



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

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30 October 2007

REPORT OF THE 48TH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEMBER STATES

19 October 2007, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

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

The Chairman of the Committee of Representatives, Ambassador Fernando Mansito, Permanent Representative of Spain to the Council of Europe, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Review of the meeting of the Bureau of the North-South Centre and other developments

- New Executive Director of the North-South Centre

The Chairman of the Executive Council, Mr Claude Frey, informed the Committee of Representatives 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 Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DGIV), Mrs Gabriella Battaini Dragoni, introduced the new Executive Director, Mr Denis Huber, to the Committee of Representatives. Mr Huber, currently the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Serbia, would take up his duties in Lisbon on 1 December 2007. The Director General 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. The Committee of Representatives warmly welcomed this appointment and wished Mr Huber every success with his future mission. The Chairman of the Executive Council viewed this change as a new opportunity for the Centre to move forward and develop to its full potential and he urged the member States to give the Centre the chance to do this in the year ahead under the leadership of the new Executive Director.

- Withdrawal of France from the Partial Agreement

The Committee of Representatives were informed of the decision of France to withdraw from the Partial Agreement at the end of 2007. The Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, Ambassador Bruno Gain, explained that his authorities, faced with financial constraints, had reached this decision after many months of reflection and evaluation of their financial contributions to all European organisations. They had judged that in the current competitive institutional landscape, the North-South Centre had not made its mark sufficiently and had not developed or expanded over the past number of years. He regretted this departure from the Partial Agreement, especially in light of the appointment of the new Executive Director. France did however not exclude the possibility of making voluntary contributions to activities in certain areas of interest.

During the exchange of views that followed, the majority of member States expressed support for the Centre and agreed that the Centre should be given a chance to refocus, redress its weaknesses and realise its full potential. The Representatives of Portugal and San Marino pointed to the importance of the Centre as a tool for dialogue with countries beyond Europe.

The Representative of Sweden confirmed his country's support for the year ahead and suggested that the Centre refocus on its core priorities and perhaps co-operate more with other partners, in particular those from civil society and the south. Similarly, the Representative of Switzerland pledged his country's support for the coming year.

The Representative of Germany informed the Committee of Representatives that, following the withdrawal of France, his authorities were currently examining the repercussions in detail. Like France, Germany was currently suffering from many budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, he very much welcomed the appointment of the new Executive Director and hoped that the Centre would improve and flourish under his leadership. The Representatives of Greece and the Netherlands shared the position of Germany.

The Chairman thanked the Committee of Representatives for this frank exchange of views. While he understood that some countries needed to reflect on recent events, he reminded the Committee of Representatives of the importance of the North-South Centre as a multiplier and vector for dialogue between European countries and beyond.

Finally, the future Executive Director, Mr Denis Huber, thanked the Committee of Representatives for its comments and kind words of support. He considered the North-South Centre as an important tool which could serve the interests of both the member States and the Organisation as a whole. He looked forward to the challenging months ahead during which he would address the questions and issues raised by the member States.

- *Meeting of the Bureau of 22 June 2007*

The Chairman of the Executive Council gave a brief summary of the main points of discussion at the Bureau meeting held in Lisbon on 22 June 2007. These included an update on the progress of the implementation of the 2007 programme of activities and an examination of the preliminary draft budget and programme for 2008.

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.

3. Approval of the North-South Centre accounts for 2006

The Committee of Representatives of the member States approved the financial statements for 2006 as presented in document CM (2007) 101.

4. Progress report on the 2007 programme of activities

The Director General gave a brief overview of the main activities which had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee of Representatives in April 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 gave information on the meeting held between DGIV representatives and the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) in July 2007.

This was a very useful meeting during which past issues and misunderstandings were clarified and concrete proposals for reinforcing co-operation and new initiatives were discussed. With regard to the youth dimension, the Head of the Communication and Administration Unit, Mrs Eliana Carvalho, provided information on the 8th annual University on youth and development held in Mollina in September. This year's theme was intercultural dialogue, in the context of the Alliance of Civilisations. She also reminded the Committee of Representatives that the Centre was currently preparing 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. In reply to a question from the Representative of Switzerland, the Head of Communication confirmed that youth organisations from many of the Council of Europe's member States, as well as from countries from Africa, were involved in the preparation of these recommendations.

The Chairman underlined the importance of the North-South Centre's youth activities as they represented a special forum for young people to come together and discuss current global issues.

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 Director General provided information on the meetings organised by the Centre in the context of the consultation process on the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue since April. The first was the consultation entitled "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. This was followed by a final consultation entitled "Promoting intercultural dialogue: issues and perspectives of the Council of Europe" held in June, also in Lisbon. The Centre had played an important role in facilitating dialogue between different partners and helped integrate these partners into the consultation process.

Finally, the Director General provided information on the 2007 Lisbon Forum which would take place in Lisbon in November. In addition to the Venice Commission with whom the Centre co-organised the 2006 Forum, this year's new partner was the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. The theme was "National human rights commissions – the cornerstone of the protection and promotion of human rights".

5. Main lines of action for 2008-2010

The Director General presented the main lines of action and priorities for the North-South Centre for 2008-2010. There would be three main dimensions in the workplan for the next three years. Firstly, to develop co-operation with the Visegrad countries and other Central European countries in the field of global education and youth. The second would be to continue and develop the Centre's role in the Organisation's work in the field of intercultural dialogue. The Centre had played an important role in bringing together the partners for the Consultation Process on the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue and it would be now important for it to include the themes of media and diversity into its work in this field. The third dimension would concentrate on governance. In this respect, the Centre needed to further consolidate and build synergies with the Council of Europe's structures and other external partners, for example, the Alliance of Civilisations. The Director General also stressed the importance of the renewed co-operation with the European Commission.

The future Executive Director asked the Committee of Representatives to wait until its next meeting before formally approving the document presenting the main lines of action 2008-2010. One of his first objectives on taking up his duties would be to establish direct contacts with each of the North-South Centre's member States with a view to defining and discussing each country's priorities for the next three years and ensure these were reflected in the Centre's main lines of action. He referred to the application for funding for 2008-2010 which the Centre had recently submitted to the European Commission for consideration and he confirmed his intention to travel to Brussels to seek both this financial and political support for the Centre.

The Representative of Finland welcomed the earlier news of the renewed contacts between the North-South Centre and the GENE Network, as well as the contacts with the European Commission for funding. Finland would continue to support the North-South Centre and would welcome the opportunity of meeting the new Executive Director to discuss the core objectives for the coming years which, she suggested, should be very precise and in line with those of the Organisation as a whole.

The Representative of Portugal urged the new Executive Director to try to modernise and improve the Centre with the implementation of its activities, with the aim of increasing visibility and attracting the accession of old and new member States. He welcomed the news of the renewed contacts with the European Commission and encouraged the search for other sources of voluntary contributions.

The Representative of Germany considered that the Centre's current lines of action were valuable in themselves but felt that the Centre needed to have a clear strategy of organisation and visibility in order to make itself more attractive to potential new member States. He asked that the Committee of Representatives be kept informed on the outcome of the contacts with the European Commission with regard to possible funding.

The Executive Director *ad interim* agreed with the Representative of Switzerland's suggestion that the Centre should take account of the modest funds currently available and should adapt its objectives and logframe accordingly. He also acknowledged the importance of a clear fund raising strategy for the Centre.

The Chairman welcomed and supported all the comments and suggestions made, in particular the need for the Centre to attract new member States. It was agreed that, at this stage, this document (doc: (NSC Prog (2007) 1) would keep the status of a working document and that a consolidated version would be presented in spring 2008.

6. Draft programme of activities for 2008

The Director General presented the draft programme for 2008 and explained that it would be a year of consolidation and continuation for the North-South Centre, with clear objectives being set by the new Executive Director of the priorities for the years ahead. Under line of action 1, one of the priorities would be to develop co-operation with countries of South East Europe. To this end, the Centre's participation was already foreseen in the informal regional conference of Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs being held in November 2007 in the framework of the Serbian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The Chairman of the Executive Council would be at this meeting to make a presentation on the North-South Centre and its work. Another priority under line of action one would be to expand the GENE Network to other countries. The Youth Dimension of the Centre's work would continue with the same priorities and fruitful co-operation with the Youth Directorate as in 2007.

Under line of action two, one of the priorities would be the work on intercultural dialogue with, as previously stated, the media and diversity dimension. The Centre would also be associated with the Council of Europe's new campaign on the fight against discrimination and xenophobia. The other priority under this line of action would be the exchange of dialogue on good governance.

The Committee of Representatives of the member States took note of the draft programme of activities for 2008 (doc: NSC/Prog (2007) 5) which would be presented to the Executive Council for adoption at its meeting on 15 November 2007.

7. Draft budget for 2008

The Executive Director *ad interim* presented the draft budget for 2008. This document had been revised the previous week following the notification from the French authorities of their withdrawal from the Partial Agreement on 1 January 2008. The Executive Director *ad interim* stressed that the remaining member States were not being asked to compensate for the reduction in budget resulting from this withdrawal. Instead, the Secretary General had taken the decision to reduce staff expenditure by the suppression of two permanent posts.

In response to a question from the Representative of Germany on the reason for the increase in the management costs, the Executive Director explained this was due to the salary differences compared to last year of some staff, including the new Executive Director.

The Head of Budget, Accounting and Linguistic Services Department, Mrs Françoise Prinz, explained that the scale of contributions had been increased (minimum from 1% to 1.2%, maximum from 20% to 25%) in order both to ensure 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.

As several member States were still waiting on confirmation from their capitals on the acceptance of the level of contributions for 2008, it was agreed that the member States would be granted a ten day period before final decision. The Committee of Representatives agreed that the ceiling of obligatory contributions of the member States for the financial year 2008 would be fixed at at € 823 500, with contribution rates of minimum 1.2% and maximum rate 25%, and that this decision would be considered approved for 2008 if no member State had sent an objection in writing to the Secretariat by Monday 29 October 2007 at 15h00.

As no written objections were received by the deadline, the decision was therefore adopted.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Date of next meeting

Monday 28 April 2007 at 3.00 pm

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**CYPRUS**

Apologised

FINLAND

Mrs Anne-Christine KRANK, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

FRANCE

Ambassador Bruno GAIN, Permanent Representative

Mrs Marie-Annick BOURDIN, Deputy Permanent Representative

GERMANY

Mr Andreas Klassen, Deputy Permanent Representative

GREECE

Ambassador Constantin YEROCOSTOPOULOS, Permanent Representative

Mr Anastassios GAVALIAS, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

HOLY SEE

Apologised

ICELAND

Apologised

IRELAND

Mr Niall SHEERIN, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

LIECHTENSTEIN

Apologised

LUXEMBOURG

Ambassador Ronald MAYER, Permanent Representative

MALTA

Mr Claude DEPASQUALE, Deputy Permanent Representative

NETHERLANDS

Mr Marchel van der KOLK, Deputy Permanent Representative

NORWAY

Mrs Elin WIDSTEEN, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

PORTUGAL

Mr João PATRICIO, Deputy Permanent Representative

SAINT MARINO

Ambassador Guido BELLATTI CECCOLI, Permanent Representative

SLOVENIA

Mr Jakob BRENČIČ, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

SPAIN (CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES)

Ambassador Fernando MANSITO, Permanent Representative

Mr Pablo DESPORTES, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

SWEDEN

Mr Björb HÄGGMARK, Deputy Permanent Representative

SWITZERLAND

Ambassador Jean-Claude JOSEPH, Permanent Representative

Mr Clemens BIRRER, Deputy Permanent Representative

Mr Claude FREY, Chairman of the Executive Council of the North-South Centre

OBSERVERS**ROMANIA**

Mrs Oana ROGOVEANU, Deputy to the Permanent Representative

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE SECRETARIAT**Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport**

Mrs Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI, Director General

North-South Centre Secretariat

Mr Eladio FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO, Executive Director *ad interim*

Mrs Eliana CARVALHO, Head of the Communication Unit

Mrs Paula SMITH, Principal Administrative Assistant

Private Office of the Secretary General

Mrs Liri KOPACI-DI-MICHELE

Mr Patrick PENNINCKX

Directorate of Finance and Linguistic Services

Mrs Françoise PRINZ, Head of Budget, Accounting and Linguistic Services Department

Mrs Catherine DU BERNARD ROCHY

Mr Alejandro ZAMORANO

Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly

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

Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers

Mrs Francine ARNOLD-PAULI, Administrative Officer

Special Representative of the Secretary General in Serbia

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