



Modalities for Effective Civil Society Participation in the UN 2013 High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development

Civil society plays a vital role at the United Nations in representing and giving voice to the needs and aspirations of ordinary people. With its community-level presence, civil society is able to bring the experiences, concerns and priorities of ordinary citizens to the policy-making process. This is why the modalities chosen for civil society participation are critical to any UN process.

The following proposals are taken from our experience of various UN commissions and conferences which we have found to be successful in allowing civil society to fulfill its critical role.

1. A liaison to Civil Society from the appropriate secretariat needs to be named by late March/early April, 2012. We base this recommendation on the very successful experiences of the Financing for Development process, the Sustainable Development process begun in 1992 (liaison to major groups) and the Commission for Social Development process. In each of these processes, there is a designated contact within the Secretariat responsible for coordination with NGOs.
2. There need to be early and frequent consultations between the Office of the PGA and civil society to create a spirit of collaboration. Following are some recent examples of effective consultations:
 - From early in the process, the NGO Committee on Migration met several times with the PGA Office to discuss themes and NGO participation for the Informal Thematic Debate on Migration and Development 2011.
 - Initiated by the Office of the PGA, a group representing the Committee of Religious NGOs met frequently with the PGA Office over a three-month period in preparation for the

Closing Event for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2012, collaborating on plans for the event.

3. Substantive input into the process and the agenda of HLD 2013 needs to come from all stakeholders, again early in the process. An excellent example of this modality is reflected in the increasingly inclusive stakeholder input into the Global Forum on Migration and Development.
4. Government and Secretariat support for a Civil Society Forum preceding the HLD will allow for input from the grassroots level, most importantly from migrants themselves.
 - One good precedent for this process was the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs, whose civil society preparatory activities enabled interaction with and input to the intergovernmental process.
 - Another successful government-supported forum planned by civil society is that of the most recent GFMD, coordinated by the International Catholic Migration Commission.
 - Hearings with civil society are also an effective way to provide an opportunity for dialogue and an exchange of views between member states and non-state actors, as is evidenced by the recent UNCTAD XIII hearing with civil society and the private sector.
 - A fourth innovative manner of fostering dialogue between member states and civil society in the context of a state led conference is that of the *Common Space* in the two most recent GFMDs. However, there is general agreement that improvement is needed both in focus on a substantive topic and more effective and consistent modalities.
5. The most frequently used modality at UN meetings for receiving necessary grassroots input is that of oral and written interventions provided by civil society.* We expect this modality to be used extensively by civil society for HLD 2013.

6. Having expert civil society speakers at each Roundtable/Panel will enhance the inclusion of all stakeholders' perspectives in the deliberations on Migration and Development in the HLD.

- This process is a hallmark of the collaboration between the FfD Office and civil society, having been used recently during the Financing for Development HLD in December 2011 with three civil society participants at each roundtable. It is also planned to be used during the annual ECOSOC/BWI/WTO consultation in March 2012.
- An even more dramatic example of the principle of civil society participation at roundtables/panel sessions took place in Jamaica in September 2011. Civil society not only participated in but also moderated the discussion groups which included all stakeholders and made specific recommendations which were adopted by the entire body.

7. In order to provide opportunities for Civil Society participation, whatever the modality, it is essential for Civil Society to be informed about such matters as the following:

- Certification deadlines;
- If opportunities exist for Civil Society to have input into the agenda;
- The number of Civil Society organizations/representatives who may participate;
- If opportunities exist for Civil Society representatives to be speakers, and the amount of time allocated to them.

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NGO Committee on Migration
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*For example, see the Civil Society Statement prepared jointly by the NGO Committee on Migration, Migrant Rights International (MRI), National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), and United Methodist Women (UMW), for the Informal Thematic Debate on International Migration and Development, 64th General Assembly, May 19, 2011.(www.ngo-migration.org)