



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

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(exists in English only)

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 15 November 2007, Lisbon

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the draft agenda

The Chairman, Mr Claude Frey, opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the Bureau. He gave a special welcome to the Representative of Portugal, Ambassador Américo Madeira Bárbara, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, who was attending for the first time.

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Latest developments

- New Executive Director of the North-South Centre

The Chairman informed the members of the Bureau of the departure of the Executive Director, Mr José Carlos Correia Nunes, at the end of July 2007 and of the Secretary General's decision to appoint Mr Eladio Fernández-Galiano as Executive Director for the interim period until the arrival of the new Director. He expressed his gratitude to Mr Eladio Fernández-Galiano for his work during this interim period.

The new Executive Director, Mr Denis Huber, currently the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Serbia, would take up his duties in Lisbon on 1 December 2007. The Chairman referred to Mr Huber's vast experience obtained in various departments of the Organisation, notably the Committee of Ministers, and felt sure that he could lead and guide the North-South Centre through the challenging times ahead. The Chairman warmly welcomed the appointment of Mr Huber and offered him the full support of the Bureau in his future work.

- Withdrawal of France from the Partial Agreement

The Chairman spoke of the decision of France to withdraw from the Partial Agreement at the end of 2007. Referring to the letter of notification sent by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Secretary General, the Chairman pointed to the two reasons for this decision: on the one hand, due to budgetary constraints and on the other, because the North-South Centre had not made its mark sufficiently and had not developed or expanded over the past number of years. It was noted that France did however not exclude the possibility of making voluntary contributions to activities in certain areas of interest. The Chairman thanked each of the quadrilogue partners for their support following this decision. Letters had been sent by the President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, as well as the Presidents of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the French authorities expressing strong disappointment and regret with this decision.

The Representative of Portugal confirmed his country's continued support, commitment and interest in the North-South Centre. His hope was that the Centre would now refocus and concentrate on finding new partners and reinforcing links with existing partners, from Europe and also Latin America. The Chairman thanked the Portuguese authorities for their continued support to the North-South Centre which was very much appreciated during these difficult times. In addition to Portugal, the Chairman pointed out that similar support had been offered by other member States at the recent meeting of the Committee of Representatives (19 October, Strasbourg).

Both the President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, Mrs Annelise Oeschger, and the Representative from the South, Professor Ben Turok, praised the staff of the North-South Centre for its work, achievements and commitment during the past two years. The Representative of the South suggested enlargement as one of the key solutions to ensuring the long-term success and development of the North-South Centre. In this context, he asked the Secretariat to examine the possibility of offering associate membership to potential new members, in particular to southern countries. He also suggested the creation of an advisory panel to help raise the visibility of the Centre. This panel could advise on the current, ever-changing developments and conditions for fostering north-south dialogue, offering a southern perspective. The Chairman thanked the Representative from the South for these suggestions which he felt should be examined, with careful attention to the financial implications, at a later stage when the immediate priorities of the Centre had been dealt with.

3. Forthcoming meeting of the Executive Council

The Bureau examined and took note of the draft agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the Executive Council.

With regard to the draft budget for 2008, the Chairman emphasised that, in the absence of the contribution from France in 2008, the other remaining member States had not been asked to compensate this budgetary shortfall. He also stressed the importance of attracting voluntary contributions in 2008.

Referring to the draft programme of activities for 2008, the Representative from the South welcomed the objectives set out in programme four, “Human Rights, democratic governance and development”. He urged the Centre to keep in mind the new dimensions of the partnership between Europe and Africa, especially in light of the new Agreement recently signed between the African Union and the European Union. The Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DGIV), Mrs Gabriella Battaini Dragoni, was pleased that the relevance of the Centre's activities and objectives was clear and commented that the North-South Centre's contribution to Europe-Africa relations would complement that of the European Union.

4. Co-operation with the quadrilogue partners

The President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe presented the project proposal submitted by the North-South Dialogue and Solidarity Grouping of the INGOs enjoying Participatory Status with the Council of Europe on the development the platform of political dialogue on ethnic and solidarity initiatives in the fight against poverty in the Maghreb countries.

The Bureau noted this proposal with interest and entrusted the new Executive Director to examine the possible follow-up of the North-South Centre to this initiative.

The Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Mr Jean-Philippe Bozouls, reconfirmed his Body's wish to explore joint co-operation with the North-South Centre on common areas of interest, such as intercultural and interreligious dialogue. He referred to the Conference on Euro-Arab cities being held in February in Dubai and invited the North-South Centre to participate.

He also took this opportunity to reiterate the Congress' disappointment and surprise at the departure of France from the Partial Agreement.

The Head of the Secretariat of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr João Ary, referred to the letter sent by the one of the Assembly's representatives on the Executive Council, Mrs Anne Brasseur, for the attention of the Chairman. In this letter, she confirmed the Assembly's wish to co-operate with the Centre, in particular in the fields of intercultural dialogue, education and youth, and its willingness to organise a joint activity in 2008.

The Chairman also informed the Bureau of his recent contacts with the Director General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), Mr Mongi Bousnina, who had expressed a strong interest in co-operating with the North-South Centre.

5. Any other business

There was no other business.

6. Date and place of the next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Friday 25 January 2008 (10h00) in Strasbourg.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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3. Representative of the Conference of INGOs

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SPECIAL GUEST

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Mr Marcos ANDRADE, Programme Manager for the Youth Programme
 Mrs Gordana BERJAN, Co-ordinator of the Global Education and Youth Programme
 Mrs Eliana CARVALHO, Co-ordinator of the Communication Unit
 Mr David GAKUNZI, Co-ordinator of the Dialogue Programme
 Mrs Monica MENDES, Financial Officer

Mr Miguel SILVA, Programme Manager for the Global Education Unit
Mrs Paula SMITH, Principal Administrative Assistant

Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr João ARY, Head of the Secretariat of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Mr Jean-Philippe BOZOULS, Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities

Special Representative of the Secretary General in Serbia

Mr Denis HUBER (Executive Director of the North-South Centre from 1 December 2007)