

Invitation to the Expert Seminar

“The Future of Civil Society Development Organisations” Vienna, November 10-11, 2009

*Dear representatives of national platforms and NGOs,
Dear CONCORD representatives and TRIALOG Advisory Group,*

For some time, a central debate within the CONCORD family has focused on various aspects affecting the future work of non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) and civil society development organisations (CSOs). Several events have challenged current development approaches and the role of CSOs in development. Just two examples: "Are we on the right track? Paradigm Review by CSOs as Development Actors" in Prague in May 2008, and "CSO Development Effectiveness - Searching New Ways" in Prague in June 2009. Furthermore, CONCORD is currently preparing for a consultation process between the European Union and civil society to define the future role of CSOs in shaping, monitoring and implementing European development policies (Quadrilogue "Palermo II").

The 2008 conference on Paradigm Review was initiated by TRIALOG and co-organised by the Ecumenical Academy Prague, the Czech platform FoRS and CONCORD, for whom it represented a first milestone in its strategic planning. The event evaluation was very positive, and participants felt that the debate should be taken forward, with more focused contributions on practical steps for the CSO community in the South, East and North. Therefore a second conference was agreed on, which is now planned for November 2010 in Managua, Nicaragua.

The enormous amount of written material, including studies and evaluation reports, as well as attempts to achieve a widely shared code of conduct led the TRIALOG Advisory Group to plan an Expert Seminar in November 2009 in Vienna. To make sure that the Managua Conference has optimum impact it was felt that a document with the working title "Managua Declaration on CSO participation in Development" should be proposed.

The Expert Seminar will collate the elements for a first draft, which will then be shared with organisations worldwide for comments. We consider it necessary to undertake such an ambitious and demanding initiative as it is clear that the overall political environment for the work of genuine CSOs is getting less and less favourable. Particularly during the present economic and social crises, ground needs to be regained and the profile of CSOs sharpened.

We are inviting about 50 experts whom we ask for support / assistance as resource persons when selecting themes and formulating a first draft of the declaration. To start the process we would like to share with you a reduced number of documents which appeared relevant to us. We are of course ready to consider others which you feel may suit the purpose.

Objectives of the Expert Seminar November 10-11, 2009:

- Establish the "status quo" of the debate on the role of CSOs.
- Reflect on the roles of CSOs - in the "Global South", the New Member States of the EU (NMS) and the Old Member States of the EU (OMS)
- Synthesise recent reviews and analyses on the status of CSOs
- Discuss the necessity of a global Code of Conduct for CSOs
- Prepare/focus the content of the Managua conference: South/East/North
- Identify themes and speakers for the 2010 Managua conference
- Prepare a first draft of the "Managua Declaration on CSO Participation in Development"

Themes that will be covered:

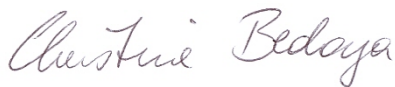
- Definition of CSOs: NGDOs, liberation movements, social movements, etc.
- Processes and factors that help or hinder the development of the role of CSOs
- The current crisis, as the moment to discuss: Consequences, survival strategies, demands to governments and the EU
- The role of corruption - favouritism, nepotism
- Dependency in the relationships between CSOs in the North and South

To help participants prepare, we will provide a reader from well researched and substantiated working papers which will be sent after registration.

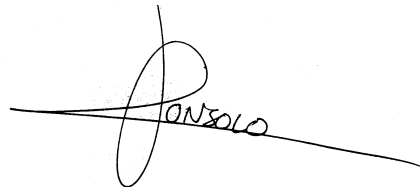
This invitation is directed to leaders of development NGOs/CSOs and board members of their national platforms. We kindly ask you to fill in the attached **registration form** and send it as soon as possible (by **October 20** at the latest) to TRIALOG: office@trialog.or.at

Please accept our apologies that our invitation comes at such short notice. Yet we hope that you will be ready to join the Expert Seminar and be part of the process of shaping the Managua conference. We believe that both events will be crucial to shaping the way forward for CSOs in difficult times.

Best regards,



Christine Bedoya
TRIALOG Director



Olivier Consolo
CONCORD Director