Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

MINUTES OF MEETING
May 12, 2006

Attendees:
Paul McCold, Chair, Friends World Committee, International Institute for Restorative Practices
Edith Linn, Secretary, American Society of Criminology
Rosalind Harris, Treasurer, International Social Service
Lynette Parker, At-Large, Prison Fellowship International
Afaf Mahfouz, International Psychoanalytical Association
Irene Melup, World Society of Victimology
Lloyd Klein, Macon State College
Karen Smith, Universal Peace Federation, Women’s Federation for World Peace International
Lucie Hrbková, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

Meeting Minutes:

Adoption of the Agenda: The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm. The Agenda was approved.

Approval of the Minutes: Future clarification was requested regarding an NGO journal described at the last meeting by Yael Danieli, who is not present at today’s meeting. The reference was omitted and the minutes of the March 2006 meeting were then approved.

Chair report:

Chair Paul McCold expressed the hope that the new executive secretariat would be selected by the American Correctional Association, and would be available by the next meeting. Edith Linn, Secretary, will prepare today’s minutes, with the assistance of Lynette Parker.

The Chair raised the issue of the month’s delay in posting the draft minutes of each meeting. He suggested that the announcement of upcoming meetings be separately e-mailed to Alliance members, to avoid their having to wait for the announcement in the posted minutes.

Paul then noted the passing of Gerhard Mueller on April 20, at the age of 82. Dr. Mueller was the first chairperson of the Alliance from 1972-74. He then served as chief of the U.N. Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch from 1974-82, and was the executive secretary to the U.N. Congresses for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders in 1975 and 1980. A memorial tribute will be held on Sunday, June 4, 2006, 2:00-4:00 p.m., in the United Nations Chapel across from the UN buildings at 1st Avenue and 44th Street, New York (this building). A Reception following the Memorial will be held at the United Nations Plaza Hotel. Those planning to attend the reception are asked to RSVP Bill Leipold - bleipold@newark.rutgers.edu. Paul also recommended that the Alliance post a memorial on its website, prepared by Nancy Grosselfinger, as she has already written about Professor Mueller.

The Chair also announced that the first Stockholm Prize in Criminology will be presented on June 16, 2006. The million-kroner/$137,000 prize is to be shared by John Braithwaite of the Australian National University and Friedrich Lösel of Cambridge University in the UK. The Prize was created in 2005 to reward achievements in the field of criminological research or for the practical implementation of research findings in order to combat crime and promote human rights.

Paul thanked Karen Smith for the work that she has done on the website. She has already posted the listing of new officers. Paul noted that the listing on the website has the web link to his NGO but no one else’s and ask that all the NGOs be included on the website. Karen asked that Alliance members check their NGO information to ensure that all the information on the site is the way that people want it to appear. Paul asked people to put web addresses on the sign-in sheet today.

Finally, Paul announced that Lucie Hrbková, of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, will be coming in to present the proposed UNODC Strategy, and hear our comments.
Executive Secretariat report: Delayed
Treasurer’s report:

Following up on the last meeting, Treasurer Rosalind Harris reported that she still has not received either the financial records or the approximately $1500 in Alliance monies that had been deposited in the Washington, DC account. Efforts by both Rosalind and Paul to get the previous treasurer, Georgette Sobel, to send these items have been unsuccessful. Paul has informed Georgette that the Alliance may have to take formal action to recover the money and records. He asked that other members consider possible options and jointly decide on what recourse to take, should the matter not be resolved by the next meeting. Lynette Parker volunteered to try to meet with Georgette and pick up the material, since both she and Georgette work in Washington area.

Report on the UN Crime Commission Meeting in Vienna /Call for Input from Alliance Members

Gary Hill’s written Report to the Alliance on the UN Crime Commission Meeting in Vienna (held April 24-26, 2006) was distributed to attendees for discussion. At least five Alliance members had attended the Vienna meeting, though only one attendee, Irene Melup, was present today. One of the items discussed in Vienna was the proposed UNODC Strategy, for which a PowerPoint summary had been had been presented. This PowerPoint, previously e-mailed to the NY-based Alliance members, is being distributed at today’s meeting for review and comments. As per Gary’s report, suggestions should be sent by the end of May to either Gary Hill (Garyhill@cega.com) who will transmit them to the appropriate people at UNODC or to Mirella Dummar Frahi (mirella.frahi@unodc.org) who coordinates NGO activities for UNODC. The general discussion during the NGO meetings in Vienna indicated that most were pleased with the fact that the strategy seemed inclusive and based on human rights. Some NGOs wanted more specific mention of issues they were particularly concerned with.

During the Vienna meeting it was pointed out by several individuals (and articulated in the Gary’s report by Alliance member Cindy Smith), that with current changes, basically three groups participate in the overall structure of the UN Crime Commission: UNODC staff, composed of business-oriented professionals and technical staff; Member States’ foreign ministry/political people who address all topics; and NGOs with expertise in crime-related areas. Currently the UNODC staff is planning to use a “think tank” model wherein the gaps in their expertise are filled by consulting experts. This model could result in the policy making process being without the input of any crime expert, or with input from only a select group.

Therefore, the report continued, NGOs with crime-related expertise need to attend carefully to the advice given to UNODC to ensure the policies do not have negative unintended consequences. Moreover, NGOs need to adjust our way of communicating with the UNODC. For example, lengthy research documents full of data and methods may still be appropriate for technical staff of the Think Tank, but under the new business model, it may be more appropriate to have strategic plans with measurable outcomes and one-page bulleted summaries. This is not to say that we should change the ultimate message, only the method and style of delivery. As an example, the report cited the representative of Pax Romana, who had suggested that we change the message from asking to inviting. Both words elicit a request, but inviting is the word Member States prefer to hear. The Alliance of NGOs in NY may want to consider providing some sample language for each audience that could be generalized to each of our topical areas.

Alliance Website:

Web master Karen Smith mentioned that our sister Alliance of NGOs in Vienna does not have its own website. We agreed to make our website available to them if needed. Paul added that the Vienna Alliance does not keep minutes or get feedback from participating NGO, diminishing its effectiveness.

Karen stated that she would put up on the website the request for responses to the new UNODC plan. She asked that Alliance member think about how we want to use the website, in light of expected changes.
Working Parties:

Working Party on Restorative Justice - Paul stated that he was unable to ascertain the status of the Handbook on Restorative Justice, which was supposed to be ready for the UN Crime Commission. He hopes for it to be well-publicized when available.

Working Party on Victims – No report, as Yael Danieli could not attend today’s meeting. Irene Melup reported that the World Society of Victimology will hold the 12th International Symposium on Victimology in Orlando, Florida, August 20-25, 2006.

Working Party on Crime Prevention – Karen Smith reported that the group is presently developing a concept on crime prevention that would embrace elements common to the various UN-related organizations. The Working Party is also seeking to bring speakers to the meetings to discuss these issues from the UN perspective, to enhance our own understanding of prevention and bring added interest to the Alliance. Paul mentioned that as a new working party, the group would need to prepare a statement of purpose in order to gain formal recognition.

Working Party on Prison Crowding – Lynette Parker stated that this party is in formation and must find a time to meet.

Old Business:

Paul restated his wish to hold an Alliance meeting in Washington DC., but will table the issue until Vice Chair Jim Gondles is present.

New Business:

Irene Melup reported that the UN Commission on Crime Prevention in Vienna had rejected the idea of combining the drug and crime commissions, after receiving little support from the US, Russia, or the EU. Pre-commission meetings for the member states had not allowed for NGO input.

Rosalind Harris reported that she had not regularly attended meetings of the UN Committee on NGOs, which has the responsibility of granting ECOSOC NGO status. The Committee’s long agenda is repeatedly postponed to discuss new NGOs seeking membership. The applications are restricted documents, but they become the subject of long, tedious procedural debates - even though it is apparent that the decisions had been made in earlier, informal meetings. The Committee also requires 4-year reports from each NGO, but it is unclear if anyone reviews the reports. Afaf Mahfouz reported that there has been some discussion of doing away with NGO consultative status.

Presentation by Lucie Hrbkova, UNODC

Guest speaker Lucie Hrbkova stated that UNODC appreciated the work of the NGOs in attendance at the UN Congress. UNODC has developed a new strategy on dealing with NGOs and Civil Society. It hopes to work closely at the field level with academia and other organizations, without restricting itself to those accredited with ECOSOC. One of the UNODC’s recent undertakings is an exhibition of quality paintings by prisoners, intended to raise awareness of prison issues. The paintings are on display at the Vienna International Centre, and will tour a number of European capitals and possibly come to New York. In another initiative, the actress Julia Ormond, as good-will ambassador, has been actively touring to raise awareness on the trafficking of human beings. Last month she was in Ghana, where children are being used as soldiers and as slave labor.

Lucie also emphasized that UNODC in Vienna would appreciate consolidated input from NGOs regarding its proposed Strategy (as shown in the distributed PowerPoint), and that NGOs report back by the end of May. As this is little more than two weeks away, she could extend the deadline until mid-June, but the sooner any responses come in, the more likely it is that they be acted upon. She specifically would like NGOs to comment on the content of pages 5 through 9, noting items that may be missing or not flow logically.
Lucie announced that the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) will take place from October 9-18, 2006 in Vienna. NGOs are invited to participate as observers to this session, and should indicate their interest by return e-mail (hrbkova@un.org or mirella.frahi@unodc.org) before July 31. NGOs without ECOSOC status are most welcome to apply by providing a short background on their area of work. They will then receive a formal invitation from the Conference Secretariat in accordance to the rules of procedure of the Conference.

Paul stated that he is please that UNODC is making this effort to reach out. He proposed that he or Gary be forwarded initial comments, to be organized and sent back to the Alliance membership before submission to ODC. Paul felt that a document from the Alliance will have more impact than individual NGOs sending in separate comments to UNODC.

Karen Smith likewise expressed appreciation that the views of NGOs area being considered more seriously, but raised the issue of how this is achieved, i.e., what kind of mechanism is being developed to allow NGOs to be represented. Paul, examining the PowerPoint handout, asked where NGOs fit into this structure. Lucie responded that on PowerPoint pg. 4, the bottom right corner- NGOs would come under the category of “Civil Society.”

Paul raised a question about the scope of the UNODC Prevention strategy (PowerPoint p.5) – why, for instance, UNODC would commit itself to AIDS prevention when other UN agencies already deal with that issue. Lucie explained that UNODC is looking to coordinate with these other groups. She said that UNODC is a member of UNAIDS, focusing on such concerns as drug use, trafficking in human beings, and HIV/AIDS in prisons. In some countries, transmission of AIDS is driven by injecting drugs, though governments are not willing to acknowledge this. Similarly, the UNODC Strategic Objective of Alternative Development (page 5) aims to discourage nations from producing drugs as they strategize to develop their economies. Paul thought the Working Party on Prevention would have something to say on the point on prevention.

Rosalind inquired as what UNODC would do with the input from the Alliance, and Lucie responded that the document will be finalized in June and presented to member states before the next GA session in the 2nd week of September. Lucie further stated that the matter does not go before ECOSOC, as it has not been a tradition for UNODC to participate with ECOSOC. The topic will be discussed with member states in Vienna and major donors. Once they reach agreement, there will be an approval. A full strategy plan will be developed after this.

**News from Affiliates:**

Millennium Development Goals ECOSOC Civil Society Forum, will be held June 29-30, 2006 in Geneva.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices will hold its 2006 Summer Training Institute in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on July 24-28 and the annual conference on restorative practices will be held on October 18-20, 2006, for the first time in Pennsylvania. See <www.iirp.org> for more.

The International Psychoanalytic Association is celebrating the 150 birthday of Sigmund Freud.

**Next meeting:**

July 14, 2006, hopefully in the same place, but possibly at the Quaker House.

Recorded by

Edith Linn, Secretary

Alliance of NGOs on CP&CJ

(with the assistance of Lynette Parker, PFI)