



Human Rights Advocates

P.O. Box 5675, Berkeley, CA 94705 USA

Human Rights NGOs
Participation in the United Nations, its organs and
specialized agencies

Contact Information:

Teresa Kokaislová, Edith Coliver Intern
Representing Human Rights Advocates through

University of San Francisco School of Law's

International Human Rights Clinic

Tel: 415-422-6961

te.kokaislova@gmail.com

Professor Connie de la Vega

delavega@usfca.edu

I. Introduction

It is undisputed that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a very important role in today's arena of international relations. They influence the developments of international system by monitoring State activities, performing fieldwork, fiercely advocating their policies and presenting their findings.

While helping to deliver reliable information and form standards and rules of human rights protection, NGOs are considered 'the prime engine of the human rights movement.'¹ Their influence is significant and desirable, as expressed by many governmental delegations as well as international organizations,² especially the United Nations, and treaty bodies.

Human rights non-governmental organizations are freely created entities for the sole purpose of helping the governments and governmental entities on the international and national level in the fight against human rights violations and assisting groups of people affected by those violations.

Yet, recent developments have shown that the participation of NGOs before some human rights bodies is facing unexpected restrictions and NGOs cannot fully benefit from the status accorded.

This paper seeks to present the current situation of NGOs' involvement into the work on the international level and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in particular. First, an overview of human rights NGOs' legal status regulation in the United Nations (UN) and specifically before the CSW and the Human Rights Council (HRC) will be laid out. A detailed summary of NGOs' legal status throughout the realm of other related international organizations and treaty bodies is included in Appendix I. Second, a discussion targeting the

¹ S. Hobe, Human Rights, Role of Non-governmental organizations, Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg and Oxford University Press, 2012) 1, accessible at: www.mpepil.com; M.W. Mutua 'Human Rights International NGOs: A Critical Evaluation' in CE Welch (ed.), NGOs and Human Rights: Promise and Performance (University of Pennsylvania Press Philadelphia 2001) 151.

² See *infra*, Reports of the Human Rights Council and Commission on the Status of Women, and documents referenced in Appendix I.

latest developments and changes with regard to cooperation between NGOs and CSW will follow. Finally, possible next steps regarding policy and strategy of cooperation in order to benefit from the engagement of NGOs in the work of CSW will be discussed.

II. Human Rights NGOs

International non-governmental organizations are organizations founded by private individuals, they are independent of states, oriented towards the rule of law and pursuing non-profit aims.³ NGOs are created on the basis of private initiative that constitutes one of the key features. The activities of NGOs are managed by the commitment and enthusiasm of their members and the results of their work depend largely on their perseverance and keenness.

The most important role of NGOS is seen in creation of new rules and standards of international law, and in monitoring and verification of information. NGOs try to influence the international system by both direct participation in treaty-making processes and by trying to draw public attention to global problems.⁴

In the field of human rights, it is generally the states that assume the role to create formal legal rules and standards on international level, within or outside the scope of the United Nations, and implement them into their domestic legal systems. However, as observed by many scholars, the non-governmental organizations have proved to be one of the most influential components in this process.⁵

Although the number has significantly increased since 1970s, NGOs focusing on

³ For the purposes of this paper only non-governmental organizations with international reach will be considered. For definition and differentiation between national and international NGOs see S Hobe, Non-Governmental Organizations, ³ S. Hobe, Human Rights, Role of Non-governmental organizations, Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg and Oxford University Press, 2012) 2, accessible at: www.mpepil.com.

⁴ Ibid. at 3-4.

⁵ S. Hobe, *supra* note 1, at 1.

human rights protection are still considered a relatively new phenomenon.⁶ Unfortunately, this is reflected by the difficulties in the relations and interactions between NGOs, state governments and intergovernmental organizations.

1. UN Organs with Focus on Human Rights

The United Nations, its subsidiary bodies, as well as its related and specialized agencies, all recognize the importance of human rights protection and do emphasize this aspect in their work regardless of the field of activity. In addition, subsidiary bodies concentrating exclusively on human rights have been established, namely the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and Human Rights Council (HRC). Interestingly, while relations between NGOs and these two bodies are regulated in a similar manner, the practical fulfillment of the theoretical provisions is considerably different. Therefore the two bodies and their relations with NGOs are being considered here.

2. Legal Basis - Commission on the Status of Women and Human Rights Council

The position and the necessity of NGOs' participation in international relations was recognized in the UN Charter. According to Article 71, 'the Economic and Social Council 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.'⁷ It had enabled the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to launch consultations with NGOs and to provide for a system that would facilitate it.

On 25th July of 1996, ECOSOC adopted Resolution 1996/31 implementing Article 71

⁶ S. Hobe, *supra* note 1, at 1.

⁷ Charter of the United Nations (adopted 26 June 1945, entered into force 24 October 1945) 1 UNTS 16.

and regulating further and in detail the consultation arrangements and consultative status NGOs may acquire.⁸ The consultative status is granted by the Council on recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations composed of 19 ECOSOC Member States. It is at complete discretion of the Council and it may be withdrawn.

The grounds as set in Article 71 of the UN Charter and the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 have allowed numerous NGOs to successfully enter into the key platform for human rights protection and development of relevant legal standards. As stated at the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations, ‘Today thousands of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participate vitally in major UN conferences and in the UN system, as active participants, and not just as observers. Civil society has become both a source of knowledge and expertise and a potential partner in the decision-making process.’⁹

Article 71 of the UN Charter and the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 determines the status of NGOs within its subsidiary bodies as well as its regional commissions. However, some of the agencies and programs directly related to the UN and some specialized agencies have developed their own mechanisms for cooperation with NGOs.¹⁰

The Commission on the Status of Women follows the rules and principles as established by Article 71 of the UN Charter and the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 of 25th July 1996. As acknowledged by the Commission, the active participation of NGOs is a critical element in the work of the CSW.¹¹ NGOs have helped to shape the current global

⁸ UN ECOSOC Res 1996/31 ‘Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations’ (25 July 1996) ESCOR (1996) Supp 1, 53.

⁹ NGO participation arrangements at the UN and in other agencies of the UN System, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations, Geneva, 2006, accessible at: http://www.itu.int/council/groups/stakeholders/Resources/Non-Paper%20on%20NGO%20Participation%20in%20the%20UN%20System3%20_CONGO_.pdf.

¹⁰ See Appendix I, Chapter 3.

¹¹ ‘The active participation of NGOs is a critical element in the work of the CSW. NGOs have been influential in shaping the current global policy framework on women’s empowerment and gender equality -the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They continue to play an important role in holding international and

policy framework on women's empowerment and gender equality that has materialized in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

On April 3rd 2006, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council as a replacement of the Commission on Human Rights.¹² In its 11th preambular paragraph, the General Assembly acknowledged that 'non-governmental organizations play an important role at the national, regional and international levels, in the promotion and protection of human rights.' In its 11th operative paragraph, the UN GA decided that 'the Council shall apply the rules of procedure established for committees of the General Assembly, as applicable, unless subsequently otherwise decided by the Assembly or the Council.' Therefore, 'the participation of and consultation with observers, including non-governmental organizations, shall be based on arrangements, including Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996 and practices observed by the Commission on Human Rights, while ensuring the most effective contribution of these entities.'

Both CSW and HRC observe the provisions of the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 that establish the fundamentals but do not provide for a specialized basis for cooperation reflecting the nature of both bodies. The question therefore is whether a more elaborate policy and strategy to refine and encourage forms of participation and observation in order to achieve the best results and fully benefit from the engagement of NGOs could prove to be effective and enhance the work of NGOs with both the CSW and HRC.

3. Cooperation between NGOs and Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council

In accordance with the nature of the consultative status granted to NGOs by ECOSOC, the non-governmental active by the Commission on the Status of Women as well as the

national leaders accountable for the commitments they made in the Platform for Action.', accessible at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/ngo/index.html>.

¹² UN GA Res 60/251 'Human Rights Council' G.A. Res. 60/251, U.N. Doc. A/RES/60/251 (March 15, 2006).

Human Rights Council recognize that their primary responsibility is to support the work and the functioning of the bodies by furnishing reliable information, monitoring and reporting on the developments concerning human rights, helping to form new strategies and policies.

The involvement of NGOs into governmental work is based on the ideas of open governance and transparency of governmental actions facilitating the development and strengthening of democracy. As a political philosophy, the open governance principle advocates the participation of interested citizen in the democratic process in order to enable them to influence the creation of policies. ‘Legislation is democratically opened to the general citizenry, employing their collective wisdom to benefit the decision-making process and improve democracy.’¹³ Most national governments and legislative bodies honoring democracy have opened their procedures to the participation and observation of their citizens that bring the touch of reality and give the representatives sense of needs and interests of the people. NGOs often represent those citizens that can influence the above-mentioned processes only with major difficulties. Therefore, they should be allowed to take their place and speak for them where needed.

This idea stood behind the adoption of the ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 enabling the participation of NGOs in the work of the United Nations. However, as mentioned above, there is no document providing for details of the cooperation between NGOs and CSW or HRC. Therefore, their relations are to a large extent governed by independent practices developed over the time.

Commission on the Status of Women

In the report from its last, 56th session, the Commission on the Status of Women spoke of as well as to non-governmental organizations. In the resolutions to be brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council, the CSW urged NGOs to pursue various

¹³ D. Rushkoff, Open-source democracy: how online communication is changing offline politics by Douglas Rushkoff (Demos 2003), 56 et al.

activities, as well as partnerships, in order to support the desired development of policies and legal standards generated by the Commission.¹⁴ Furthermore, numerous remarks and references to the work, reports and statements by NGOs were also addressed in other chapters of the report.

Regrettably, the report does not reflect that the participation of NGOs in the 56th session was restricted. The CSW platform used to be a place for the NGOs to thrive and to freely and with great success present their work and render thus support to the Commission. Although the work of NGOs has proved to be a vital element of the discussions and work at CSW, NGOs were not allowed to even observe the decision-making processes. Consultations on Agreed Conclusions and the final Action on Draft Proposals were held as closed meetings and NGOs were not admitted without further explanation.

Unfortunately, the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women did not adopt any agreed conclusions, the main outcome of the work of the CSW. The sudden twist in the exclusion of NGOs raises question whether the lack of transparency and accountability in the CSW procedures led to the failure to pass the agreed conclusions. It is hoped that a more open process would provide for best results and profit from mutual work.

Human Rights Council

Quite in the contrary, the Human Rights Council seems to provide for a more transparent environment supportive to the engagement of NGOs. As evidenced by the Report of Human Rights Council from its 19th, 20th and 19th special sessions held in 2012,¹⁵ the Council recognizes, encourages and welcomes the efforts of non-governmental organizations in the question of the realization and enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

¹⁴ United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the 56th Session, E/2012/27, E/CN.6/2012/16; Chapter I, D: Resolution 56/3 'Eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women', Chapter II and III.

¹⁵ Report of the Human Rights Council - 19th, 20th and special 19th session, as adopted by GA, Supplement No. 53 A/67/53.

Moreover, in several adopted decisions and resolution, the Council explicitly invites States and other actors to collaborate with NGOs, develop dialogue in order to fulfill identified aims.¹⁶

Most remarkably, the Human Rights Council agreed on language of Resolution 19/20 entitled ‘The role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human Rights’ which was then adopted without a vote by the UN General Assembly. In this resolution, the Council confidently

‘Invites all States, United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, as well as national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations, to provide the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with information on good practices and their views regarding the organization, training and education of the public service, to ensure the promotion and protection of and respect for human rights, impartiality, accountability, transparency and the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as well as other activities developed to assist and support the public service at the national, regional and international levels.’¹⁷

By reiterating the major principles of good governance and articulating the necessity of NGOs’ contribution in this context, the Council sent out a clear message regarding its views on position and participation of NGOs on the national, regional as well as international levels.

Furthermore, Resolution 19/36 on ‘Human rights, democracy and the rule of law’ was adopted. In its operational paragraphs, the Council

‘*Encourages* Member States to continue to strengthen their cooperation with the United Nations system, relevant intergovernmental regional, subregional and other organizations and arrangements, and national human rights institutions, as well as with relevant non-governmental organizations in the field of electoral assistance and support for the promotion of democratization, and to initiate or reinforce networks and partnerships for the dissemination of knowledge and information about the role of democratic institutions and mechanisms in facing the political, economic, social and cultural challenges in their respective societies;’¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., at p. 18 (Resolution 19/5), p. 21 (Resolution 19/6), p. 29 (Resolution 19/7) et al.

¹⁷ Ibid., at p. 57, Resolution 19/20 ‘The role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human Rights’.

¹⁸ Ibid., at 96, Resolution 19/36 ‘Human rights, democracy and the rule of law’, operational paragraph 18.

Invites intergovernmental regional, subregional and other organizations and arrangements, national human rights institutions and relevant non-governmental organizations to engage actively in work at the local, national, subregional and regional levels to consistently support and consolidate democracy and the rule of law...¹⁹

Agreement to such a strong language that ties together the fundamentals of democracy and the role of NGOs in cooperation with UN Member States as well as other entities could have been stimulated by equally strong statements of several delegations. The founding States of the Open Government Partnership (OGP),²⁰ recalled the Open Government Declaration²¹ stating clearly that ‘public engagement, including the full participation of women, increases the effectiveness of governments, which benefit from people’s knowledge, ideas and ability to provide oversight.’ The OGP States recognized that the principles of transparency, civic participation, professional integrity, technology and innovation are crucial and ‘when applied to all aspects of governance, they will directly contribute to a greater enjoyment of the entire spectrum of civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights addressed by the Council.’²²

Also, the governments were called to protect civil society from attacks, restrictive laws and other obstacles in order to help to uphold their commitments to promote and protect human rights.²³

¹⁹ Ibid., at 96, Resolution 19/36 ‘Human rights, democracy and the rule of law’, operational paragraph 19.

²⁰ The OGP founders are Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, United States of America and the United Kingdom.

²¹ The Declaration was endorsed by OGP founding states in September 2011. More states followed and endorsed it in 2012 and 2013; accessible at: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/open-government-declaration>.

²² Statement by US Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe ‘People Around the Globe Are Demanding More Transparency, Accountability and Participation in Governance’ delivered at Human Rights Council 19th Session, March 9, 2012; accessible at: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2012/03/09/donahoe-people-around-the-glo...g-more-transparency-accountability-and-participation-in-governance/>.

²³ Statements delivered by the US delegation at the HRC 19th Session ‘Civil Society Playing a More Critical Role Than Ever in Protecting and Promoting Human Rights’, ‘Civil Society is Crucial to Protection and Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights Around the Globe’; accessible at: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2012/03/19/>.

4. Recommendations

The legal basis for participation of NGOs in the session of both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council is identical. Yet, the practical application is contrasting. The HRC welcomes the activity and participation of NGOs at all levels, including observation of the adoption of resolutions. While, the Commission on the Status of Women recognizes the importance of civil society, it has restricted NGOs from observing the most important part of the process – the adoption of agreed conclusions.

The broadly recognized policies of open governance, transparency and democracy mandate that NGOs must have a reasonable access to the CSW session and a sound possibility to participate as well as observe. Clearly, certain procedures, such as the complaint procedure, are confidential by their nature and NGOs as well as non-member states cannot be allowed to access them.²⁴ However, apart from those procedures, the session should be opened and the right to observe should be restricted only in limited and special or emergency situations.

This challenge may be overcome through explicit commitment of the Commission and its Member States to improve the situation and to elaborate on clear strategies and standards for cooperation with NGOs targeting the details of their participation and observation.

²⁴ E.g. 1503 Complaint Procedure established by ECOSOC resolution 1503 (XLVIII) of 27 May 1970.

Appendix I

This appendix offers an overview of the status of non-governmental organizations in the practice of United Nations, its organs and various treaty bodies and highlights the most successful and most elaborate regulations of NGOs engagement.

International Legal Status of NGOs

Legal status of both national NGOs and NGOs comprising international elements is ultimately determined by domestic laws of the particular state regardless of the reach of the NGO or the nature of their activities.²⁵ There is no international legislation providing regulating the status of NGOs, however, international law does regulate the appearance and activities of NGOs in the arena of international relations. It accords them a certain position, or rather grants them certain privileges.

1. NGOs in the United Nations

As illustrated in Chapter II, Subchapter 2, the legal status of NGOs in the United Nations is well regulated by Article 71 of the UN Charter and the Resolution 1996/31.

Depending on the level of relevance of the NGO's activities to the work of the UN, the resolution differentiates between three forms of consultative status. Firstly, the general consultative status is accorded to NGOs that are concerned with most of the activities of the Council and its subsidiary bodies and can substantively and in a sustainable manner contribute to achieving the objectives of the United Nations.²⁶ NGOs that have a special competence in and focus only on a few of the fields of activity covered by the Council and its

²⁵ Legal status of NGOs is determined by domestic laws of the state of incorporation or the state where the headquarters or other organized activities of the NGO are located. For further details see S. Hobe, *supra* note 1, at 2.

²⁶ Resolution 1996/31, §22.

subsidiary bodies are granted special consultative status.²⁷ Other organizations that do not have general or special consultative status but that are considered to be able to make occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council, its subsidiary bodies or other UN agencies are to be incorporated in the Roster. These organizations may be called for consultation at the request of the Council or any of its subsidiary bodies.²⁸

Pursuant Part IV of the 1996/31 Resolution, NGOs in general consultative status can make oral statements during meeting of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, hand out written documents not exceeding 2,000 words and propose to the Council Committee on NGOs to request the Secretary General to place items in the provisional agenda of the Council. The special consultative status allows NGOs to make oral statements before subsidiary bodies and to circulate written documents not exceeding 500 words to ECOSOC and 1,500 words to subsidiary bodies. NGOs included in the Roster may submit their written statements to the Council when invited to do so by the UN Secretary General.

In addition to these two documents, human rights treaty bodies as well as certain specialized agencies of the United Nations do have their own regulations of NGOs' engagement, which are discussed below.

2. NGOs and Human Rights Treaty Bodies

To ensure compliance with human rights treaties and accountability for human rights violations, most treaties provide for so called review mechanisms. In these procedures, NGOs play an important role while furnishing reliable information concerning human rights violations by State Parties. They are in a position to seriously question the version portrayed by official State reports and to formulate observations that reflect a more accurate assessment of the situation.²⁹ Therefore, the treaty bodies tend to expand their cooperation with NGOs

²⁷ Resolution 1996/31, §23.

²⁸ Resolution 1996/31, §24.

²⁹ S. Hobe, *supra* note 1, at 3.

and to formalize their common methods of work:

- The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) established to monitor the implementation of the Covenant (ICESCR)³⁰ is quite open to the engagement of NGOs. The governing document, UN ECOSOC ‘Non-Governmental Organization Participation in the Activities of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’ allows for participation of NGOs both with and without consultative status. NGOs may comment on State reports, by submitting a written report or by oral presentation, they may participate in general discussion and can contribute to the drafting of general comments.³¹

- The Human Rights Committee (HRC) administering the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) cooperates with NGOs through accepting their ‘shadow’ reports and allowing for oral presentations with regard to the State under review.³²

- According to Article 45 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) the CRC Committee may receive information from governments, intergovernmental organizations but also from other competent bodies. This broad provision gave rise to very open involvement of NGOs into the work of the Committee. They may submit information and selected number of them can participate in the pre-sessional working group and request private meetings.³³

- The Committee overseeing the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families interpreted Article 74 (4) of the Convention in a similar way and allows for submission of written statements by NGOs as well as their participation.³⁴

³⁰ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3.

³¹ UN ECOSOC ‘Non-Governmental Organization Participation in the Activities of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’ ESCOR [2001] Supp. 2, 149.

³² See UN HRC ‘Decision on Working Methods’ (5 April 2002) in ‘Annual Report of the Human Rights Committee (2002)’ UN Doc A/57/40 vol. I Annex III B. vol. I Annex III B paragraph 12; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) 999 UNTS 171.

³³ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 UNTS 3.

³⁴ International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their

- In contrast, Article 74 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) is one of the most restrictive provisions. It allows the ICERD Committee to receive information from NGOs only on personal level (to a committee member). Informal meetings with representatives of NGOs may be convened only with the approval of the ICERD Committee but are not considered a part of the official proceedings.³⁵

3. Specialized Agencies

- As a UN specialized agency, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been successfully integrating NGOs into its tripartite structure. Since the creation of the agency, representatives from worker and employer organizations were included at all levels of governance and provided with equal voting powers as the government delegates. The basic rules for the ILO's engagement with NGOs are enshrined in the Annex V of the Compendium of the Governing Body Rules.³⁶

- The success in creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) can be partially accorded to the dedication and commitment of numerous NGOs. As a natural consequence of the process, the relations between UNEP and NGOs has been duly enacted in two documents, in 'Rules for Civil Society Engagement at the Governing Council' and in the 'Directive on Criteria for NGO Accreditation as Observers to the Governing Council of UNEP and Its Subsidiary Bodies.'³⁷

- NGOs also play an increasingly important role in the work of the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF). Currently, there are about 190 NGOs in consultative status with UNICEF. Their status is determined according to the ECOSOC

Families (adopted 18 December 1990, entered into force 1 July 2003) 2220 UNTS 3; UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families 'Provisional Rules of Procedure' UN Doc HRI/GEN/3/Rev.1/Add.1.

³⁵ International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (opened for signature 7 March 1966, entered into force 4 January 1969) 660 UNTS 195.

³⁶ Compendium of the Governing Body Rules, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2011; accessible at: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/leg/download/compendium-nov2011-en.pdf>.

³⁷ For further information see supra note 13, at 5.

Resolution 1996/31 and their participation in the meetings is governed by the ‘Annex to the Rules of the Executive Board on Participation of Non-Members of the UNICEF Board Meetings.’³⁸

- The initiative Partnership in Action, launched by the UN Refugee Agency established a framework for cooperation between hundreds of NGOs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The relationship is either on an operational or an implementation basis and is synchronized by the NGO Coordination Unit, the focal point for all policy issues concerning NGOs.³⁹

- The arrangements for consultation and cooperation between the NGOs and the World Health Organization (WHO) are regulated by Article 71 of the WHO Constitution and ‘Principles Governing Relations with Nongovernmental Organizations.’⁴⁰ The Principles outline the criteria to establish formal relations between the WHO and NGOs, specify the objectives of the collaboration and provide for its framework.

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has adopted ‘Directives Concerning UNESCO’s Relations with Non-Governmental Organizations’ outlining the conditions for creation of either formal or operational relations with UNESCO.⁴¹

- Also the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has adopted specific rules in order to facilitate its cooperation with NGOs and civil society. The fundamental principles are based on the ‘FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations’⁴² and reflect FAO’s aims to ensure that its decision-making, policies and scientific research mirror the interest of all sectors of society.

³⁸ UNICEF Executive Board ‘Rules of Procedure’ (adopted 6 May 1994, entered into force 1 July 1994) UN Doc E/ICEF/177/Rev.6.

³⁹ For further information see supra note 13, at 7.

⁴⁰ Document accessible at: www.who.int/civilsociety/relations/principles/en/.

⁴¹ Document accessible at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33137&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

⁴² Document accessible at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x2214e/x2214e00.htm>.