

## **Activities Report for the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, 2015-2016**

*Presented by Philippe Beaussant, Secretary*

Committee members elected at the International Conference of NGOs in December 2014

**President:** Martine Lévy

*Representing Africa:* FAWE: Aïcha Bah Diallo

*Representing Latin America and the Caribbean:* CLASO: Pablo Gentili, replaced by Paulo Leonardo Martins, who lives in Paris

*Representing Asia and the Pacific:* China Folklore photographic: Shen Che

*Representing Eastern Europe:* Sozopol Foundation: Petya Zelenski, replaced by Kiril Arnautski

*Representing Europe and North America:* AFAL: Patrick Gallaud, Vice-President

*Representing CCIVS:* Victoria Lovelock

*Representing CIOFF:* Philippe Beaussant, Secretary

*Representing IFCCD:* Diego Gradis

*Representing CIEO:* Thierry Brault

*Representing Rotary international:* Cyril Noirtin, Treasurer

Arab region: *unable to attend*

I am very pleased to present the Activities Report of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee for 2015-2016, and elected in December 2014 at the last meeting of the International Conference of NGOs. In keeping with the new Directives, our membership reflects a broad geographic representation.

Since the beginning of the year 2015, Committee members and I have worked to intensify intellectual cooperation with UNESCO and to reach out and mobilise new audiences. At the same time, the Committee has pursued a communications policy that promotes cultural diversity in collective endeavors while strengthening dialogue with Member States. The statutory framework regulating cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is determined by the *Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations*, adopted in 2011 at the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference. UNESCO currently maintains official partnerships with 381 NGOs and 30 foundations and similar institutions.

### **RESOLUTIONS VOTED BY THE CONFERENCE IN 2014**

- The complete list is accessible on the website of the Liaison Committee at: [www.ngo-unesco.net](http://www.ngo-unesco.net)
- Several recommendations stress the importance of having broad geographic representation (a matter developed later on in this report with regard to meetings of the Liaison Committee).
- Another recommendation says: *Having taken note of the reports on the three NGO fora held during the past biennium, we invite NGOs to work individually and collectively to follow up on the outcomes of these fora and of the thematic debates held at the International Conference, notably 'Enhancing cultural heritage and fostering cultural*

*expression diversity', 'The commitment of NGOs for the promotion of quality education in the post-2015 Agenda', 'Water and sustainable development: from awareness raising to decision making', 'Climate change: acting now'. (More on this appears later with regard to forums.)*

## **INTELLECTUAL COOPERATION WITH UNESCO**

This cooperation involved organizing three international forums, two of which took place outside UNESCO headquarters in an effort to encourage decentralization.

We should remember that the Liaison Committee is expected to organize at least two NGO forums each year, in consultation with UNESCO, on one of UNESCO's priority themes. These were prepared in close collaboration with Sabina Colombo and her expert team at UNESCO Headquarters.

**The first forum on "The Role of Women in Combating Poverty" took place on 29 and 30 June 2015 and was the only one held at UNESCO Headquarters.** We offer thanks again to our co-leaders, Marie-Christine Griès de la Barbelais and Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré, and to our coordinator Thierry Brault, a member of the Liaison Committee, who made the forum possible.

I now turn the meeting over to them for further details.

**Powerpoint**

**The second forum took place in Beijing, China, on 27 and 28 July 2015. It's theme was "Rapprochement of cultures: one humanity beyond diversity".**

We would like to thank Patrick Gallaud and Du Yu of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO for their work in organizing this Forum. Patrick Gallaud will now present the highlights.

**Powerpoint**

**The third forum highlighted the theme: "From promoting to building peace with NGOs" and was held in Queretaro, Mexico on 3 and 4 November 2016,** This was the first time that a forum had been organized in Latin America. More than 800 participants representing official NGO partners of UNESCO, government groups, academia and youth took part in lively and animated discussions throughout the two days.

Co-leaders were Cyril Noirtin and Philippe Beussant, in close cooperation with Patrick Gallaud.

**Powerpoint**

It is clear that the three forums were instrumental in allowing a large number of NGO partners to join forces, to work closely with the relevant sectors of UNESCO, and to help build awareness among newer local NGOs, whether in Paris, Asia or Latin America.

## **REACHING OUT AND MOBILISING NEW AUDIENCES**

### **Better communication**

In order provide appropriate support to this policy of cooperation and outreach, we had to rethink our communication strategy. If you go to our website you can follow the activities of our Liaison Committee and also access the documents that concern cooperation between

civil society and UNESCO. Our Facebook presence has allowed much greater public participation in some of our major events. An online registration system has also facilitated participation.

### **Better participation in the UNESCO General Conference**

The 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference took place from 3 to 18 November, 2015. Martine Lévy, the President of the Liaison Committee, made a presentation to the plenary meeting in which she described the Committee's role and actions. Once the formal part was over and the session closed, we enjoyed a convivial "photographic" moment, much appreciated by everyone. Several NGOs were able to present their own activities at that time.

### **The NGO space**

Throughout the General Conference, a dedicated NGO space was available in the public areas on the ground floor of the Fontenoy building: espace Miró 2. This served as both a meeting place and source of information. Each day, the NGO stands displayed their wares while members explained how their NGO was organized and what its goals are.

There were many small presentations and debates centred around the work of the General Conference and the collective endeavors promoted by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

In conclusion:

- Our thanks go to Sabina Colombo and her staff, and to Patrick Gallaud who both organized and ensured a daily presence in the NGO space.
- It was generally agreed that the space and animation were better than in 2013.
- The daily presentations attracted many people totally unfamiliar with the Liaison Committee and its activities; they were curious to learn more, expressed their interest and engaged in lively discussions.
- Representatives of the National Commissions were especially appreciative of the partnership aspect.
- There was good participation of international NGOs having a Paris base. They were able to get to know each other better outside of the usual business encounters.
- Both presentations made by the Liaison Committee were warmly received by their respective audiences.

### **More about these UNESCO presentations:**

- The meeting room was full. Some 40 people listened as Eric Falt, Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Public Information paid tribute to the important work done by NGOs, and also spoke at length about the efforts made by his sector to devise a new classification system for NGOs.
- They were also interested in learning about the work of the programme sector Commissions for science (SC), social and human sciences (SHS), culture (CLT) and education (ED); the quadrennial report of the Director General; the rules and regulations governing use of the name, acronym and logo of UNESCO; and the Participation Programme.
- NGO representatives participated and were heard in all the Commission deliberations

## **STRENGTHENING THE DIALOGUE WITH MEMBER STATES**

Fruitful dialogue only happens if Member States are fully informed about the work carried out by NGOs. It is worth recalling that in these alliances between NGO/UNESCO/Governments, each partner retains its own specificity. The participation by

NGOs in meetings of the UNESCO Executive Board's Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP) was essential in this regard.

### **Meeting of the Executive Board's NGP Committee (9 October, 2015)**

In the 2011 Directives it is written that: *"The principal task of the NGO UNESCO Liaison Committee is to contribute to preparations for the debates of the Executive Board's Committee on Non-Governmental Partners, in particular by promoting, as far as possible, the participation of a large number of NGOs."*

- The President of the Liaison Committee made a speech retracing the Committee's activities; there were few questions afterwards, but the representative from Tunisia did express satisfaction that the Committee was taking an interest in the Arab region and would be seeking someone from there to join its ranks.
- There was a highly emotional moment when Eric Falt announced that the Nobel Prize had just been won by Tunisians.
- For budgetary reasons it had been decided not to allow extended discussions as in earlier years, but rather to limit the meeting to a single day
- *"..ensuring the greatest participation possible of NGOs"*: NGOs were present, but not many states were represented
- New Committee on Non-Governmental Partners: the terms of reference of the new committee, which took effect at the close of the 198<sup>th</sup> session, is available on the UNESCO website. (198 EX/SR.2`0.) Available on the Liaison Committee website are all the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Executive Board at its 198<sup>th</sup> session that pertain to non-governmental partnerships (NGPs).

The NGP Committee is composed of 24 members, with four from each region. It examines:

- The best policies for promoting dialogue among all interested non-governmental partners and the Secretariat in order to encourage these organizations to contribute to UNESCO actions.
- All other questions concerning cooperation between UNESCO and international non-governmental organizations and, in particular, new requests for establishing formal relations.

### **Meeting of the Executive Board's NGP Committee (6 October, 2016)**

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  - All other questions concerning cooperation between UNESCO and international non-governmental organizations and, in particular, new requests for establishing formal relations.
- In her speech to the Executive Board the President of the Liaison Committee retraced the Committee's activities since the last meeting on 9 October 2015. The speech is available on the Committee website.
- On behalf of all NGOs she congratulated the newly elected President of the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners, M. Darko Tanskovic, Serbian Ambassador to UNESCO

### **70 years of UNESCO**

Many special events were organized as part of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of UNESCO's founding:

- *10 - 15 June 2015:* Armen Safaryan, President of UNIMA Armenia, the national branch of UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette), an NGO partner of UNESCO, invited Martine Lévy to open the International Festival of Puppet Theatres, in Erevan. She also launched the World March of "Puppets for Peace and Intercultural Dialogue". A tree for peace was planted.
- *3 July, 2015:* Philippe Beaussant, President of CIOFF (International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts) and Secretary of the Liaison Committee, organized a magnificent evening at UNESCO headquarters featuring folklore groups from different countries. They celebrated the theme of "Rapprochement of Traditional Cultures".
- *8 August, 2015:* At the invitation of the Sozopol Foundation, Liaison Committee members went to Bulgaria to participate in one of the country's most important cultural events: the Bulgarian Folklore Festival, which takes place every five years in the city of Koprivchitsa. UNESCO Director-General Irena Bokova, Eric Falt and Sabina Colombo also attended under the banner of UNESCO's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.
- *15-20 September, 2015:* Liaison Committee members who were present in Shangri-la inaugurated an eco-museum in a nearby village containing a large number of agricultural tools. Now, thanks to folk dances, culinary traditions, the eco-museum and another traditional house undergoing renovation, the village has become the keeper of local heritage.

## **COP21**

NGO Day took place on 8 December, 2015 in the UNESCO Pavillon at Le Bourget where the Paris Climate Change conference took place. Following a presentation by the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), ten NGOs recognized as official UNESCO partners presented their work on climate change.

A roundtable had also been organized to disseminate results of the NGO Action Day Declaration on Climate Change, drafted on 6 October.

- The Declaration, drafted initially in French, was then translated into English, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic.
- This important document will require follow-up.

Other events related to COP21

- Peter Dogse, of UNESCO's Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, and head of the Intersectoral platform on climate change, spoke about the biosphere and climate change, even challenging the audience with tough questions.
- Paulette Vallette, representing UNESCO Green Citizens, described how *"All around the world, men and women give life to projects on education for sustainable development. UNESCO GREEN CITIZENS reveals the talent and determination of these pathfinders, often modest, but who are crucial actors for change."*

Thanks to Vicky Lovelock member of the Liaison Committee and Director of CCIVS for her great work...

## **COLLECTIVE CONSULTATION of NGOs/ EDUCATION FOR ALL (EPT) COORDINATION GROUP (CCNGO/EFA)**

In May 2015, the Liaison Committee was represented at the UNESCO World Education Forum (WEF) - in Incheon, Korea, by Philippe Richard, who stood in for Thierry Brault.

The Incheon Declaration commits the international community to ensuring: "Equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. Transforming lives through education."

The full Declaration is available on the UNESCO website.

The Liaison Committee was represented at the various coordination group meetings of the CCNGO/EFA by Aïcha Bah Diallo, Thierry Brault and Philippe Richard. The International Montessori Association and the World Association for Early Childhood Education are also members of the coordination group.

### **Liaison Committee meetings**

The Committee met 7 times in 2015 and 5 times in 2016. Minutes for all the meetings are accessible on the Liaison Committee website.

#### Meetings at UNESCO headquarters

- In a room equipped for Skype and provided by the bureau of External Relations and Public Information (ERI)
- Or in Room 103
- None of the meetings assembled the full Committee, due to professional commitments elsewhere or travel
- Skype is increasingly being used and the Committee has recently purchased a computer with Skype capability so it can also be hooked up in Room 103.
- CLACSO – the Latin American Council of Social Sciences – now has regular representation at Liaison Committee meetings thanks to the presence of Paris-based Leo Martins.
- Shen Che (China Folklore Photographic Association), has made the long trip to attend meetings on behalf of the Asia-Pacific region on several occasions, always with an interpreter.
- Pétya Zélenski represented the Sozopol Foundation at meetings in Paris, with Foundation President Kiril Arnautski joining via Skype.
- Both Shen Che and Kiril Arnautski also participate actively by email.

#### Meetings outside UNESCO

The importance of broad geographic representation has been highlighted in the Resolutions adopted by the International Conference of NGOs in December 2014: *“Convinced that a wide geographical representation of NGOs is an asset for the overall collective collaboration and can enhance impact substantially on the ground, we invite the Liaison Committee to reach out to NGOs across regions and to involve them fully in the preparation of NGO fora and other activities;”*

- In response, the Liaison Committee accepted all-expense-paid invitations from Kiril Arnautski and Shen Che to hold meetings in Bulgaria and China, respectively. Seven members attended the event in Sofia (August 2015) and eight attended the event in Shangri-la (September 2015).
- Budget considerations aside, the Liaison Committee felt it was an honour for elected members outside of France to be able to welcome and host the Committee in their country.
- In both cases, meetings were linked to some special event organized by the Bulgarian and Chinese members.
- This allowed the Committee to play the role of Ambassadors in each country, with opportunities to exchange views, explain the Committee’s role and describe its activities.
- The Sophia event was a roundtable at the National Palace of Culture celebrating UNESCO’s 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the theme of promoting peace through education,

science and culture. It was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Education, Science and Culture, in addition to actors from civil society.

- The Shangri-la event showcased photographers from all over the world and an awards ceremony.

### **Meeting with the Director-General of UNESCO**

The August travel invitation from Kiril Arnautski included an informal meeting with UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. Each Committee member had a chance to exchange a few words with her during the Bulgarian Folklore Festival and to meet her briefly after the luncheon that day.

The encounter was very positive and the Director-General thanked the Committee for its work.

### **NGO HOMAGE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE 13 NOVEMBER ATTACKS**

On 18 November 2015, about 40 representatives of international NGOs gathered at UNESCO headquarters to pay an emotional tribute to the victims of the barbarous terrorist attacks that had occurred in central Paris a few days earlier. The ceremony was dignified, with readings from Nobel Peace Prize winners and others, followed by a minute of silence.

### **NGO DIRECTIVES**

During the first half of 2015, a working group led by Diego Gradis was set up to revise the 2011 Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations. It comprised about 30 representatives from 26 NGOs.

Three sub-groups also examined questions about the NGO mandate, bilateral NGO/UNESCO activities, and the NGOs' collective work coordinated by the Liaison Committee.

From these deliberations emerged 21 observations and proposals that were later discussed with the Deputy Director-General for External Relations (ERI) and the NGO desk at a meeting held in March 2016. These concerned: the setting up of partnerships; cooperation with UNESCO Sectors, the Secretariat, and NGO partners and governments; the structure and functioning of the Liaison Committee; resources; the Forum. A summary is available upon request.

### **YOUTH FORUM – UNESCO**

The Liaison Committee regrets that it was not involved in preparations for the Forum.

- Despite what has sometimes been said, there are many UNESCO partnerships with youth NGOs, such as the YMCA, YWCA, the Scouts and Girl Guides – not to mention the youth branches of other NGOs.
- The Liaison Committee would like to suggest a re-evaluation of the situation with regard to its involvement in preparation of the Forum; this would enhance the meaning of "partnership".

## **Astana Project**

The project is being led by Patrick Gallaud, Committee vice-president, as part of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) and at the request of the Decade Secretariat.

Next year from June to September, Astana (Kazakhstan) will host the international Expo 2017, whose theme is "Future Energy." A group of NGOs have joined forces to create a project that would echo this theme, entitled "Art – renewed energy for the rapprochement of cultures." It would consist of an intercultural festival within the main expo, offering exhibitions, events, films and digital art displays, a fashion show, and debates.

Participation is open to all NGOs, regardless of their particular interests.

## **International Academy of Ceramics (IAC)**

The Liaison Committee was invited by IAC to participate in its General Assembly being held in Barcelona (Spain) in September 2016. The evening of 13 September had been set aside for an event devoted entirely to relations with UNESCO: the role of the NGO UNESCO Liaison Committee, how to obtain authorization to use the UNESCO label and similar issues.

With more than 400 delegates attending, the evening was a big success. Both the official representative of AIC and Patrick Gallaud, vice-president of the Liaison Committee, made presentations.

The initiative is a model of its kind for all NGOs wishing to renew their bond with UNESCO or the Liaison Committee.

## **International Dance Council (CID)**

As part of her role in making the Liaison Committee and its activities better known, the President accepted an invitation from CID to attend the 48<sup>th</sup> World Dance Research Congress in Avignon (France). People from many countries participated.

More than one hundred years ago, the celebrated American dancer Isadora Duncan said: *"The dancer will not belong to any nation but to all humanity."*

CID mounted a presentation and discussion of "United Colors of Dance" - Dance for Peace at the Avignon Music Conservatory.

## **Madagascar**

The President of the Liaison Committee was invited by the Malagasy Government to come to Tananarive to meet with NGOs there and learn more about the country's immediate needs. She also met with the local UNESCO representative to Madagascar.

## **CONCLUSION**

This year-end report is intended to trace the outlines of our policy and activities. Rather than offering any conclusion – for that is your prerogative --I think we could best summarize these past two years by the word "openings", in the plural:

- Opening of the Liaison Committee to greater regional and cultural diversity; to new national and local NGOs and to new arenas beyond UNESCO headquarters.
- Opening to new audiences less familiar to UNESCO, reached with the help of new technologies. Some involve the general public, but others are truly new, such as youth and people with disabilities.
- Opening to the world, the international community, by engaging more and more Member States.

Now it is your turn to speak, to ask questions or seek clarifications. We hope you will share your fresh ideas and proposals, so that when the conference is over, we can move forward and open new pathways together.