Concept Note

OBJECTIVE: A kind request to Your Excellency and all potentially interested Member States for support in forming the United Nations Non-Governmental Organizations General Assembly (www.unngo.org – #UNNGOA). And, bringing the all UN recognized NGOs under one roof with an ultimate purpose to be accredited with an “Observer” status and making it a part of the UNGA Works.

ABSTRACT: In reference to the #2 Curdoso Report’s (A/59/354) dated 13 September 2004, the “Executive Summary” provides a strong and needed ground towards forming the UNNGOGA with two specific goals:

1. Bringing all affiliated, associated, accredited and recognized NGOs, CSOs, and Educational Institutions under one roof for all the NGOs that are recognized under relevant “Specialized Agency” at the United Nations including Department of Public Information (DPI), Department of Economic Social Affairs (DESA), Academic Impact (UNAI), UN-Women, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR etc.

2. In particular, all NGOs that are affiliated with the ECOSOC or associated with the DPI, and required to submit a quadrennial report or annual review, to bring all of them under one roof within the UN System towards NGOs at large, obtaining an “Observer” Status at the General Assembly. This does not aim to merge any of the fore-mentioned existing structures. On the contrary, each entity within the existing status and working mechanism will continue working towards its own mandate. However, the proposed UNNGOGA will be consistent with all NGOs under the same room to engage, involve, have a say, support, share, partner, be a bridge between the UNGA Agenda and works with the relevant local, regional and global communities as ‘the public faces’ of the United Nations as well as establishing two-way communications both from local-regional to the UNGA; and global to local-regional.

DEFINITION: Based upon obtained support through Member States to be presented to the UNGA, consequently, bi-annual UNNGO General Assembly formation and gathering is envisioned as a new and independent initiative. The proposed UNNGOGA will be formed as a joint effort by all the DPI and ECOSOC-associated NGOs to the United Nations with an equal capacity and ground. It will be open to all interested UN recognized NGOs/CSOs and Educational Institutions. A "Formation Committee" will be formed, and it will seek the DPI (Global Communications), ECOSOC/DESA, and UNGA’s initial support for its formation process and the implementation of its vision and principles. Consequently, the NGOA will take a decisive action for channeling its full capacity as one–united and synergized body for implementation and realization of the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, promoting UN Days and related programs as well as disseminating relevant resolutions and programs locally and globally as a two-way bridge between the UNGA to the local and regional communities and vice-versa from local-regional to reflect back to the works of the UNGA.

Inspired by Your Excellency’s following quote and the theme of the 73rd Session of the UNGA (ref#4): “It is all too often forgotten that the United Nations Charter begins with the words "We the peoples". This reflected a collective determination and optimism that was outward looking and inclusive following from the privations and horrors of the Second World War. I strongly believe that we have to make
the United Nations relevant to all people while encouraging all Member States to recognize the shared responsibilities required to ensure peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.”

And:

PREAMBLE, The Charter of the United Nations, 26 June 1945, San Francisco states the following:

“WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED”
- “To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and
- to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and
- to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
- to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.”

Despite the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration Human Rights’ (UDHR) 70th Anniversary, NGOs and CSOs within the UN System at large, are not yet included formally in the UNGA works. In most cases, the UNGA Sessions are closed to the NGOs and despite an ever increasing inclusion of the NGOs/CSOs in the formal delivered statements. The reality presents the opposite: that some flexibilities have been removed, most sessions are closed, and in recent years Special Event Ticket (SET) is required—not limited to the annual UNGA Gatherings in September– in addition to the Annual Ground Pass; spaces are shrinking, NGO Briefings have also lessened from weekly to bi-weekly and in this year, it is about once-a-month!

During the “One-on-One Meeting” with Your Excellency at the UN HQ on December 5, 2018 (ref#5), you stated that you’ve reminded the Member States of the Charter of the United Nations, which was received well by the NGO Community. The initial 2012 [Envisioned] Draft for the same purpose (Ref#3), also started with the above “We the Peoples…” quote from the Charter.

Your Excellency has attached the utmost importance to the UN Charter and in setting out the 73rd Session of the GA, “To make the United Nations relevant to all people while encouraging all Member States to recognize the shared responsibilities required to ensure peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies”.

This has encouraged me to reach out to you with this letter towards “Making the United Nations relevant to All Peoples…” In my opinion, it has to start as first within the UN body to be embraced all of the UN recognized NGOs by the Member States of the General Assembly through and formally with an “Observer” status that will be on the equal ground and encouragement to all NGOs of further involvement with the related UNGA Committees, and commitment with the UNGA Works.

Indeed, as Your Excellency stated, “the GA is the Parliament of Humanity”, and yet NGOs are excluded from the UN System under the GA without any formal recognition or permanent status such as an “Observer”. With over 8103 [*] NGOs/CSOs and Educational Institutions from all corners of the globe, there are very small–tiny NGOs as well as as those with power and global reach comparable to the UN itself. The overall total reach out and impact is huge but the UN hasn’t mobilized it towards supporting the UN works through a unified mechanism. The UNGOGA Proposal is just aims to do that.

CONCLUSION: This newly envisioned pyramid, as a new initiative and the counterpart of the UNGA, or as one of its key components—in other terms—, “Public Faces of the United Nations”, aims to
create a new, modern, democratic, interdependent, and a highly representative medium for the voices of all peoples around the world. The UNNGOGA will lay out the ground for this new and contemporary pyramid, whereas both DPI and ECOSOC-associated NGOs along with the Academic Institutions will be forming it as one key entity in the eyes of the UNGA. This definitely will contribute greatly towards making the “GA is the Parliament of Humanity” in its all-meanings and purposes.

Overall, this will be a magnificent achievement in multiple layers for the entire UN system and as a form of “change” in real and positive terms globally as well as being a real reform within the UN System at large. Consequently, it will be contributing to changing the UN image and perception in a positive way in the eyes of people on large on the global level. A positive outcome of this certainly will contribute towards “making the United Nations relevant to all people” that its first component will be achieved starting within the UN System.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration, valuable time, initial support, and potential encouragement of the Member States to bring this to the UNGA Hall.

[*] Active consultative status with ECOSOC 5083 [list]); associated NGOs with the DPI 1300; Member Educational Institution of UNAI 1300; and UNESCO collaborated NGO partners 420= 8103)

References:
4) “Making the United Nations relevant to all...” OP-ED by H.E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73rd General Assembly, Vienna International Centre;
5) One-on-One with the President of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly –UNHQ, 5 Dec. 2018.

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