

# Istanbul CSO Planning Group Final Conference Call

## *12 November 2009*

### **MEETING NOTES**

#### **PARTICIPANTS:**

1. *Danica Popovic* (Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies / Serbia)
2. *Derya Sevinc* (Economic Policy Research Foundation – TEPAV / Turkey)
3. *Duru Ozkaban* (TOBB / Turkey)
4. *Edith Grace Ssempala* (WB – Civil Society Team / United States)
5. *Feyziye Günaydın* (Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation – TEGV / Turkey)
6. *Ibrahim Makram* (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services – CEOSS / Egypt)
7. *Jeremy Mark* (IMF – External Relations Department / United States)
8. *John Garrison* (WB – Civil Society Team / United States)
9. *John Ruthrauff* (InterAction / United States)
10. *Mamata Pokharel* (WB – Civil Society Team / United States)
11. *Nathaniel Don Marquez* (ANGOC / Philippines)
12. *Oykum Sutlu* (GSM Youth Services Center / Turkey)
13. *Tilla Mcantony* (IMF – External Relations Department / United States)
14. *Vladimir Ivanov* (Business Technologies Development Center / Ukraine)

The final conference call with the Istanbul CSO Planning Group was held to assess and evaluate the Annual Meetings and produce a final report on the planning process for the civil society engagement events at the Istanbul Annual Meetings. These meeting notes serve as that final report which is divided into four sections:

- Role of the CSO Planning Group
- Logistical Issues (visas, accreditation, CSO space, etc)
- Civil Society Policy Forum Sessions (Orientation, Townhall, other sessions)
- Recommendations for the Future

#### Role of CSO Planning Group

On the role of the CSO Planning Group, most participants spoke positively of their experience. There was a sense that in the short period of time available, the Planning Group had achieved what it set out to do. The Terms of Reference agreed to in the first meeting were closely adhered to. The CSO representatives to be sponsored were selected, input was given into selecting panelists for the Program of Seminars, topics for the Policy Forum were suggested and sessions organized, and issues such as accreditation and visas were discussed with the Turkish government. Participants felt that the process was important, and was responsible for the high level of participation at the Civil Society Policy Forum. The transparency of the process was also mentioned as a positive factor.

In terms of the civil society sponsorship program, the general view was that the Planning Group did a good job of recommending CSO representatives, as the final list of 44 was quite representative and strong. Some conveyed concern that perhaps there wasn't enough representation from the Latin America and Caribbean region, although since the meeting was regional there was an emphasis on encouraging the participation from the Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Middle East, and Africa regions.

Several participants of the Planning Group also expressed thanks to the World Bank Group and IMF CSO Teams for their high level of organization and the participatory planning process which they undertook.

### Logistical Issues

On accreditation, most felt it went smoothly. It was noted that the Turkish government did not attempt to bar any CSO participant requesting accreditation – as had been the problem during the Annual Meeting in Singapore in 2006 – and it was felt that the existence of the Planning Group had helped to reassure the authorities that CSO participation would be constructive. Similarly, on visa issues it was felt that it worked well overall, despite the fact that some individuals experienced initial problems which were resolved). The fact that the Turkish government waived the visas fees and allowed arriving CSOs (from countries without Turkish Consulates) to obtain their visas at the airport, were seen as another positive outcome of the Planning Group.

Planning Group Members recognized the convenience of having shuttle service to the Convention Center, and praised the work done by Mehmet and the volunteers in ensuring a smooth operation. Most also felt that the hotel used to house the sponsored CSOs (Mim Hotel) was quite adequate and it was convenient to have everyone housed in the same location.

Some participants felt that the CSO space was modest compared to spaces such as the Press Room or Program of Seminars spaces, and suggested working out a better space. CSO Room B which had a temporary wall also had some problems with noise from the outside.

### Civil Society Policy Forum Sessions

On the policy sessions themselves, participants felt that while there were a lot of substantive sessions, covering a wide range of topics, and organized by a similarly diverse spectrum of CSOs. Participants thought that the Townhall and Orientation sessions both went well. As always, the Townhall attracted a diverse group, and a variety of issues were brought to the table. Some participants felt that there were too many organizations trying to be heard in the short time allotted.

Some participants felt that there were too many parallel sessions at the Policy Forum, and Program of Seminars, making it hard to choose among which to attend. This also led to some sessions having smaller audiences. Participants also pointed out that some government officials were unaware of the CSO Program and suggested distributing a Master Annual Meetings Program that includes all the events – the Civil Society Policy Forum, the Program of Seminars and so on.

### Recommendations

- In terms of accreditation, it was suggested that the Bank and Fund should consider the option of obtaining group accreditation for organizations that have large numbers of people attending in order to facilitate the accreditation process. Bank and Fund staff responded that accreditations will need to continue being individualized, but that they would continue to explore ways of simplifying and streamlining the process.
- Several conference call participants asked that CSO participants be allowed into the official events of Annual Meetings events (e.g. Opening Plenary Session), perhaps as special guests. Bank and Fund colleagues agreed to make that recommendation to the Joint Secretariat for consideration for future Annual Meetings. In this same vein, participants suggested that perhaps the Policy Forum could produce some sort of final report or statement that could be presented to the Development Committee or IMF Committee, or publicly announced.
- In order to better focus the Townhall, it was suggested that CSOs could agree among themselves on a few questions that would be posed to the Bank and Fund principals. Since this model could also lead to some CSOs feeling excluded, a mixed model was proposed for consideration which would prompt a few questions (agreed among CSOs in advance) to be posed at the beginning of the Townhall before opening the floor to general audience questions.
- Regarding the modest size of the CSO space, it was agreed that the CSO team would be talking to the Joint Secretariat about the logistics of the CSO space, and would bring up issues including the size of the rooms, and adequacy of computing facilities, among others. Several felt that the CSO Space in Istanbul was sub-standard, particularly if compared with the space afforded the media and the Program of Seminars.
- It was pointed out that many participants felt that it would be great to have better access to the media, as well as to more Bank staff. Others suggested devising a system so that the various CSO participants can locate each other – for better networking among CSOs. A bulletin board to pin-up notes for others was suggested.
- Some of the Turkish participants proposed starting the process sooner, and felt that with more time, more of Turkish CSO representatives would have participated. Another suggestion was to identify specific themes around which post-Annual Meetings networking can take place to ensure some form of continuation. Several participants suggested their interest to keep working with the Bank on poverty reduction and ‘voices of the poor’ initiatives.
- To ensure continuity between these processes, it was proposed that more people from the previous Planning Group be included in any new Planning Group. Colleagues also suggested involving more youth representatives. It was also suggested that research centers, and newly emerging social movements be invited in such a process next time, as they could add real value.
- While the establishment of the Planning Group was a one-time process, it would be important to try to ensure more systematic civil society involvement in the civil society outreach events during the Annual Meetings held in Washington as well. Bank and Fund staff explained that they already consult on which CSOs to sponsor and which policy sessions to hold, but agreed that it is a good idea to consider more systematic ways of increasing CSO involvement in this planning process. They also said that it will be important to convene a similar CSO planning group for the Annual Meetings in Egypt, to be held in 2012, and that the CSOs from the Middle East who were in Istanbul could play an important role in that process.

In closing, the Bank and Fund Civil Society Teams thanked members of the Planning Group for their participation, suggestions, and comments. The Teams felt that the role of the Planning Group was quite positive in contributing to the 2009 CS Policy Forum, which was the largest and most substantive to date. The conference call concluded with next steps, which included sending the draft meeting notes to participants for review before they are posted on the Bank's civil society website.