

JOINT RESOLUTION BETWEEN THE WORLD BANK AND THE NGO WORKING GROUP
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Considering that:

- 1. Since its creation in the early 1980s, the NGO-World Bank Committee (the Committee) has played an important role** in the substantial growth of civil society involvement in Bank-supported operations and policy dialogue. The Committee was a formal mechanism for policy dialogue with NGOs. At the time, this mechanism had no precedent and it was innovative for an international development institution.
- 2. Over the years, the Committee has played a lead role in facilitating dialogue between the Bank and NGOs on important issues related to poverty reduction participation and other issues essential to civil society.** With the decentralization of the World Bank offices to the field and the appointment of civil society specialists in field offices, the dialogue moved closer to the field. The creation of the Committee's Regional Assemblies since the mid 1990s broadened the potential range of opportunities for exchange of information and policy debate on specific issues of concern to civil society. The Bank has benefited from these exchanges and interaction in that the global policy dialogue was expanded to include NGOs involved in the Committee.
- 3. The NGO Working Group on the World Bank** (the NGO members of the Committee hereafter referred to as the Working Group) **triggered the decentralization of the dialogue between the World Bank and NGOs in all the regions.** In doing this, the Working Group and the Committee have effectively contributed to open opportunities to NGOs from client countries to engage in regular exchanges with senior management in many developing countries in which the Bank has operations.
- 4. The growing role of civil society worldwide in development and emerging concerns among civil society groups about the Bank on specific issues has resulted in a myriad of substantive discussions on an ad-hoc basis.** It has also resulted in a significant expansion of policy dialogue and consultation with NGOs beyond the Committee's realm. A large number and range of civil society actors not involved in the NGO Working Group have sought to engage with the World Bank on global issues. The 'globalization of civil society' has helped to mainstream the dialogue and interaction between the Bank and civil society as an important dimension of development effectiveness and sustainability.
- 5. In the context of the evolving relationship between the Bank and civil society, last year, the President of The World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, encouraged the Working Group to rethink its role and that of the Committee.** The Working Group would take stock of its accomplishments to date, the emerging challenges to the Bank and civil society, and the growing budget constraints in the Bank. The Working Group addressed Mr. Wolfensohn's request into the ongoing discussions amongst members of its steering committee.
- 6. In early August 2000, the Working Group submitted a detailed proposal to the Bank** setting out recommendations on its future role, and on how the Bank's relationship and dialogue with NGOs and other civil society actors may be strengthened. In the proposal, the Working Group stated its intention to pursue a policy of critical but constructive engagement with the Bank, stressed the need of maintaining a global space, recognized the urgency of bringing more civil society actors into the Bank-civil society dialogue, and proposed to focus this dialogue on specific issues and to update the

mandate and structure of the Working Group, among others. By helping to broaden the dialogue to other important civil society actors, the Working Group would be taking up the challenge to move beyond its privileged position of access to key decision makers within the Bank. The proposal has been discussed among CSTT members and sent to the regional Vice-Presidents (RVPs) for consultation within the regions.

7. **Committee Co-chairs, Ian Johnson, Mats Karlsson (EXTVP), and Chris Sinckler (Working Group Chair), and other Committee members met twice to identify areas of convergence for the future** relationship between the Bank and the Working Group. The main points from the September meeting were:

- The creation of a permanent space of dialogue between the Bank and civil society is needed.
- Giving voice to the South in the dialogue between the Bank and civil society on policy and global issues is critical.
- The Working Group would need to expand its civil society constituency and revise its role.
- Strengthening the regional dialogues and broadening their membership and scope.
- The Bank will conduct an internal consultation within the regions to make an informed position on the Working Group proposal that includes the regions' experience and input.
- Open an external electronic consultation to inform both the Working Group and the Bank. It will gather opinions from other civil society organizations vis-à-vis the future of the NGO World Bank Committee and the Working Group proposal.

In the last meeting of the Committee Co-Chairs that took place in mid November, the preparation of a draft joint resolution was agreed.

8. **In late October, the Working Group with the support of the World Bank and Bellanet, a Canadian NGO facilitating virtual discussions set up a broad, electronic discussion on the Working Group proposal.** Of the 371 subscribers as of November 21, only 4 were found to be Working Group members. Of the 117 messages received, only 12 were relevant to the proposal. **Key insights from the discussion worth considering are the following:**

- a. The Working Group is not seen as the sole spokesperson nor a facilitator for civil society.
- b. The Working Group is encouraged to find its appropriate space within the myriad of civil society voices.
- c. The restructuring of the Working Group is called to be embedded in, reflected and built upon experiences and suggestions from civil society in the countries involved.
- d. The usefulness of a heavy and centralized system of Bank-NGO relations for global policy dialogue is being questioned.
- e. Increased capacity building of civil society at the national level for civic engagement is considered crucial.

**The Committee resolves that:
(2:45, 6 December Amendment)**

1. **As per the Working Group proposal, an annual World Bank-Civil Society Forum will be established.** The Forum will be a key space for dialogue between the Bank and civil society on specific issues. It will attempt to be as inclusive as possible and, depending on the issues discussed, it will convene representatives of NGOs, trade unions, community organizations, religious groups, women organizations and other organized expressions of civil society with relevant expertise in issues identified as the annual focus of the forum.

2. In addition to the above, the following have been identified as key principles and criteria in the organization of the Forum:
 - i. There should be **clear objectives** linked to **specific outcomes**. These objectives need to have relevance to regional and country realities in the context of Bank-civil society engagement.
 - ii. The Forum must be **planned** carefully, following clear and transparent processes.
 - iii. There should be **flexibility** in defining: the specific issues to be discussed; the nature of participants; the timing of the Forum; use of global, regional and country linkages in developing the agenda; .
 - iv. A process should be defined to ensure systematic **follow-up** of Forum discussions with clear responsibilities designated for that purpose.
 - v. The focus of the new arrangements is principally Bank-civil society engagement. However, there should be flexibility to invite other actors (e.g. bilaterals and multilaterals) depending on their interest and expertise in regard to the theme(s).
3. **The Bank will continue to promote regional and country dialogues with civil society organizations.** During the first half of 2001, the regions will re-think their regional (and country) mechanisms of dialogue, not necessarily based on the existing regional structures. These (new) mechanisms should be flexible and tailored to the specific dynamics and background of the Bank-civil society relationships in each region. These regional dialogues will feed into the annual Forum, where possible.
4. **With the purpose of facilitating the organization of the Annual Forum, a Joint Facilitation Committee will be created.** During the first half of 2001, the NGO Working Group will advise the Bank on the role of the Joint Facilitation Committee, its specific functions (based on the outline in paragraph 5 below), its size, structure and the criteria for selection of its civil society members. The Bank and the Working Group will also consult with other regional and global networks. The Chair plus two other representatives from the NGO Working Group will join the Joint Facilitation Committee once it has been established, no later than June 30, 2001.
5. **Members of the Joint Facilitation Committee will rotate every year according to the topic of the Annual Forum while ensuring civil society participation from across all the regions.** The Joint Facilitation Committee will meet once a year, while convening through electronic means as necessary. Its overall functions will be to:
 - i. Consult and help define the thematic focus of the Annual Forum.
 - ii. Identify civil society panelists and invitees to the Annual Forum.
 - iii. Define the rules of the game to ensure credibility, quality, timeliness, effectiveness and continuity of the dialogue.
 - iv. Provide oversight and guidance in the follow up and implementation of the decisions made in regard to this process.
 - v. After about two years, evaluate progress made through the Forum discussions (e.g. value-added, relevance, effectiveness in broadening access by civil society, and achieving specified objectives).
- I. 6. The NGO-Civil Society Unit of the World Bank will work with the Chair and Secretariat of the NGO Working Group to ensure a smooth transition to the creation of the Joint Facilitation Committee. Once the Joint Facilitation Committee has been established, a joint secretariat will be created to support its work. The Bank will support the Joint Secretariat in developing its functions, organizing the Annual Forum, and facilitating the adequate participation of civil society representatives of client countries.
7. **The Bank will continue to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Working Group.** It is noted that, in close coordination with the Bank regional NGO focal points and the NGO and Civil

Joint Resolution-Final-Merge-6 Dec.00

Society Unit, the Working Group will continue to channel its regional members' concerns and initiatives related to policies, development strategies and projects supported by the Bank. **It also acknowledges the Working Group's interest in pursuing specific programs as stated in its August 2000 proposal**, which include: enhancing civic engagement in poverty reduction and mainstreaming participation in social development; promoting participatory and poverty focused macro-economic reform; and building the capacity of CSOs for civic engagement. The Bank will consider supporting specific proposals of the Working Group, notably where the latter has expertise.

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