

1 - Introduction to United Nations and its Association with NGOs

The United Nations has maintained relations with non-governmental organizations representing the concerns of civil societies throughout the world ever since it was founded in 1945. The provisions for relations between the United Nations and NGOs are outlined in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter and in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. The rights and privileges enumerated in detail in the resolution enable qualifying organizations to make a contribution to the work programs and goals of the United Nations.

NGOs are playing an increasingly more important role in forming policies that are changing the world today. NGOs influence decisions made by governments and diplomats and provide a voice for causes that would otherwise go unheard. The diversity of the world's NGOs and their perspectives is representative of the diversity and complexity of issues in the arena of international relations. Through its many specialized agencies, the UN is involved in numerous issues including international economic and social development, the promotion and maintenance of peace, establishment of international law and humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations helps to solve the problems facing the world today by facilitating communication and information exchange and promoting mutually supportive activities between diverse groups of state and non-state actors. The United Nations maintains close relations with thousands of NGOs around the world because NGOs play an important role in interactions between civil society and government. All organizations that act in the same spirit of cooperation and unity as the United Nations, regardless of size or influence, have a right to participate in international developments through the UN.

2 - NGOs Working with the United Nations

NGOs are an invaluable resource for the various entities of the UN. NGOs provide expert analysis in the field, serve as early warning agents and help monitor and implement international agreements. NGOs also help raise public awareness of issues, play a major role in advancing UN goals and objectives and contribute essential information at UN sponsored events. NGOs advocate many of the same causes of concern to the United Nations, volunteer resources and execute and oversee development projects. Since the United Nations and NGOs share many interests, there is the opportunity for them to work together in several ways. Below are descriptions of four primary ways the United Nations and NGOs cooperate :

a. NGOs active in the field of economic and social development may seek to obtain consultative status with ECOSOC. NGOs may obtain one of three

categories of status: General, Special or Roster; and each category entitles an NGO to certain privileges within the United Nations system. Instructions for obtaining consultative status as well as the most recent changes regarding the conditions and privileges of status are contained in these guidelines.

b. NGOs may receive accreditation for a conference, summit or other event organized by the United Nations. Such accreditation is issued through the Secretariat office preparing the event and NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC are entitled to send representatives to meetings and make and make contributions to United Nations events based on the category of status they hold.

c. NGOs may establish working relations with particular Departments, Programs or Specialized Agencies of the United Nations system. Because the United Nations and NGOs share many similar concerns, working together in a cooperative relationship means greater advances toward common goals.

d. NGOs that have the commitment and the means to conduct effective information programs with its constituents and to a broader audience about UN activities either by publishing newsletters, bulleting and pamphlets, radio or television programs, or through their public activities such as conferences, lectures, seminars or workshops, and that have an established record of continuity of work for a minimum of three years, may apply for association with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI).

3 - Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Non-governmental, non-profit 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. The provisions for this relationship are set out in Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations and in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. The rights and privileges enumerated in detail in the resolution enable qualifying organizations to make a contribution to the work programs and goals of the United Nations by serving as technical experts, advisers and consultants to inter-governmental branches and the Secretariat. Increasingly, as advocacy groups, NGOs espouse UN themes, assist in implementing plans of action, monitoring programs and declarations adopted by the Member States of the UN. There are three levels of NGO participation in UN affairs described in detail below.

a. **General Category** NGOs are “concerned with most of the activities of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies and are closely involved with the economic and social life of the peoples and areas they represent.” NGOs in the General Category are fairly large and represent large segments of societies in several countries. NGOs in the general category may send representatives to the UN,

attend meetings of and its subsidiaries, can speak at ECOSOC meetings, circulate statements, and are required to submit quadrennial reports.

b. **Special Category** NGOs are those that “have a special competence in, and are concerned with only a few of the fields of activity covered by ECOSOC.” Special Category NGOs are smaller and many have only recently been established. NGOs in the special category may also send representatives to the UN, attend meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiaries, can speak at ECOSOC meetings, circulate statements, and are required to submit quadrennial reports as well.

Note: JCI has been in this category since 1954

c. **Roster Category** NGOs “make occasional and useful contributions to the work of ECOSOC or its subsidiary bodies.” Roster Category NGOs have a specific technical focus. NGOs holding roster status with the UN are permitted to attend meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiaries, but are not allowed to circulate statements, speak at meetings, and are not required to submit quadrennial reports.

Following are the formal rights and arrangements for the participation of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.

The Secretary General is authorized to offer facilities to NGOs in consultative status including:

- a. access to UN grounds and facilities;
- b. arrangement of informal discussions on matters of special interest to groups or organizations;
- c. access to UN press documentation services;
- d. accommodation for conferences or smaller meetings of consultative organizations on the work of ECOSOC; and
- e. appropriate seating arrangements and facilities for obtaining documents during public meetings.

Status Specific Privileges (*)

General	Special	Roster
Able to consult with officers from the Secretariat on matters of interest to the NGO	Able to consult with officers from the Secretariat on matters of interest to the NGO	Able to consult with officers from the Secretariat on matters of interest to the NGO
Allowed to make oral statements based on recommendations by the Committee.	Allowed to make oral statements based on recommendations by the Committee.	
Allowed to submit brief written statements	Allowed to submit brief written statements	
May designate representatives to sit at meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiaries	May designate representatives to sit at meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiaries	May designate representatives to attend meetings in the NGO field of competence
Have the right to place items on the agendas of ECOSOC and its subsidiaries		

(*) Consultative status with the UN does not permit an NGO to: 1) Use the UN logo; 2) Represent the UN; 3) Receive diplomatic passports or tax exemptions; 4) Become part of the UN system

4 – JCI's participation at UN ECOSOC

JCI and its National Organizations have been actively participating in UN ECOSOC Conferences and accordingly contributing to the advancement of the global society.