



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

NSC/EC (2007) 4
23 November 2007

REPORT OF THE 38TH MEETING 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 Executive Council, in particular those who were attending for the first time. Apologies had been sent by the Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mrs Anne Brasseur, and the Representative of Malta for their absence at the meeting.

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Review of other statutory meetings and recent developments

The Chairman gave a report on the statutory meetings which had taken place since the last meeting (Bureau and the Committee of Representatives of the member States), and on the main North-South Centre developments.

- Withdrawal of France from the Partial Agreement

The Chairman informed the members of the Executive Council 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/would be 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 from the South, Professor Ben Turok, added his deep disappointment to the decision of France to withdraw from the Partial Agreement and regretted that no representative was present at the meeting to provide more explanation to the Executive Council.

- New Executive Director of the North-South Centre

The Chairman informed the members of the Executive Council 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 its future challenges. He felt that the priority for the new Executive Director would be to show the added value of the North-South Centre to both its existing and potential new member States in the coming year. The Executive Council warmly welcomed the

appointment of Mr Huber as Executive Director and wished him every success with his future endeavours.

- Reports on other statutory meetings

The Chairman reported on the two meetings of the Bureau which had taken place on 23 June and 15 November 2007. At its June meeting, the Bureau had examined the progress of the implementation of the 2007 programme of activities and the current financial situation. The Bureau meeting was followed by the Jury for the 2007 North-South Prize. The Jury had decided to award the 2007 prize to Mrs Simone Veil, President of the Foundation for the Memory of Shoah, former Minister of State for France and former President of the European Parliament, and Mr Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, for their contribution to the defense and the promotion of the human rights throughout the world. The Award Ceremony would take place in Lisbon in spring 2008. During its meeting earlier that day, the Bureau had discussed co-operation with its quadrilogue partners. In this context, the Chairman read the letter received from the Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mrs Anne Brasseur, confirming 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 Executive Council 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.

Information was also given on the Committee of Representatives of the member States (19 October 2007) at which the level of obligatory contributions for 2008 had been fixed. One important point was that the remaining member States had not been asked to compensate for the financial shortfall resulting from the withdrawal of France. The Chairman commented on the strong support expressed by a large number of countries to the Centre during this meeting. With regard to the representation of the member States on the Bureau, Portugal had been nominated to fill the vacant seat left following the departure of Italy.

Finally, the Chairman provided information on the Informal Regional Conference of Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs which he had recently attended in Belgrade. He had given a presentation on the North-South Centre and had received encouraging signs of interest from some south eastern European countries in the Partial Agreement. He referred to the conclusions of the Conference which cited the North-South Centre's central role in the development of contacts with public authorities and civil society partners in neighbouring countries.

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. He asked the Secretariat to examine the possibility of offering associate membership to potential new members, in particular to southern countries and beyond. 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. During the exchange of views which followed, the members of the Executive Council agreed on the need for the Centre to reflect and consider its future role. The Director General pointed out the paradoxical situation the Centre was currently facing with, on the one hand, strong interest from outside partners who viewed the Centre as the instrument for dialogue between the Council of Europe and other countries, and, on the other, the withdrawal of member States. She felt that both these perspectives needed to be considered during discussions on the best way forward for the Centre.

While the Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr Kimo Sasi, welcomed the Representative of the South's proposal to look beyond Europe to other developing countries, the President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe urged the Centre to concentrate on the exchange of dialogue and focus on small southern countries before looking further afield. The Chairman thanked the Representative from the South for his 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. a Progress report on 2007 activities

The Head of the Administration and Communication Section, Mrs Eliana Carvalho, gave a brief overview of the main activities which had taken place since the last meeting of the Executive Council in March 2007, and those planned for the rest of the year.

Under line of action one, "raising European public awareness of issues of global interdependence and solidarity through education and young people", she mentioned the new online global education guideline, Global Education Week, the World Aware Education Awards and the meeting held between DGIV representatives and the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) in July 2007. With regard to the youth dimension, she provided information on the 8th annual University on youth and development held in Mollina in September, which had included a consultative seminar with youth organisations on global education and youth. She also referred to the Euro-Africa Youth Summit which would be held on the fringe of the Summit of EU-Africa Heads of State in December in Lisbon. The aim of the Youth Summit was to prepare a list of recommendations to present to the EU-Africa Heads of State for consideration. At the request of the Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly, additional information was provided on the preparations and expected participation at the Youth Summit which would offer a high visibility for the North-South Centre.

Following a request from the Representative of Germany, the Director General provided additional information on the meeting held with the GENE Network in Strasbourg. This had been a very useful meeting during which past issues and misunderstandings were clarified and concrete proposals for reinforcing co-operation and new initiatives were discussed. It had also offered the representatives of the GENE Network the opportunity to establish direct contacts with members of the Secretariat from the Directorate of Education.

With regard to line of action two, "promoting North-South solidarity policies in conformity with the goals and principles of the Council of Europe through dialogue between Europe, the southern Mediterranean countries and Africa", the Head of the Administration and Communication section gave information on the meetings organised by the Centre in the context of the consultation process on the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The first was a consultation entitled "Women and intercultural dialogue" held in April in Geneva, the second, "Migrants: actors and vectors of dialogue" held in May in Lisbon, in collaboration with the Directorate General for Social Cohesion (DGIII), the High Commissioner for Migration and Ethnic Minorities of Portugal, the FORIM and the support of the Aga Khan Development Network. These were followed by a final consultation entitled "Promoting intercultural dialogue: issues and perspectives of the Council of Europe" held in June, also in Lisbon. Information was also provided on the inter-parliamentary Forum on "Europe-Africa dialogue and democratic governance: the role of parliamentarians" and the Euro-Africa Forum for civil society, both recently held. Finally, reference was made to the forthcoming 2007 Lisbon Forum which was being co-organised with the Venice Commission and the Office of the Commissioner for Human

Rights. This year's theme was "National human rights commissions – the cornerstone of the protection and promotion of human rights".

The Representative of the South welcomed the Centre's current work on Europe-Africa dialogue and asked the Secretariat to provide a summary report of all the recent and forthcoming activities, highlighting the particular implications for the North-South Centre.

Commenting on the written progress reports presented to the Executive Council, the Representative of Switzerland suggested that a more direct language be used to reflect the achieved results more clearly.

3. b White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue

The Director General presented the draft version of the Council of Europe's "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue". The background to the White Paper process, she explained, had started when intercultural dialogue was identified as the key priority of the Organisation in the Recommendations of the 3rd Summit. The Council of Europe then developed a strategy for developing intercultural dialogue, known as the Faro Declaration, adopted in October 2005 and from this the idea of preparing of the White Paper had emerged. The White Paper had been drafted following extensive consultations with all the major stakeholders on all levels and reflected their insights and concerns. The White Paper would be a guide for the development and implementation of intercultural dialogue to both policy makers and stakeholders. The draft version was currently being discussed by the Committee of Ministers, with a view to its adoption by the end of 2007 or early 2008, so that the official launch could coincide as much as possible with the start of the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue" being organised by the European Union.

The Director General pointed to the vital role that the North-South Centre had played in the consultation process by bringing together many partners in and beyond Europe. The White Paper recognises the North-South Centre as one of the Council of Europe's key instruments for promoting intercultural dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring countries and would have an important role to play in the implementation of the recommendations of the White Paper.

The members of the Executive Council thanked the Director General for her informative presentation and looked forward to supporting the North-South Centre in its role in the implementation of the recommendations.

4. Draft budget for 2008

The Executive Director *ad interim* presented the draft budget for 2008. As already mentioned, the remaining member States had not been asked to compensate for the reduction in budget resulting from the withdrawal of France. Instead, the Secretary General had taken the decision to reduce staff expenditure by the suppression of two permanent posts. The Executive Director *ad interim* explained that the scale of contributions had been increased (minimum from 1% to 1.2%, maximum from 20% to 25%) in order to ensure both a fair balance of contributions between the Centre's member States, and to guarantee that member States, in so far as possible, would be paying the same amount of contributions as originally proposed in the 2008 draft budget issued to the member States in September.

The Representative of Germany referred to his country's increased level of obligatory contribution in 2008 and explained that although his authorities had accepted to pay this higher

contribution, they had reservations in doing so. While they welcomed the change in management and recognised the steps taken to consolidate the budget in light of the departure of France, they were anxious about the mixed performance of the Centre in the past and that the situation would continue as before, in spite of current efforts. He sought clarification on how the Centre intended to broaden its resource base and how it could best present its added value and increase effectiveness. He also voiced concerns at the low level of resources foreseen in the global education budget line, Germany's priority area of interest in the North-South Centre, and the high level of expenditure on the management line.

In reply, the Executive Director *ad interim* explained that the management expenditure figure was due to an increase in staff expenditure relating to the change in Executive Director, and also due to the fact that the global office running costs were included in this figure. He acknowledged the small amount of expenditure available for programmes but pointed out that no cuts had been made to the global education, as one of the priority areas of the Centre's work. He agreed with the Representative of Germany that the Centre urgently needed to attract voluntary contributions. In this context, he referred to the funding application which had been submitted to the European Commission and to other steps currently underway by the future Executive Director to attract additional funding.

The Director General added that the global education programme now enjoyed the full support and assets of the DGIV's Education and Youth Departments which offered expertise to the North-South Centre's team. She also explained that DGIV had contributed to the Centre during the interim management period by appointing an *ad interim* Director from DGIV at no additional expense to the Centre. With regard to the resources available, every effort would be made to use them in the most effective way. She added that the possibility of giving an additional staff position to the Centre in 2008, financed by the Organisation's general budget, was being examined.

In reply to a question from the Chairman on the choice of permanent posts suppressed, the Director General and Executive Director *ad interim* explained that offers of redeployment had been made to two staff members after a serious examination of the staffing needs of the North-South Centre.

Following a discussion on the question raised by the Representative of Portugal regarding the inclusion of any voluntary contributions received in the expenditure figures, it was agreed that any voluntary contributions received would be considered as additional receipts and the figure could be adjusted accordingly.

The Executive Council adopted the draft budget for 2008 (Resolution NSC/EC (2007) 1 – appended).

5. Draft programme of activities for 2008

The Executive Director *ad interim* presented the draft programme of activities for 2008. In spite of the announcement of the withdrawal of France in 2008, he had decided that it was important for the Centre maintain its original ambitions in terms of its objectives and the document had therefore not been altered. Under line of action 1, one of the priorities would be to reinforce co-operation with countries in southern and eastern Europe. To this end, it was foreseen to carry out a follow-up to the support programme designed to strengthen global education in the four Visegrad countries, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (V4) carried out by the Centre previously, extending it to other neighbouring countries. Another priority would be to

strengthen co-operation with the Global Education Network Europe (GENE). The youth sector would continue with the same priorities as 2007 and follow-up work on the Youth Summit.

Under line of action two, there would be two key priority areas of work. Firstly, the Centre's work on intercultural dialogue with a particular focus on the implementation of the Recommendations of the White Paper and, secondly, the Centre's involvement in the Council of Europe's broad pan-European campaign on the fight against racism, intolerance and xenophobia, with an emphasis on the growing risks of islamophobia that appear in many European countries.

The Director General very much welcomed the Representative of Portugal's suggestion that the Centre be included in the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union within the framework of the European Union Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), currently on the agenda of the Ministers' Deputies Rapporteur Group on External Relations.

The Representative of Switzerland commented that the objectives and performance indicators in the Centre's 2008 activity logframes should be formulated in a more concrete manner and more in line with the Results Based Budgeting (RBB) and Project Management Methodology (PMM) used by the Council of Europe.

Also referring to the logframes, the Representative of the Holy See asked that references be included to inter-religious dialogue, and not just intercultural dialogue.

The draft programme of activities for 2008 was adopted by the Executive Council.

6. Main lines of action for 2008-2010

The new Executive Director introduced himself to the Executive Council and confirmed his enthusiasm and commitment to the challenging months ahead and thanked the members of the Executive Council for their support. He took this opportunity to outline his key priorities for the coming months.

His first months in office would be spent carrying out a consultation with the North-South team to analyse the reasons for the current difficult situation and the ways of addressing this situation on an individual and team level. He also intended to adapt the administrative environment of the Centre, taking account of the reduction in staff and the work priorities.

The future Executive Director would also spend time in Strasbourg to meet with each of the North-South Centre's member States to discuss and define each country's priorities for the coming years. This would be followed by consultations with representatives from each of the quadrilogue partners for the same purpose.

In terms of budgetary resources, he agreed with the comments of the Representative of Germany on the low level of programme expenditure available and the need to attract additional funding. He intended to do this, using the political support and credibility which the Council of Europe could offer. Similarly, the Centre needed the vital support of its Portuguese hosts and should take advantage of its geographical base to develop north-south relations with countries from north Africa and beyond. The Centre also needed the financial and political support of the European Union. In addition, a strong focus would be placed on attracting new member States, in particular countries from south-east Europe, the Mediterranean and the Maghreb.

The results of the work carried out on the aforementioned priorities and consultations would be reflected in a strategic document and in the revised version of document NSC/Prog (2007) 1 containing the main lines of action for 2008-2010, to be presented to the Executive Council and the Committee of Representatives at their spring 2008 meetings.

The future Executive Director undertook that, in 2008, the Centre would play its part in implementing the Recommendations of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, and would be actively involved in the Council of Europe's broad pan-European campaign on the fight against racism, intolerance and xenophobia, with a special emphasis on the growing risks of islamophobia that appear in many European countries. Looking to later in 2008 and beyond, he looked forward to working with the Swedish, Spanish, Slovenian and Swiss Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers and hoped the Centre could be used as a tool in helping them achieve their respective priorities.

The Executive Council noted with satisfaction this presentation and encouraged the new Executive Director to move ahead along those lines.

7. Other business

There was no other business.

8. Date and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Monday 31 March 2008 in Lisbon, subject to the date confirmation of the North-South Prize Ceremony as 1 April 2008.

Resolution MS/EC (2007) 1
concerning the budget of the Partial Agreement
establishing the European Centre for
Global Interdependence and Solidarity
for 2008

The members of the Executive Council of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity,

Having regard to the decisions taken by the Committee of Representatives of the member States at its 48th meeting (19 October 2007):

- to fix the ceiling of obligatory contributions of the member States for the financial year 2008 at € 823 500, with contribution rates of minimum 1.2% and maximum rate 25%;

Resolve as follows:

- i. that the budget of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity for the financial year 2008, as it appears on page 15 of document NSC/bud/2008E rev2, is adopted;
- ii. that the budget of expenditure of the programme account will be equal to the difference between the total amount of the budget of receipts and the total of the budget of operational expenditure such as presented in Table A on page 15 of document NSC/bud/2008E rev2 for an amount of € 748 300;
- iii. that the total of the budget of receipts such as presented in Table B on page 15 of document NSC/bud/2008E rev2 will be a function of actual receipts and adjusted accordingly in the course of the financial year.

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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)