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ESTONIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO
COMMISSION NATIONALE ESTONIENNE POUR L'UNESCO

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Reçu CLT / CIH / ITH
Le 19 JAN. 2010
N° 2453.1

15 January 2010

Subject : Comments on the modalities and methods of facilitating the contribution of NGOs from developing countries, in accordance with the Operational Directives concerning advisory assistance to the Committee (Decision 4.COM 10)

Dear Cécile Duvelle

NGOs have a specific role to play in order to build and to strengthen the contribution of civil society to the Convention. In order to contribute, the NGOs need to fully understand the role of NGOs in the Convention, to be clear about what is actually entailed by advisory services and what, if any, is the added value of accreditation. Much has already been done by the Secretariat to publish and disseminate the information regarding the criteria, modalities and procedures for accreditation of NGOs that may wish to request accreditation as foreseen in Article 9 of the Convention. These efforts should be continued in cooperation with the Committee, the State Parties, the category 2 centres and NGO Liaison Committee at UNESCO in order to update the list of NGOs with recognized competence in the various fields of ICH, to enlarge the roster of accredited NGOs and to make sure that it includes NGOs from all parts of the world. However, Estonia feels that the role of the NGOs in the daily implementation of the Convention is even more crucial than providing advisory assistance to the Committee.

As Estonia underlined during the fourth Committee meeting in Abu Dhabi, the most effective way of disseminating the information and facilitating the contribution of NGOs, in particular from developing countries and underrepresented regions, would be organizing a series of workshops. Experts of the Convention can give an overview of the aims and mechanisms of the Convention, representatives of some NGOs that have already been actively involved in the implementation of the Convention or invited by the Committee to provide advisory services can share their practical experience and explain the expectations of the Committee to NGOs. But most importantly, NGOs can meet each other and discuss their methods, concerns and aspirations with regard to the Convention, as well as brainstorm about the modalities and methods of strengthening their capacities to provide advisory services to the Committee. Such interaction would definitely be more interesting and useful than, for instance, mere

participation in the Committee meetings where observers have very limited possibilities to express themselves. Estonia has proposed to host such a regional NGO workshop in September 2010 in Tallinn in co-operation with the Secretariat and to contribute financially to the organization of the event. According to the document ITH/09/4.COM/CONF.209/10 REV (dated September 2009) the total number of NGOs recommended for accreditation is 98, but only 4 of them represent Electoral Group II, 9 represent Group III, 5 represent group V(a) and there is only 1 accredited NGO representing group V(b). The numbers show that there are still many underrepresented regions in the roster of accredited NGOs.

The Committee has also taken note that there exist regional and national variations in the distribution of NGOs. In many developing countries the expertise and proficiency in the ICH domain can be found in communal based entities that do not have legal personality, which is one of the formal prerequisites for requesting accreditation. Where formal NGOs are yet to exist, more efforts should be made to request advisory services from the experts, centres of expertise, research institutes and other entities with competence in the ICH, thus respecting the principle of equitable geographic representation.

Yours truly

Margit Siim
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