

## CONSULTATIVE STATUS

Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council provides an important opportunity for civil society to influence international decision-making. It is an integral part of the UN Charter and actualizes the UN Charter's historic opening passage,

**“WE THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm within in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom....”**

This opening statement was penned at a time when the signatories, countries structured as `nation states`, on Westphalian principles, exhibited a variety of government structures ranging from authoritarian to democratic and were not necessarily enthusiastic about hearing the voice of civil society.

In recognizing the role of NGOs as a means to give voice to the concerns of ordinary people irrespective of their Government's position, the Founding Fathers made their intention clear that provision for NGOs to influence international decision-making was a part of the Charter in Article 71 as follows:

*Article 71 The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may make suitable arrangements for consultation with Non Governmental Organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.*

To regulate the partnership between the UN system and the people linked to NGOs, an ECOSOC Committee on NGOs was established. ECOSOC's function remains the oversight of UN economic and social activities). Accordingly a Committee on NGOs was established. They meet annually. (See <http://www.csonet.org?menu=105> ). This functions to receive applications and decide on their validity. General Assembly (GA) Resolution 1296 May 23rd 1968, and the update GA 1996/31

detail the principles on which consultative status should be exercised.(as follows)

*GA Resolution 1996/31*

*1. The organization shall be concerned with matters falling within the competence of the Economic and Social Council and its bodies.*

*2. The aims and purposes of the organization shall be in conformity with the spirit purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations*

*3. The organization shall undertake to support the work of the United Nations and to promote knowledge of its principles and activities, **in accordance with its own aims and purposes and the nature and scope of its competence and activities.***

*4. Except where expressly stated otherwise, the term “organization” shall refer to Non Governmental Organizations at the national, the sub-regional, regional or international levels`.*

There is plenty more important information in GA 1996 including reference to the need for Quadrennial Reports to the NGO Committee. Members will also find useful **Working with ECOSOC an NGO Guide to Consultative Status** United Nations New York 2011

In conclusion, the importance of consultative status is further demonstrated by the work of the UN. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) The DESA News ([ngonews@un.org](mailto:ngonews@un.org)) provides a useful update of news and events of concern to NGOs. There is also the CSO Net and Civil Society Network – access via <http://www.un./ecosoc/csonet>

I think if we keep the above facts in mind, we can give a hand to country delegates in need of basic information to successfully carry out their mandate.

With all good wishes,

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Geneva, August 6th, 2012