstract. National and Southern NGOs give important depth and reality to international discussions. The percentage of Southern NGOs increased from 21% to 34% between 1996 and 2007. During the same period, the total number of NGOs with consultative status tripled (See Annex 2).

[2] Willets' (2002) article provides an in-depth historical account of civil society's access to the UN.

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c. Solid Mechanisms for Supporting CSO Participation

The UN's effort to promote CS involvement includes a well-established institutional CSO participation support mechanism. The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) in New York and Geneva has provided information, advice, expertise and consulting and support services since 1975. NGLS is administered by UNCTAD.

The NGO section of the Department of Economic & Social Affairs (DESA) acts as the substantive secretariat of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs as well as a focal point within the UN Secretariat for all issues related to the consultative relationship between the UN and NGOs. In the past, civil servants fill positions in these offices. It is reported that staff composition has shifted greatly and now many of the staff members have NGO backgrounds and are familiar with the work of NGOs.

The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC (CONGO) was established in 1948 as a forum of NGOs with consultative status and has been providing support and sharing expertise with other NGOs.

d. Innovations in UN Conferences and Temporary Accreditation

In the last decade, a number of major UN conferences have taken place: the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference, to name just a few. Along those lines, a great variety of arrangements for CS participation were experimented with. There is no doubt that those conferences greatly enhanced CS' participation, visibility and influence at the international level. Conferences are even more attractive for small and Southern NGOs as financial support is often extended to them.

5.1.2 Relationship Weaknesses

a. Flaws in Consultative Accreditation

At first glance and on paper, ECOSOC accreditation looks good; however there are some major flaws. They include:

Time Consuming and Bureaucratic Procedure: The accreditation procedure involves lots of paperwork and can take up to four years (Foster, 1999). Recently the application process was changed to an electronic format and this has reduced the paperwork. The process however remains unable to respond to urgent or special cases.

Accreditation Is Highly Politicized: Obtaining accreditation can be subject to blockage by a member state that does not like the work of a particular NGO. During the Cold War era, accreditation was seriously affected by East-West conflicts. Currently, the most contentious issue is human rights. Both the literature and some interviewees for this study asserted that the ECOSOC NGO Committee has become politicized to the point that they are policing and censoring NGO activities.

Inflexible Accreditation Criteria: There are many NGO networks. Those loosely organized, rather than established and institutionalized, forms are important modalities allowing for the dynamic and flexible nature of NGO activities. Yet, because they do not fit neatly into accreditation

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criteria, such networks have a difficult time attaining accreditation. The value of these networks is thus lost. This inflexibility of criteria will become more problematic as NGOs increasingly form virtual and internet-based networks and coalitions.

Lack of Ongoing Participation Mechanisms for NGOs Following Consultative Status:
As the term suggests, consultative status (ongoing accreditation) is granted for the purpose of NGOs' ongoing engagement with the UN. In reality, the UN leaves NGOs to figure out how they will maintain ongoing engagement. Traveling to New York or Geneva is costly and obtaining an entry visa can be a major obstacle, especially for Southern NGOs. Having a permanent presence in New York or Geneva is an exorbitant and unworkable solution for poorer NGOs. Only large, resource-rich international NGOs can afford a permanent base in New York. Many smaller and Southern NGOs depend on New York or Geneva-based volunteers to substitute but this arrangement has proved to be rather unsatisfactory. Having a full-time staff with the expertise to attend meetings is crucial for an ongoing engagement but again is very expensive.

b. Aftermath of UN Conferences

Massive conferences brought organizational challenges, pressures, and logistical limitations. Conference organizers were often too occupied with experimenting to pay attention to consistency and coherence in the rules of NGO engagements. There was considerable confusion, uneven standards and unclear procedures. Standardization of the rules for NGO participation in UN conferences has not been looked into. Rather, without much evaluation or reflection, more varieties of procedures and standards have been added, creating more confusion.

c. Failed Follow-up to UN Conferences, No Link between One-off and Ongoing Accreditation

Post-UN conference arrangements designed to engage CSOs were not really thought through by Conference organizers. Few NGOs understand the difference between temporary accreditation and ongoing consultative status. NGOs participating in Conferences often make the assumption that their engagement will continue afterward. In some cases, such as in case of the Commission on Sustainable Development, those NGOs who took part in the 1992 Rio Conference were given status after the Conference for their ongoing engagement. However this is one of few exceptions. In most cases, the link between one-off and ongoing engagements has not been made.

d. NGOs' Excessive Focus on Conferences

Interviewees expressed concerns about NGOs' tendency to be excessively attracted to major Conferences, while paying much less attention to ongoing consultative engagement. Conferences have a number of attractive features: almost instant visibility, publicity, networking opportunities, less formal and relatively quick procedures to get accredited, and the like. Conferences can give NGOs a false impression as to the extent that things can be changed through action at a single conference. In reality, policy-making is a lengthy process and in order to make an effective impact, an ongoing engagement, such as that which consultative status provides, is needed.

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5.2 CS Relations with The Commonwealth of Nations (CW) (See Annex 3)

The Commonwealth is an alliance with member states that are united through the history of the British Empire. Not all countries with histories of British rule or historical links are members (e.g the USA and some Arabic-speaking countries). A wide variety of CSOs have been affiliated with the CW for a long time. They are grouped under the "Commonwealth Family" that is a loose network of associations, organizations, and charities affiliated with the Commonwealth. The CW has two types of accreditation: temporary (conference specific) and ongoing (observer status). Following are strengths and weaknesses of CS relations with The CW.

5.2.1 Relationship Strengths

a. Good Southern Representation

In comparison with the United Nations, the size of the CW in terms of the number of member governments (53) is less than one-third. Due to its historical background, the majority of the CW member states are developing countries. For this reason, developing countries have a bigger voice and more visibility at the CW than in the UN system, in particular, those Pacific and Caribbean countries.

b. CSO Engagement Reaches the Top Level of the CW's Decision-making Structure

CSOs have access to the highest decision-making body, the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting (CHOGM) which meets every two years. CSOs also participate in ministerial meetings. Ministry meeting cycles vary depending upon the ministry in question and for each ministry, the CS engagement modality differs according to the ministry structure and processes.

c. The CW Has Well-established CS Engagement Support Mechanisms

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Planning & Evaluation Division employs a civil society liaison officer. This officer is in charge of accreditation-related matters. Additionally, the Commonwealth Foundation (CWF), funded by Commonwealth governments, is mandated to promote the involvement of civil society in the Commonwealth. The CWF is the only intergovernmental organization in the world with CSOs formally integrated into its key governance structures. The Civil Society Advisory Committee is one of the CWF's subsidiary bodies which provides guidance on CWF's work. The other subsidiary body is the Writers' Prize Advisory Committee. The Civil Society Advisory Committee has 15 civil society members. They are drawn from all regions of the CW. The Board of Governors comprises five CS Advisory Committee members as well as UK-based representatives of member governments. CWF facilitates the participation of CSOs in Commonwealth priority areas of work and often organizes parallel activities and consultations for CSOs.

5.2.2 Relationship Weaknesses

a. Limited Scope of Accreditation

For a long time, CSOs with observer status with the CW was limited to CW professional associations which numbered around 60. It was only two years ago that accreditation for observer status started to open up to other CSOs. At present, the number of CSOs with observer status is about 80 (60 professional associations and 20 other CSOs). Most

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professional associations' headquarters are in London and member associations in developing countries are represented through their headquarters. For this reason, there is no breakdown between Northern-based and Southern NGOs, according to a CW official. Another 150 or so CSOs are involved in the work of the CW from time to time. Given the size of the CW, the number of CSOs involved seems very low. Moreover, the membership is heavily skewed to professional associations whose primary mandate is to serve their members (constituencies). Only very recently, other CSOs who address broader issues in society were accredited by the CW. This number remains very small.

The CW offers ongoing and temporary accreditation. It functions as a two-tiered system; with observer status as a pre-requisite to gaining temporary accreditation. In addition, there are some other conditions attached to temporary accreditation.

b. One CS Group's Over-representation

The CW has been creating and nurturing professional associations for a long time. This group of CSOs has privileged status. The legacy appears to still be strong though the door is now opened up to other CSOs. CSOs argue that professional associations are often used as major showcases of the CW's efforts in engaging CS even if they are often small in size and the impact is limited.

c. Limits Due to the CWF's Traditional Functioning

The Commonwealth Foundation was established by the CW heads of government in 1965, the same year its sister organization, the Commonwealth Secretariat was founded. The Secretariat's mandate was set for supporting the political endeavours of the CW. The CWF's original mandate was professional development. Until 1979, the CWF facilitated the creation of professional associations and supported the professional development of professionals and skilled auxiliaries. In 1979, the Foundation's mandate was extended to include a broad range of CSOs in such areas as rural development, disability, gender, arts, and culture. Setting out to promote the involvement of these CSOs was a forward-looking innovation well ahead of the times. However, after close to three decades and with the surge of CS and other changes since the 1990s, the Foundation's functioning shows some major flaws.

Despite the fact that the CS Advisory Committee is in place and that CSOs have been on the Board of Governers of the CWF since 2004 (after more than 10 years of vigorous lobbying by CSOs), the Foundation is still a typical traditional governmental body, mostly controled by London-based member country diplomats. The top position goes to a former ambassador or high-level civil servant of the member country. The staff is also comprised of civil servants. They tend to function as gatekeepers and their views toward CSOs are not always favorable and can be hostile. CSO representatives assert that despite its mandate, the Foundation has become a major obstacle for CSOs. CS' past experience with the Heads of State Conference illustrates this situation well. Interviewees remarked that despite the fact that CSO engagement with the Heads of State was institutionalized (see above), in reality the Foundation functioned as a buffer between CSOs and the official meetings. Access to Heads of State was restricted to CSOs and their input in the official meeting was modified under the Foundation's pressure. By doing so, the Foundation was effectively fulfilling its original parallel division of labour vis-a-vis the Secretariat. The CWF serves CSOs and the Secretariat serves the member states.

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Yet there is a twist. All CS accreditation matters are handled by the Secretariat. The Foundation, which is not a subsidiary of the CW, has its own inter-governmental status and is mandated to promote CS engagement. This arrrangement for overlapping clientele has been a source of continued tension between the two.

5.3 Common Issues: ECOSOC, the CW and Other Multilaterals

5.3.1 Parallel NGO Fora

Several elements are common to ECOSOC, the CW, as well as other multilaterals. Many of them have organized NGO fora. As mentioned earlier, benefits of these parallel fora for NGOs include: opportunities for networking, mutual learning, strategy development and the like. At times NGOs were too busy with their own activities to interact with concurrent official meetings. In this case Parallel NGO fora become really parallel; NGOs' engagement with multilaterals can easily be forgotten. They can be NGOs' isolated and segregated events, taking them away from official policy deliberations.

5.3.2 Communication, Access to Information and Secretariat

Interviewees expressed concerns about the use of diplomatic language in recording and reporting in multilateral bodies. Rough edges or contentious issues are often removed or softened. This makes it difficult to accurately evaluate inputs and outcomes.

Multilateral bodies' websites on CSOs have little consistency in their contents and presentation. Information on accreditation varies considerably from one body to another (See Annexes 5-7). In some cases, vital information such as name and contacts of the CS officer is not updated.

Inaccessibility of the respective Secretariats was also a common issue. Attempts were made to get access to the Secretariats for this study. Our e-mail messages remained unanswered and our phone calls have not been returned. Taking into consideration that Secretariat staff work under duress and resource constraint, the level of communication is far from desirable. More effective means of communication are needed.

5.4 Lessons Learned

The snap shots of the modalities presented above provide different examples of CSO/multilateral relationships (See Annexes 2-4). A number of lessons can be learned from CS' experiences with those multilaterals. The following lessons can be helpful for CSOs who have recently started to look into ways to engage with multilaterals.

5.4.1 Do the Homework

Homework on CS engagement with the multilateral system must occur on three levels: know your issue, know the counterpart multilateral organization, and know yourself. A CSO needs to research the issue concerned, get to know the target multilateral well, understand the rules of the game, and know how the system works and when and how to exercise influence. You must familiarize yourself with diplomatic language and processes. At the same time, clarify exactly what your organization wants to ask the multilateral to do. Examine your organization's capacity and resources and develop a plan of action accordingly.

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5.4.2 Build Trust and Credibility

A good relationship with your target multilateral is worth the effort. In particular, good relations with the Secretariat and other CS focal points really make a difference. Views of leaders and staff often greatly affect the quality and level of CSO engagement. Developing a relationship takes time and patience. Nothing can replace good personal rapport. At the same time, close relationships can be perceived as being "co-opted." The benefits of close relations and maintaining independence can be a delicate balance to strike.

The following are suggestions designed to help build trust and confidence:

- Explore common purposes or goals with your target multilateral, and engage them in dialogue;
- Provide to the multilateral examples or experiences of other multilateral bodies, namely what has already been done elsewhere;
- Present the value that CSOs can offer. Value-added includes expertise and experience with the issues concerned; a link to the public; and sources of information, ideas, analysis and solutions. In short, let them know how your organization can help them make better and more informed decisions or help them prepare for emerging issues;
- Let the multilateral make its own choice; a sense of ownership goes a long way;
- Adhere to certain agreed upon standards and codes of conduct. Governments often assert that NGOs are not accountable to an electorate and their participation at the UN or other multilateral bodies are not necessarily representative.

5.4.3 Work on Multiple Levels, Channels and Leverage Points

Seek alliances with other institutions/bodies that might be able to influence your target multilateral. Paying attention to subsidiary bodies is crucial. Multilaterals these days are large and very complex. Ordinary policymaking is usually done in subsidiary bodies and is endorsed at the higher level where an often-crowded agenda allows limited time for elaborated deliberation. CSOs can find more opportunities at lower levels that have fewer rules and procedures. CSOs tend to think that they must work to influence only at the international level. However, working at regional or national levels, including with your own government is often worthwhile in order to have an impact at the international level. It is important to understand that the policy process is a long and complex process.

5.4.4 Understand Governments' Behaviour Patterns

Governments' attitudes toward CS engagement oscillate between hostility and reluctance at one end of the spectrum and openness at the other end. Governments keep questioning the legitimacy and accountability of CS. Governments feel *they* (sic), being elected, are the legitimate representatives of society (UN, 2003). When governments are hostile to CSOs, seeing them merely as troublemakers or nuisances, they attempt to minimize CSO roles by increasing restrictions on CSOs and putting them "in their place." In this case, no matter what is written on paper regarding CS involvement, CSOs may be excluded or tolerated only for token engagement. When governments' attitude towards NGOs is positive, they see NGOs as valuable partners. NGOs may well have a decisive influence on governments' decisions. The dynamic of these pulling and pushing forces makes governments' attitudes take one step forward, two steps back. Paul succinctly summarizes: "In short, NGOs are annoying but

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indispensable. So delegations are constantly closing the door, only to open it again still wider" (Paul, 1999). Hostility and reluctance persist. Recent examples include governments' attitude on the 1996 ECOSOC review. This review revealed considerable levels of resistance and reluctance amongst governments to extending CS engagement beyond ECOSOC to the General Assembly and specialized agencies.

5.4.5 Limitations of the Accreditation Modality

CSOs attain access and influencing opportunities under the accreditation modality. Some unprecedented openness and generous resource allocations have been demonstrated in major international conferences since the 1990s. Yet no matter how open and generous multilaterals have been, at one point or another, the relationship between the two remains unequal. Multilaterals can always change the rules on a whim. Privileges granted to CSOs can be taken away or modified at any time. Examples include the recent UN budget cut that resulted in the withdrawal of some services and restrictions of access previously granted to CSOs.

6. Conclusion

Multilateral bodies are struggling to keep up with the surge of civil society and rapid global changes when it comes to their relationship with civil society. Accreditation modalities in various multilaterals are confusing, complex, and fragmented, particularly in the area of temporary (conference specific) accreditation. Complexity can be more prohibitive for smaller or Southern CSOs. Smaller resource-tight organizations suffer more than bigger and richer organizations. Adequate evaluation is yet to be done on the experiments and innovations undertaken to date. Learning lessons from what has been done and introducing greater consistency and coherence in the rules and procedures of engagement with civil society are urgently needed.

Civil society's level of engagement with multilateral relations through accreditation has been stagnated at the level of influencing. Institutionalised consultation that is established with a legal base can take CSO engagement to a new level – a level where CSOs engage multilateral bodies on a more equal footing.

It is becoming clearer that existing modalities do not serve well for today's reality. New thinking is needed in order to develop a new model of a multilateral-CS relationship that bridges constituency-based representation and an emerging participatory-type of representation. The new model needs to be inclusive, taking into account other important non-state actors such as parliamentarians, the academic community and the business sector who do not necessarily identify themselves as part of civil society.

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United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) http://www.unctad.org
United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) & Civil Society http://www.unctad.org/Templates/StartPage.asp?intItemID=3455&lang=1

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) http://www.unicef.org

UN High Commissioner for Refugees http://www.unhcr.org

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, doners/partners: http://www.unhcr.org/partners.html

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Civil society partnership – about partnership http://www.unicef.org/about/index_3374.html

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) http://www.un-ngls.org

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Other Multilateral Bodies

African Union (AU) http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/index/index.htm

African Union Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) http://www.ecosocc.org/; http://www.africa-union.org/ECOSOC/home.htm

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Commonwealth Foundation http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com

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Others

Global Policy Forum http://www.globalpolicy.org

North-South Institute, Canada www.nsi-ins.ca

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Annex 1
Key Elements / Components for Accreditation

Key Elements / Components for Accreditation

1. Statutory provisions (where terms of reference are set out)
2. Eligible organizations (e.g. type, geographical reach)
3. Type of accreditation (e.g. temporary, on-going)
4. Category/status
5. Requirements (e.g. proof of NGO status, proof of activities, financial information)
6. Eligible issues for CSO input into multilateral decisions (e.g. economic, social, religious)
7. Benefits (e.g. access to documents, the ability to place items on the agenda, the ability to participate in discussions)
8. Obligations (e.g. reporting requirement)
9. Process for gaining accreditation
10. Decision making body, its composition & process
11. Maintaining the status
12. Procedures for the withdrawal or suspension of consultative status
13. Right to redress (e.g. refused accreditation, lost status)
14. Secretariat

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Annex 2
Snap Shots of Selected Modalities
Commonwealth of Nations (The Commonwealth)

Commonwealth of Nations (The Commonwealth)

Established: 1926 (Balfour Declaration), 1931 (Statue of Westminster). It does not have a written constitution, but it does have a series of agreements setting out its beliefs and objectives.

Membership: 53 member States (former members of the British empire), 1.8 billion citizens

Role: co-operate in the common interests of their peoples and promote international understanding and world peace. An alliance with members that are united through history of British colonialism. Its members possess shared legal, economic, and governmental traditions.

Meetings: the Commonwalth Head of Government - held biennial; there are also regular meetings of finance ministers, law ministers, health ministers, etc.

Commonwealth Family: a network of associations, organizations and charities affiliated to the Commonwealth. They are not fully a part of it, and membership is on a voluntary basis. Commonwealth Foundation, Commonwealth Association of Universities, Commonwealth Games; Commonwealth of Learning, Commonwealth Business Council, and the like.

1. Relations with Civil Society

Definition of civil society: 'Civil society organisations (CSOs) include community groups, labour unions, teacher unions, professional associations, faith-based organisations and parts of the media and academia. They operate at all levels, from the village and community through to national and international levels.'
http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=142018&int1stParentNodeID=20639

2. Formal Mechanisms for Civil Society Participation

Accreditation
There are two types of accreditation - temporary (official meeting specific) and ongoing (observer status).

Temporary (official meeting specific)
- Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM): every two years
- All organizations accredited to the Commonwealth may apply to be accredited.
- Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings:
  Accreditation is by invitation. Accreditation to meetings normally requires being accredited to the Commonwealth plus working in areas of direct relevance to the Commonwealth.

Civil Society Consultations

The Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation co-host civil society consultations twice a year for Commonwealth organisations accredited to the Commonwealth and selected CSOs involved in areas of work relevant to the agenda of the meeting. The overall objective of these meetings is to provide a forum for the discussion of issues of common interest to the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation and CSOs.

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Ongoing (observer status)
One category of accreditation for civil society organizations.
Ongoing accreditation is a pre-requisite (with some exceptions) to obtain meeting specific accreditation. Some additional conditions may be imposed to obtain meeting specific accreditation.

Cooperation Agreements
The Commonwealth Secretariat is not a grant-making organisation. However, it undertakes projects in collaboration with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and can assist CSOs to participate in its activities.

e.g. The Governance and Institutional Development Division can sometimes provide grants for key CSO regional activities, such as CSO training, if they have the support of the host government.

3. Institutional Support Mechanism

Commonwealth Foundation (CWF)
Funded by Commonwealth governments, and mandated to promote the involvement of civil society in the Commonwealth. The Foundation is the only intergovernmental organisation in the world with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) formally integrated into its key governance structures. It facilitates the participation of CSOs in Commonwealth priority areas of work and often organises parallel activities and consultations for CSOs in the lead up to a ministerial meeting.

CWF has two subsidiary bodies: Civil Society Advisory Committee and Writers' Prize Advisory Committee.

Secretariat: Civil society liaison officer, Strategic Planning & Evaluation Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Statistical Data

Number of Civil Society Organisations with observer status: about 80 (2007)
Number of Civil Society Organisations with observer status: about 60 (2005)

Number of Civil Society Organisations occasionally engage in the work of the Foundation: about 150 (2007)

Source: The Commonwealth Secretariat

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Annex 3
Snap Shots of Selected Modalities
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Established: 1945

Membership: The Economic and Social Council has 54 members, elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms.

Role: The Council, under the overall authority of the General Assembly, coordinates the economic and social work of the United Nations and the UN family of organizations.

Meetings: It meets throughout the year and holds a major session in July, during which a special meeting of Ministers discusses major economic, social and humanitarian issues.

Subsidiary Bodies: The Council's subsidiary bodies meet regularly and report back to it. Functional commissions focus on such issues as sustainable development, the status of women, crime prevention, and narcotic drugs. Five regional commissions promote economic development and cooperation in their respective regions.

1. Relations with Civil Society

Article 71 of the UN Charter defines that 'The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence'. With this mandate, ECOSOC has been a vital link between the United Nations and civil society since the inception of the UN.

ECOSOC's definition of NGOs: Resolution 1996/31 defines NGOs 'any international organization which is not established by a governmental entity or intergovernmental agreement.'

Type: non-governmental, non-profit public or voluntary organizations. Geographical reach: international, regional, sub regional and national NGOs. The UN often uses the words NGOs and civil society interchangeably. Their definition of the word 'civil society' is unclear.

2. Formal Mechanisms for Civil Society Participation

Accreditation
Accreditation: there are two types of accreditation, temporary and ongoing (consultative status) and three categories within consultative status depending on NGOs' level of involvement.

Temporary accreditation: accreditation to UN conferences and other one-time events.
It tends to be easier to obtain than the on-going accreditation (consultative status), but still requires submission of forms and documents describing the organization and its work.
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status (general, special consultative status and on the Roster), shall as a rule be accredited for participation.
Conference accreditation must be obtained separately for each event, usually from the conference secretariat. The criteria and benefits vary substantially from one conference to another.

On going (referred to as 'consultative status'): for NGOs that are seeking a regular presence at the UN or a more permanent relationship one off temporary accreditation.

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There are three categories of consultative status depending on NGOs' levels of involvement in ECOSOC work.
General consultative status: reserved for large international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the agenda of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.
Special consultative status: granted to NGOs which have a special competence in only a few of the fields of activity covered by the ECOSOC. These NGOs tend to be smaller and more recently established.

Roster category of NGOs: NGOs that tend to have a rather narrow and/or technical focus. They make occasional contributions to the work of the Council. There are four sub-categories.

Decision making body: ECOSOC's 19-Member NGO Committee

3. Institutional CS Participation Support Mechanism

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)
Established in 1975. NGLS is part of the United Nations effort to promote dynamic partnerships between the United Nations and non-governmental organisations. It provides information, advice, expertise and consulting and support service. NGLS is administered by UNCTAD.

Secretariat: Department of Economic & Social Affairs (DESA), NGO section, UN Economic & Social Council acts as the substantive secretariat of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs. It also acts as a focal point within the UN Secretariat for all matters related to the consultative relationship between the UN and NGOs.
Statistical data

Number of NGOs in Consultative Status with the council:

Year	General	Special	Roster	Total
1948	13	26	1	40
1968	17	78	85	180
1992	18	297	409	724
1993	40	334	410	784
1994	40	334	410	784
1995	65	406	415	886
1996	76	468	497	1041
1997	85	582	517	1184
1998	100	742	663	1505
1999	111	918	909	1938
2000	122	1048	880	2050
2001	124	1132	895	2151
2002	131	1197	906	2234
2003	131	1316	903	2350
2004	134	1474	923	2531
2005	136	1639	944	2719
2006	137	1780	952	2869
2007	139	1956	955	3050

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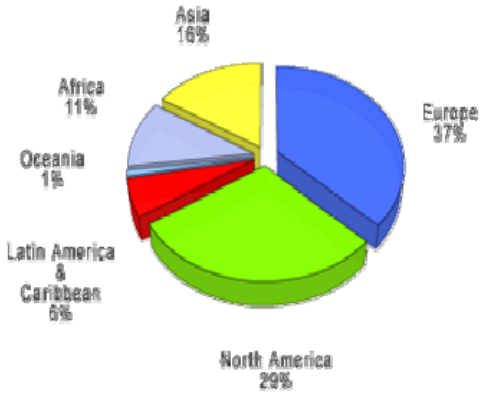
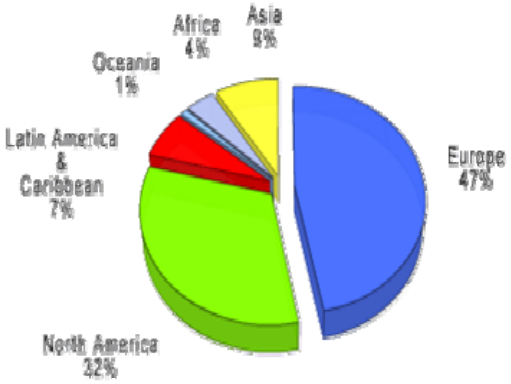
http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/table2007.html (accessed Sept. 18, 2007)

Number of NGOs in Consultative Status with the council by Region





2007 1996

3050 NGO's in Consultative Status 1041 NGO's in Consultative Status

http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/pie2007.html, accessed Sept. 18, 2007.

Annex 4
Snap Shots of Selected Modalities
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Established: 1964 by the UN General Assembly

Membership: 191 member States (2007)

Role: To maximize the trade investment and development opportunities of developing countries and assist them in their efforts to integrate into the world economy on an equitable basis. Three key functions: forum for intergovernmetal deliberations, research, plicy analysis and data collection and technical assistance.

Meetings: There are four levels of meetings: the UNCTAD Conference - held every 4 years; The UNCTAD Trade and Development Board - the Board manages the work of UNCTAD in between two Conferences and meets up to three times every year; Four Commissions and one Working Party meet more often than the Board in order to take up policy, programme and budgetary issues; Expert Meetings - the Commissions will convene expert meetings on selected topics.

Subsidiary bodies: Four UNCTAD Commissions (Commission on Investment, Trade, Enterprise, and Science, technology for development) and one Working Party (Panel of Eminent Persons), International Trade Centre (ITC) – the technical cooperation agency of UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

1. Relations with Civil Society

Formal and informal mechanisms for civil society participation in the activities of UNCTAD are in place.

UNCTAD's Definition of 'civil society': non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and academia. 'At UNCTAD´s recent Conference (2004) in São Paulo, Brazil, member States agreed that better integration of NGOs, the private sector and academia into the work of UNCTAD would benefit both UNCTAD and its member States.'

2. Formal Mechanisms for Civil Society Participation

Accreditation: two types - temporary (the Trade and Development Board hearings and UNCTAD Conferences) and ongoing (observer status)

Temporary accreditation
UNCTAD Conferences (every four years): UNCTAD´s highest decision-making body. Civil Society Forum is part of the official programme of the Conference. CSOs with observer status with UNCTAD and those accredited by the Preparatory Committee for UNCTAD are able to participate in the Civil Society Forum. Financial support was extended to civil society representatives from developing countries.

Trade and Development Board (TDB) Hearings with Civil Society, the Private Sector and Parliamentarians (annual): the Board manages UNCTAD's work in between two UNCTAD Conferences. NGOs/CSOs accredited to the Hearings and those that have observer status with UNCTAD are able to participate in the Hearings.

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Ongoing (observer status, open only to international organizations)
There are two categories: general and special category organizations:

General category organizations: those who are concerned with most of the activities of UNCTAD. They can participate in the public meetings of all the intergovernmental bodies of UNCTAD.

Special category organizations: 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.

Observer status is only granted to international NGOs. CSOs with observer status are able to participate in the Civil Society Forum the TDB Hearings.

Decision making body: the Trade and Development Board approves applications for status. Accreditation criteria and procedure are similar to UNECOSOC accreditation model.

N.B. National NGOs/CSOs which are considered to have a significant contribution to make to the work of UNCTAD may be entered by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in a Register after consultation with the member State concerned.

Cooperation agreements
UNCTAD has cooperation arrangements with civil society in respect of development-oriented research and technical cooperation in areas affecting international trade

3. Institutional CS Participation Support Mechanism

Secretariat: Civil Society Outreach Unit

The Civil Society Outreach (CSO) Unit is responsible for liaison between UNCTAD and civil society.

The CSO Team:

- Helps facilitate the participation of civil society actors - including non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations - in the work of UNCTAD and its Conferences, organizing hearings, consultations, briefings and meetings with civil society.
- - Reviews and processes requests for accreditation and observer status with UNCTAD from civil society.
- - Provides civil society with information and documentation.
- - Liaises and interacts with other UN system focal points for civil society.

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Statistical Data

Number of NGOs with observer Status by category

Category	**1999**	**2007**
General category	95 (of them 25 Southern NGOs)	200 (General & Special combined)
Special category	82 (of them 17 Southern NGOs)	
Roster category	10 (of them 3 Southern NGOs)	20 to 22
Total	187 (of them 45 Southern NGOs)	220 to 222

Source: Jing in Foster 1999; UNCTAD Secretariat

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Annex 5
Accreditation Information
UN ECOSOC

Accreditation Information - ECOSOC
Taken from the ECOSOC's Website

Consultative Status with ECOSOC

http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/about.htm

The first avenue by which non-governmental organizations took a role in formal UN deliberations was through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 41 NGOs were granted consultative status by the council in 1946; by 1992 more that 700 NGOs had attained consultative status and the number has been steadily increasing ever since to 2,870 organizations today.

Article 71 of the UN Charter opened the door providing for suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations. The consultative relationship with ECOSOC is governed today by ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, which outlines the eligibility requirements for consultative status, rights and obligations of NGOs in consultative status, procedures for the withdrawal or suspension of consultative status, the role and functions of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, and the responsibilities of the UN Secretariat in supporting the consultative relationship.
Consultative status is granted by ECOSOC upon recommendation of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, which is comprised of 19 Member States.

Who is Eligible?
Consultative relationships may be established with international, regional, sub regional and national non-governmental, non-profit public or voluntary organizations. NGOs affiliated to an international organization already in status may be admitted provided that they can demonstrate that their programme of work is of direct relevance to the aims and purposes of the United Nations. In the case of national organizations consultation with the Member State concerned is required.
To be eligible for consultative status, an NGO must have been in existence (officially registered with the appropriate government authorities as an NGO/non-profit) for at least two years, must have an established headquarters, a democratically adopted constitution, authority to speak for its members, a representative structure, appropriate mechanisms of accountability and democratic and transparent decision-making processes. The basic resources of the organization must be derived in the main part from contributions of the national affiliates or other components or from individual members. Organizations established by governments or intergovernmental agreements are not considered NGOs.

General, Special and Roster status:
There are three categories of status: General consultative status, Special consultative status and Roster status.
General consultative status is reserved for large international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the agenda of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. These tend to be fairly large, established international NGOs with a broad geographical reach.
Special consultative status is granted to NGOs which have a special competence in, and are concerned specifically with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by the ECOSOC. These NGOs tend to be smaller and more recently established.
Organizations that apply for consultative status but do not fit in any of the other categories are usually included in the Roster. These NGOs tend to have a rather narrow and/or technical focus. NGOs that have formal status with other UN bodies or specialized agencies (FAO, ILO, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO and others), can be included on the ECOSOC Roster. The roster lists NGOs that ECOSOC or the UN Secretary-General considers can make "occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council or its subsidiary bodies."

Participation in International Conferences:
Non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, special consultative status and on the Roster, that express their wish to attend the relevant international conferences convened by the United

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Nations and the meetings of the preparatory bodies of the said conferences shall as a rule be accredited for participation. Other non-governmental organizations wishing to be accredited may apply to the secretariat of the conference for this purpose.

How to obtain Consultative Status with ECOSOC

http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/

1. First a letter of intent: To begin the process of applying for consultative status, an organization must submit a letter of intent to the NGO Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), also known as the Secretariat. The letter should be on the organization's letterhead and signed by its secretary-general or president.
This letter of intent is important! Please send the letter to:
DESA NGO Section
One UN Plaza. Room DC1-1480, New York, NY 10017
tel: (1-212) 963-8652; fax: (1-212) 963-9248 desangosection@un.org

2. The Application: Qestionnaire + Summary + Supporting Document

Once the NGO section receives the letter of intent, it will mail the application package containing the questionnaire and all the background materials to the organization. The application and questionnaire is then completed by the NGO applying for status. Questions regarding the correct completion of the application and questionnaire should be directed to the NGO Section. The applications forms are also available for download at the documents section of this site.
Applications are only accepted in one of the UN Secretariat working languages: English or French. Completed applications must be received by the first day of June of the year preceding the year the NGO wants to be considered for recommendation by the Committee. For example, complete applications, (which include a completed questionnaire and all the required supporting documentation) received by the NGO Section before 1st June 2004, will be taken up by the Committee on NGOs in the year 2005. Applications received between the 1st June 2004 and 1st June 2005 will be taken up in the year 2006.

3. NGO Section screening of applications:

The period between 1st June and the date the Committee meets is dedicated by the NGO Section to review the applications. During this time the NGO may be contacted and asked for more information or clarifications. Only after reviewed by an officer and considered complete, an application is submitted to the NGO Committee.
When an application becomes part of the agenda of the NGO Committee a letter is sent to the NGO informing them of the upcoming session and inviting to send no more than two representatives to be present during the session. The presence of NGO representatives in the room is in no way mandatory and it does not imply any advantages. NGOs simply have the right to be present when their applications are being considered. Considering the cost involved in traveling to New York most NGOs do not attend the first time they are being considered. If the application raises many questions from member countries and gets deferred to another session, NGOs might consider useful to be present at the following session in order to be able to reply in person and avoid being deferred again.

Among other requirements for obtaining consultative status are the following:

- Applying organization's activities must be relevant to the work of ECOSOC;
- The NGO must have been in existence (officially registered) for at least 2 years in order to apply;
- The NGO must have a democratic decision making mechanism;

The major portion of the organization’s funds should be derived from contributions from national affiliates, individual members, or other non-governmental components.

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4. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations:

The Committee meets twice a year to decide which NGOs applying for consultative status it will recommend to the ECOSOC Council. At any time, the Committee may ask questions to the NGO. Such questions are immediately faxed to the NGO by the Secretariat and should be replied by the NGO as fast as possible in order to help the Committee make a decision and avoid getting deferred to future sessions.

The main tasks of the Committee are:

The consideration of applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by NGOs;

The consideration of quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs in General and Special categories;

The implementation of the provisions of Council resolution 1996/31 and the monitoring of the consultative relationship;

Any other issues which the ECOSOC may request the Committee to consider.

5. The Committee only recommends:

The Committee recommendations are published in a report and submitted to the next ECOSOC meeting for final approval. Official notification is sent to all reviewed NGOs, informing them about the Committee's recommendation.
The Committee may recommend a different category than the status requested by the NGO. Also, the Committee may decide to defer an application review until the next session, waiting for clarifications and answers to questions asked to the NGO.

6. ECOSOC final decision:

When the Council finally approves the Committee recommendation to grant consultative status to an NGO, official notification is sent by the Secretariat. NGOs granted General or Special consultative status must submit to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, every fourth year, a brief report of their activities, in particular regarding their contribution to the work of the United Nations (Quadrennial Report).

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations is a standing committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established by Council resolution 3(II) on the 21st of June 1946. The Committee reports directly to ECOSOC (rule 82 of its rules of procedure) and its report includes draft resolutions on matters calling for action by the Council.

The Committee has 19 members (Council resolution 1981/50 of 20 July 1981) who are elected on the basis of equitable geographical representation: 5 members from African States; 4 members from Asian States; 2 members from Eastern European States; 4 members from Latin American and Caribbean States; and 4 members from Western European and other States. In accordance with ECOSOC decision 70 (ORG-75) of 28 January 1975, the term of office of its members is four years

The Committee's original terms of reference were set out in ECOSOC resolution 288 B (X) of 27 February 1950, which was superseded by ECOSOC resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 25 May 1968. The current terms of reference of the Committee are set out in Resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996. In its proceedings the Committee is guided by the rules of procedure of the Council.

The main tasks of the Committee are:

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- The consideration of applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by NGOs;
- The consideration of quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs in General and Special categories;
- The implementation of the provisions of Council resolution 1996/31 and the monitoring of the consultative relationship;
- Any other issues which the ECOSOC may request the Committee to consider.

At the first formal meetig of the session, the Chairperson encourages the Committee to adopt its decisions by consensus. If requested, the Committee decides on proposals by a recorded roll-call vote. Otherwise, it takes action through resolutions and decisions by consensus. The Committee's decisions are considered recommendations, often in the form of draft decisions calling for action by the Council. Once an application from an NGO has been reviewed and approved by the Committee it is only considered recommended for consultative status. As soon as possible during its next meeting, the Economic and Social Council reviews these recommendations, takes note of the Committe's report and makes the decisions final. It is only after the recommendation becomes an ECOSOC decision that the NGO is granted the consultative status.

The Committee meets annually for three weeks (Council decision 1995/304 of 26 July 1995 and 1997/297 of 23 July 1997). The Committee also holds informal meetings prior to each session for the purpose of clarifying matters arising from applications for consultative status. If necessary, with the approval of the Council, the Committee holds a resumed session of up to two weeks annually. Informal consultations may take place on an ad hoc basis.

In accordance with rule 18 of the ECOSOC Rules of Procedure, each year, at the commencement of its first meeting, the Committee elects its Chairperson and four Vice-Chairpersons. The Chairperson is usually re-elected for another year. In accordance with rule 19, Bureau members are eligible for re-election. One of the Vice-Chairpersons is later designated also to serve as Rapporteur.
The Bureau is always elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution. A Vice-Chairperson may not be elected Chairperson at the next session. The rotation of Chairpersonship on a geographical basis has not been strictly established.

ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 [http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/]

PART IV
CONSULTATION WITH THE COUNCIL

Provisional agenda

27.- The provisional agenda of the Council shall be communicated to organizations in general consultative status and special consultative status and to those on the Roster.

28.- Organizations in general consultative status may propose to the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations that the Committee request the Secretary-General to place items of special interest to the organizations in the provisional agenda of the Council.

Attendance at meetings

29.- Organizations in general consultative status and special consultative status may designate authorized representatives to sit as observers at public meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. Those on the Roster may have representatives present at such meetings concerned with matters within

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their field of competence. These attendance arrangements may be supplemented to include other modalities of participation.

Written statements

30.- Written statements relevant to the work of the Council may be submitted by organizations in general consultative status and special consultative status on subjects in which these organizations have a special competence. Such statements shall be circulated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the members of the Council, except those statements that have become obsolete, for example, those dealing with matters already disposed of and those that had already been circulated in some other form.

31.- The following conditions shall be observed regarding the submission and circulation of such statements:

(a) The written statement shall be submitted in one of the official languages;

(b) It shall be submitted in sufficient time for appropriate consultation to take place between the Secretary-General and the organization before circulation;

(c) The organization shall give due consideration to any comments that the Secretary-General may make in the course of such consultation before transmitting the statement in final form;

(d) A written statement submitted by an organization in general consultative status will be circulated in full if it does not exceed 2,000 words. Where a statement is in excess of 2,000 words, the organizations shall submit a summary which will be circulated or shall supply sufficient copies of the full text in the working languages for distribution. A statement will also be circulated in full, however, upon a specific request of the Council or its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations;

(e) A written statement submitted by an organization in special consultative status or on the Roster will be circulated in full if it does not exceed 500 words. Where a statement is in excess of 500 words, the organization shall submit a summary which will be circulated; such statements will be circulated in full, however, upon a specific request of the Council or its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations;

(f) The Secretary-General, in consultation with the President of the Council, or the Council or its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, may invite organizations on the Roster to submit written statements. The provisions of subparagraphs (a), (b), (c) and (e) above shall apply to such statements;

(g) A written statement or summary, as the case may be, will be circulated by the Secretary-General in the working languages, and, upon the request of a member of the Council, in any of the official languages.

Oral presentations during meetings

32.-
(a) The Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations shall make recommendations to the Council as to which organizations in general consultative status should make an oral presentation to the Council and on which items they should be heard. Such organizations shall be entitled to make one statement to the Council, subject to the approval of the Council. In the absence of a subsidiary body of the Council with jurisdiction in a major field of interest to the Council and to organizations in special consultative status, the Committee may recommend that organizations in special consultative status be heard by the Council on the subject in its field of interest;

(b) Whenever the Council discusses the substance of an item proposed by a non-governmental organization in general consultative status and included in the agenda of the Council, such an organization shall be entitled to present orally to the Council, as appropriate, an introductory statement of an expository nature. Such an organization may be invited by the President of the Council, with the

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consent of the relevant body, to make, in the course of the discussion of the item before the Council, an additional statement for purposes of clarification.

PART VIII
SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF CONSULTATIVE STATUS

55.- Organizations granted consultative status by the Council and those on the Roster shall conform at all times to the principles governing the establishment and nature of their consultative relations with the Council. In periodically reviewing the activities of non-governmental organizations on the basis of the reports submitted under paragraph 61 (c) below and other relevant information, the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations shall determine the extent to which the organizations have complied with the principles governing consultative status and have contributed to the work of the Council, and may recommend to the Council suspension of or exclusion from consultative status of organizations that have not met the requirements for consultative status as set forth in the present resolution.

56.- In cases where the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations has decided to recommend that the general or special consultative status of a non-governmental organization or its listing on the Roster be suspended or withdrawn, the non-governmental organization concerned shall be given written reasons for that decision and shall have an opportunity to present its response for appropriate consideration by the Committee as expeditiously as possible.

57. The consultative status of non-governmental organizations with the Economic and Social Council and the listing of those on the Roster shall be suspended up to three years or withdrawn in the following cases:

(a) If an organization, either directly or through its affiliates or representatives acting on its behalf, clearly abuses its status by engaging in a pattern of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations including unsubstantiated or politically motivated acts against Member States of the United Nations incompatible with those purposes and principles;

(b) If there exists substantiated evidence of influence from proceeds resulting from internationally recognized criminal activities such as the illicit drugs trade, money-laundering or the illegal arms trade;

(c) If, within the preceding three years, an organization did not make any positive or effective contribution to the work of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Council or its commissions or other subsidiary organs.

58.- The consultative status of organizations in general consultative status and special consultative status and the listing of those on the Roster shall be suspended or withdrawn by the decision of the Economic and Social Council on the recommendation of its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

59.- An organization whose consultative status or whose listing on the Roster is withdrawn may be entitled to reapply for consultative status or for inclusion on the Roster not sooner than three years after the effective date of such withdrawal.

NGO-related Frequently Asked Questions
http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/faq.htm (accessed Aug.09, 2007)

Q. How many NGOs are there in consultative status?
Currently there are 2719 NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and some 400 NGOs accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), a subsidiary body of ECOSOC. NGOs in the CSD roster need to contact the NGO Section of DESA in order to apply to consultative status.

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Q. What is consultative status?

Non-governmental, non-profit public or voluntary organizations may be admitted into a mutually beneficial working relationship with the United Nations by attaining consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status is based on Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations and on ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 adopted in 1996. The rights and privileges enumerated in detail in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, enable qualifying organizations to make a contribution to the work programmes and goals of the United Nations by serving as technical experts, advisers and consultants to governments and Secretariat. Sometimes, as advocacy groups, they espouse UN themes, implementing plans of action, programmes and declarations adopted by the United Nations. In concrete terms this entails their participation in ECOSOC and its various subsidiary bodies through attendance at these meetings, and also through oral interventions and written statements on agenda items of those bodies. In addition, organizations, qualifying for General Category consultative status, may propose new items for consideration by the ECOSOC. Organizations granted status are also invited to attend international conferences called by the U.N., General Assembly special sessions, and other intergovernmental bodies. (The participation modalities for NGOs are governed by the rules of procedure of those bodies).

Q. What are the procedures for obtaining consultative status with the ECOSOC?

In order to obtain consultative status an organization's application must be reviewed by the Committee on NGOs of the ECOSOC which meets twice a year. The Committee, composed by 19 States members of the United Nations, recommends to the ECOSOC which organizations should be granted one of three categories (General, Special, and Roster). The recommendation then goes to the ECOSOC meeting, with the full ECOSOC making the final decision. The section HOW TO OBTAIN STATUS of this site explains the process in detail.

To begin the process for applying for such status an organization must contact in writing the NGO Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This letter of intent should be on the organization's letterhead and signed by its secretary-general or president. Once the NGO section receives the letter of intent, an application package containing the questionnaire and all the background materials is mailed to the organization. The deadline for receiving completed applications is June 1 of each year. For example, complete applications, (which include a completed questionnaire and all the required supporting documentation) received by the NGO Section before 1 June 2003, will be taken up by the Committee on NGOs in the year 2004.

NGOs in the CSD roster need to contact the NGO Section of DESA in order to apply to consultative status.

The application forms and guidelines for the association between NGOs and the UN are also available for download at the documents section of this site.

Q. What are the requirements for obtaining consultative status?

Non-governmental, non-profit voluntary organizations may be admitted into consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The types of NGOs that can apply for consultative status, the requirements for obtaining status, as well as duties and responsibilities of the NGOs in consultative status are enumerated in detail in ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31. Among other requirements, the organization's activities must be relevant to the work of ECOSOC. The NGO must have a democratic decision making mechanism. The NGO must be in existence (officially registered with the appropriate government authorities as an NGO/non-profit) for at least 2 years in order to apply. The basic resources of the organization must be derived in the main part from contributions of the national affiliates, individual members or other non-governmental components.

NGOs in the CSD roster need to contact the NGO Section of DESA in order to apply to consultative status.

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Q. What is the difference between General category, Special category and Roster?
Organizations wishing to apply for General Category must be "concerned with most of the activities of the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies". These tend to be fairly large, established international NGOs with a broad geographical reach. Special Category is granted to NGOs "which have a special competence in, and are concerned specifically with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by the ECOSOC". These NGOs tend to be smaller and more recently established. Organizations which "can make occasional and useful contributions to the work of ECOSOC or its subsidiary bodies" are included in the Roster. These NGOs tend to have a rather narrow and/or technical focus.

	General	Special	Roster
Relevance to the work of ECOSOC	all areas	some areas	limited
Are in consultative status with ECOSOC	yes	yes	yes
Attend UN meetings	yes	yes	yes
Designate UN representatives	yes	yes	yes
Invited to UN International Conferences	yes	yes	yes
Propose items for ECOSOC agenda	yes	no	no
Circulate statements at ECOSOC meetings	2000 words	500 words	no
Can speak at ECOSOC	yes	no	no
Circulate statements at ECOSOC subsidiary bodies' meetings	2000 words	1500 words	no
Can speak at ECOSOC subsidiary bodies' meetings	yes	yes	no
Must submit quadrennial reports	yes	yes	no

Q. We are in the process of completing the questionnaire to obtain consultative status. How do we make sure we do it correctly?
The section HOW TO OBTAIN STATUS of this site explains the process. Guidelines for association between the UN and NGOs are available for download at the documents section. Please read both for detailed information.

Q. There used to be NGOs in consultative status Category I and Category II. Now we keep hearing about General and Special category. How do all those categories relate to each other?
Under the terms of ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, what used to be known as Category I, is now "General Category". Category II became "Special Category". In other words, if your organization was in Category II, it is currently listed in "Special category".

Q. We are an NGO in consultative status with the ECOSOC. Aren't we supposed to submit reports from time to time to keep our status?

If you are and NGO in General or Special category, you are required to submit a quadrennial report once every 4 years detailing your activities in support of the UN. This reporting requirement does not apply to NGOs on the Roster. Quadrennial reports run on a somewhat complicated schedule, so your organization will be contacted by the NGO Section and advised of the modalities and deadline of submission of your report. We suggest you keep detailed records of your cooperation with the UN.

Please download and read carefully the guidelines for the submission of quadrennial reports available in the documents section of this site.

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Q. Are there alternative formal arrangements for NGO association with the U.N.?

NGOs which have an information component in their programmes can become associated with the U.N. Department of Public Information (DPI).

In addition to that, many U.N. specialized agencies operate their own accreditation programmes for NGOs which are relevant to their area of work. Examples include:

* International Labor Organization (ILO) - Geneva, Switzerland
* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) - Rome, Italy
* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - Paris, France
* World Health Organization (WHO) - Geneva, Switzerland
* International Telecommunication Union (ITU) - Geneva, Switzerland
* International Maritime Organization (IMO) - London, UK
* World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) - Geneva, Switzerland
* United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) - Vienna, Austria
* United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) - Geneva, Switzerland

Q. Are NGOs in consultative status part of the UN?

No, they are not. They are not representatives or agents of the UN, nor are they authorized to enter into business arrangements on behalf of the UN. Consultative status does not entitle them to special privileges, tax exemptions, diplomatic passports, etc.

Q. Are NGOs in consultative status entitled to use the UN logo?

NO!, they are not. Not unless the NGO obtains a written authorization from the UN Office of Legal Affairs first. Under no circumstances is this permission granted for use on stationery or business cards.

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Annex 6
Accreditation Information
Commonwealth of Nations

Accreditation Information - The Commonwealth
Taken from the Commonwealth of Nation's Website

http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=142018&int1stParentNodeID=20639

Civil Society

Civil society - those associations are at the heart of education, development and democracy. Civil society organisations (CSOs) include community groups, labour unions, teacher unions, professional associations, faith-based organisations and parts of the media and academia. They operate at all levels, from the village and community through to national and international levels.

ACCREDITATION TO THE COMMONWEALTH

1. Introduction

Links and working relations between the Commonwealth inter-governmental organisations and civil society organisations have existed for many years. The recent High Level Review of the Commonwealth recognised that 'the networks for sharing expertise, information and experience among organisations, the people-to-people links and the existence of a wider Commonwealth civil society are valuable assets that give the Commonwealth a depth and reach that is unique'. The Review made a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening the intergovernmental Commonwealth's relations with civil society, including a recommendation that new criteria should be developed for accrediting non-governmental organisations to the Commonwealth and its official meetings.

2. Criteria for Accreditation by Non-Governmental Organisations

(For the purposes of this document, the term NGOs is used to include NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as Commonwealth professional associations).

Non-governmental organisations wishing to be accredited to the Commonwealth must meet the following criteria:

(i) Committed to the Commonwealth's fundamental values

These principles are enshrined in Commonwealth Declarations, notably the Singapore Declaration on Commonwealth Principles (1971) and the Harare Commonwealth Declaration (1991). The Harare Declaration confirmed the Commonwealth's commitment to promoting democracy and good governance, human rights and the rule of law, gender equality and sustainable economic and social development. Organisations will be required not only to confirm their commitment to these values them but also to indicate what they do to promote and implement them.

(ii) Representing the true diversity of Commonwealth countries

Organisations must recognise and respect the diversity of the Commonwealth's membership and be open to exchanging information and collaborating with like-minded organisations in all Commonwealth countries.

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(iii) Transparent in their activities

Organisations seeking accreditation should be transparent in their activities and have democratic governance and decision-making processes. They should be accountable to their members. Reports on their activities and audited accounts should be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretariat at least every four years.

(iv) Open to all Commonwealth members

To be eligible for accreditation, all applicant organisations should be open to permitting eligible individuals, organisations or associations from other Commonwealth member countries to join or associate with them.

In addition to accreditation for civil society organisations, there are two other categories, namely **Intergovernmental Organisations** and **Associated Organisations**. The latter category is for organisations set up by Commonwealth governments and having an established relation with the Commonwealth

3. Benefits of Accreditation to the Commonwealth

The following benefits, some of which are more widely available, will be available to organisations accredited to the Commonwealth:

3.1 Visitor's Access to Marlborough House, the Headquarters of the Commonwealth in London

- access on request to Marlborough House
- arrangements for informal discussions with Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation staff on matters of special interest
- able to consult with officers from the Secretariat and Foundation on matters of mutual interest in a field of activity related to the Commonwealth's work programme
- accommodation for small meetings on work of direct relevance to the Commonwealth, subject to availability of space. Because of very limited number of formal rooms in Marlborough house, access is limited and priority is given to Commonwealth official meetings. A reduced charge is made for accredited organisations. A special small room (up to 25 people) to accommodate meetings of accredited organisations will be available from September 2003.

3.2 Access to general information

- access, upon request, to all public information not already available on the Internet
- access to Commonwealth information materials(e.g. posters, pamphlets)
- access to *CNIS*, the e-news service of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and *Commonwealth People*, the newsletter of the Commonwealth Foundation. Where possible, this information will be sent electronically. However, hard copies can be provided to organisations that do not have access to the Internet.

3.3 Access to consultation processes

- able to participate in civil society consultative mechanisms which advise the Commonwealth on its work such as the Coolum Committee. This is currently done in a variety of ways including sector Focus Group meetings.

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- invited to attend special consultations from time to time according to the subject area

3.4 Access to official meetings

The Commonwealth holds a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) every two years and regular Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings of education, finance, foreign, women's, health, law, and youth ministers.

(i) Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings

Accreditation to Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings is by invitation and the benefits of being accredited vary according to the nature of the Meeting. They range from access to documents and the ability to submit documents to the ability to participate in discussions as an observer. Accreditation to meetings normally requires being accredited to the Commonwealth plus working in areas of direct relevance to the Commonwealth and being known, through programme collaboration, to the Commonwealth Secretariat or Foundation.

Accreditation to individual Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings may sometimes be extended to an NGO if it has a working relationship with the Commonwealth, whether or not it is an accredited organisation.

(ii) Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings

All organisations accredited to the Commonwealth may apply to be accredited to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Benefits include:

- able to submit papers
- may receive reports approved by Heads of Government
- invited to opening ceremony and other social events subject to limitations of the venue
- may participate in activities organised to interact with the Committee of the Whole
- may submit proposals through the Commonwealth Foundation or Commonwealth of Learning

4. Application Procedures

New applications for accreditation are reviewed by the Commonwealth Accreditation Committee twice a year, in March and September. For the March 2004 meeting, applications must reach the Commonwealth Secretariat by 29 February 2004. Accredited status will be periodically reviewed to ensure that accredited organisations remain in compliance with the accreditation criteria.

CSOs wishing to be accredited should write a letter on their letterhead setting out their application to become accredited. They should also attach the following information:

- the most recent annual report
- the most recent audited account
- the constitution or founding document of the organisation
- a statement confirming the organisation's commitment to Commonwealth values, and how the organisation promotes and implements these values, including information about any Commonwealth-related activities recently undertaken by the organisation
- proof of registration in a Commonwealth country
- a statement setting out any other inter-governmental organisations to which the organisation is accredited

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- a statement setting out how the organisation is governed including a full list of all office bearers, their designations and country of nationality
- a list of the countries in which the organisation is active and/or has members/affiliates.

5. Information about staff

The Civil Society Liaison Office is located within the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Unit (SPED) of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Director of SPED is Ms Alexandra Jones. The Civil Society Liaison Officer is Ms Sharon Robinson.

6. Contact us

The Civil Society Liaison Officer
Marlborough house
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX

Email s.robinson@commonwealth.int

7. List of CSOs Accredited to the Commonwealth

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Annex 7
Accreditation Information
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Accreditation Information – UNCTAD
Taken from UNCTAD's Website

Observer status with UNCTAD http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=3475&lang=1

Requirements and Procedure for Obtaining Status

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 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 which 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.

A document is prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat on the basis of the information, completed questionnaire and supporting documentation provided by the organization and is submitted for the approval of the Trade and Development Board, which meets annually in the autumn in regular session and in executive sessions (three times a year).

The Trade and Development Board approves applications for status and distinguishes between general and special category organizations.

- **General category organizations** are those which 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.

National NGOs/CSOs

National organizations of recognized standing which are considered to have a significant contribution to make to the work of UNCTAD may be entered by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in a Register after consultation with the member State concerned (Board decision 43 (VII), section III). National NGOs in the Register receive UNCTAD's documentation on a regular basis.

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