

## Istanbul CSO Planning Group Meeting

Istanbul, 14 - 15 July 2009

### SUMMARY MEETING NOTES <sup>1</sup>

#### PARTICIPANTS:

1. *Amal Basha* (Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights / Yemen)
2. *Baquer Namazi* (Hamyaran Iran NGO Resource Center / Iran)
3. *Danica Popovic* (Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies / Serbia)
4. *Derya Sevinc* (Economic Policy Research Foundation – TEPAV / Turkey)
5. *Duru Ozkaban* (Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges - TOBB / Turkey)
6. *Edith Grace Sempala* (WB – Civil Society Team / United States)
7. *Ekaterine Tsereteli* (Youth Voices, Heinrich Boll Foundation / Georgia )
8. *Feyziye Günaydın* (Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation – TEGV / Turkey)
9. *Ibrahim Makram* (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services – CEOSS / Egypt)
10. *Ivan Blokov* (Greenpeace / Russia)
11. *John Garrison* (WB – Civil Society Team / United States)
12. *John Ruthrauff* (InterAction / United States)
13. *Kerim Paker* (Community Volunteers Foundation – TOG / Turkey)
14. *Mehmet Arslan* (WB – Ankara Office / Turkey)
15. *Namik Ceylanoglu* (Third Sector Foundation of Turkey – TUSEV / Turkey)
16. *Nathaniel Don Marquez* (ANGOC / Philippines)
17. *Oykum Sutlu* (GSM Youth Services Center / Turkey)
18. *Rebecca Steel* (TRIALOG / Belgium)
19. *Sabina Bhatia* (IMF – External Relations Department / United States)
20. *Tunya Celasin* (WB – Ankara Office / Turkey)
21. *Vasuki Chastra* (IMF – External Relations Department / United States)
22. *Vladimir Ivanov* (Business Technologies Development Center / Ukraine)
23. *Yelena Kudryavtseva* (UNIFEM/Regional Office for CIS / Kazakhstan)

The meeting of the Istanbul CSO Planning Group was held on July 14 – 15 in Istanbul, Turkey. The two-day meeting began with a prior planning meeting of the CSOs in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by a dinner with the CSOs and the Bank and Fund staff. There was a full day meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> which included a visit to the Istanbul Congress Center where the Annual Meetings will be held, and a final meeting of the CSOs. Alice Yeo, the head of the Joint Bank – Fund Secretariat (responsible for organizing the AMs) joined the group for lunch, and three colleagues from the Turkish Government responsible for liaising with civil society – *Hatice Kokden* (Treasury), *Seray Yilmaz* (Central Bank), *Fatih Ozturk* (Istanbul Police Department) –also joined for lunch and the afternoon portion of the meeting.

---

<sup>1</sup> Drafted by Rebecca Steel and reviewed/revised by Oykum Sutlu and John Garrison

## MAJOR ISSUES DISCUSSED:

**Role of the CSO Planning Group** – The origins and role of the Planning Group are outlined in the terms of reference (ToRs) which were revised based on several recommendations made at the meeting, and are posted online. The ToR will be revised based on several suggestions made at the meeting, namely that we add an ‘objectives’ section with more clearly stated larger objectives for improving Bank- CSO relations. The Planning Group is composed of CSOs from Turkey, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Middle East, Africa, and other regions. It’s one time mission is to assist the Bank /Fund in enhancing civil society participation at the 2009 Annual Meetings by: helping to design the Civil Society Policy Forum and organize sessions; suggesting names of developing country CSOs to be sponsored to participate in the AMs; suggesting names of CSO leaders for the Program of Seminars; and organizing youth events.

**Learning from Singapore** – The last international Annual Meeting took place in Singapore in 2006. Don Marquez, who was part of that CSO Planning Group, shared lessons learned from that experience. While accredited CSOs had ample space within the conference center and there was even a restricted area for CSO demonstrations, the Singaporean government did not allow for street protests. In addition, a number of CSOs were denied visas to enter the country and numerous participants were questioned at the airport. While Bank and Fund staff actively tried to lessen disruption for CSOs, this action by the Singaporean government undermined the quality of CSO participation. In terms of lessons learned it is important to clarify the rules of engagement so that everyone has realistic expectations, and make sure that the CSOs have clear contact persons in the government and on the Bank/Fund teams they can contact in case there are problems. Defining an overall theme and identifying key messages was posted as a challenge in planning for the CSO Forum.

**Policy Agendas at the Annual Meetings** – The policy agenda at the Annual Meetings is set by Bank’s Development Committee and by the Funds IMF Committee. Main themes expected to be covered this year (final agendas only determined 1 month before) include the global outlook for the economy, crisis response including G20 decisions on scaling up resources, governance reform at the Bank and Fund, allocation of special drawing rights (SDRs), impact of financial crisis on low income countries, and climate change. The IMF will, for instance, be discussing with CSOs its governance reform process (see details at the following website: [www.fourthpillar.org](http://www.fourthpillar.org)). The Bank’s World Development Report is on climate change this year, thus there are expected to be various sessions on this topic. Several CSOs raised the concern that if the report only is released a couple of days before the AMs, there won’t be opportunity to respond adequately, thus there was a request that an early copy of the report be released well before the Meetings.

The CSO Planning Group outlined five themes which civil society might be most interested in pursuing during the CS Forum:

1. Youth and Volunteerism: employment, vulnerable youth, education and youth participation.
2. Disclosure Policy: transparency, governance, participation, accountability, IFC performance standards, corruption.
3. Environment: energy, climate change, forests/water, extractive industries.
4. Economic Crisis: poverty and empowerment, food crisis, employment, resources/funding.
5. Conflict and Disasters: refugees, IDPs, mass mobilization, disaster mitigation.

Specific members of the Planning Group volunteered to develop these themes further.

**Draft Annual Meetings Schedule:**

Friday 2 October	CS Forum begins with CSO Orientation session and Townhall / Reception with heads of the Bank and Fund
Saturday 3 October	CS Forum / Program of Seminars (organized by Bank/Fund Joint Secretariat)
Sunday 4 October	CS Forum / Program of Seminars
Monday 5 October	CS Forum / Program of Seminars
Tuesday 6 October	CS Forum / Annual Meetings
Wednesday 7 October	CS Forum / Annual Meetings

**Civil Society Forum** – The Civil Society Forum will start on October 2 with an Orientation Session on the Bank and Fund, and a Townhall/Reception with the heads of the Bank and Fund and run through October 7. It is expected to have some 40- 45 policy dialogue sessions depending on how many are requested by CSOs. Some of the sessions will be organized by the Bank and Fund, others by CSOs, and still others jointly. International and Turkish CSOs are already beginning to request space for sessions. TOBB, for instance, is thinking of organizing an international Chambers of Commerce conference on how the business community can help to address the global financial crisis. Other CSOs which have already expressed interest in holding sessions are Bank Information Center, Henrich Boell Foundation, and EURODAD. Participants recommended that events within the CSO Forum should be limited to 1.5 hours and that an effort should be made to avoid duplication of sessions with the same theme. In cases where CSOs are organizing competing sessions with the same theme, they should be encouraged to merge their sessions if possible.

The Civil Society Forum has not had specific themes before, but the CSO Planning Group decided that it might be a good idea to try to organized CSO discussion around a common set of themes (see five themes listed above), while allowing room for further complementary themes to be suggested by CSOs. The schedule needs to be coordinated with the Program of Seminars timetable so that themes do not overlap, although some overlap is inevitable since they occur on the same days. The Planning Group offered to establish a working group which could work with the Bank and Fund to schedule the sessions and manage the CS Forum through daily CSO plenary sessions, informal periods for networking, etc.

**CSO Space** – As with previous Meetings, there will be a CSO Space where the CS Forum will be held and CSOs can schedule press conferences, network, and check their emails. There will be two conference room (for 100 and 60 people each), two smaller meeting rooms, and an open space with some 10 computers with cables for internet, and photocopier. It will also be possible to use other rooms outside the CS Space for larger sessions such as the Townhall meeting (which is expected to have some 200 participants), but space in the Congress Center is quite limited and thus the Civil Society Team will need to make these requests.

**Sponsored CSOs** – Some 50 CSO representatives from developing countries (including the CSO Planning Group) will be sponsored to attend the Meetings. The Bank and Fund are providing their own funds and well as raised funds from the Norwegian and UK governments. The Planning Group will provide names of candidates to be considered, but the final decision on whom to invite will be made by the Bank and Fund staff based on the following criteria: geographic coverage (with preference given to the ECA, MENA, and Africa regions); thematic diversity (e.g. environment, governance, health); institutional complementarity (e.g. NGOs, foundations, youth groups); and gender balance. In addition to these standard criteria, it was suggested that the Bank / Fund also use three additional criteria: good knowledge of Bank/Fund and international development issues; willingness to organize or participate as speakers of policy dialogue sessions during the Civil Society Forum; and age balance (including youth). Bank and Fund staff also made clear that there needs to be a balance of newcomers who will learn a lot but may not contribute much and people with the needed expertise but who come regularly.

**Hotels and Logistics** – There are a many hotels and other spaces such as universities for CSO meetings in walking distance to the Congress Center. Universities were suggested as good meeting places, as well as the TOBB premises. The Bank will book hotel rooms for the sponsored CSO representatives who will stay in 1-2 hotels in order to facilitate networking. As with other Annual Meetings, CSO representatives are expected to book their own hotels, although the Bank will see about trying to obtain a group rate which CSO representatives at large can use.

**Accreditation Process** – Accreditation for CSO representatives will be open on 3 August and go until September 21. CSOs should be encouraged to apply for accreditation early to avoid last minute complications. As with all Annual and Spring Meetings, Executive Directors (EDs) review the names of all the applicants either grant or deny accreditation. They have 8 working days to respond in a ‘no-objection’ basis. There have been very few cases over the last 5 years in which CSOs were not granted accreditation, and this has been largely because the applicant did not work for a functioning CSO or the CSO does not work on international development issues at the country level. The CSO Planning Group will be informed if applicants are turned down, so that individual cases can be followed up.

**Visas** – The CSO Planning Group would like the Turkish government to facilitate the obtention of visas for CSO representatives, particularly from those countries where there may not be a Turkish consulate. The Turkish government has a largely open visa regime and thus CSOs should not experience problems in this area for the Annual Meetings. We were informed that the Foreign Ministry will have a welcoming center at the airport to handle any visa problems, but that our colleagues from the Treasury would try to get more information regarding visa procedures.

**Demonstrations** – As with Annual Meetings held in Washington, demonstrations are not allowed in the conference venue. On the other hand, the Turkish government is making arrangements for peaceful protests to occur outside the Annual Meetings venue. The Turkish government colleagues explained that they have arranged for what is being called “Press Statements“ in which up to 500 persons can hold demonstrations. As long as the roads are not blocked, Turkish law is not broken, and there is no violence, police will not intervene. There will be five sites near the Congress Center where CSOs can apply to hold these. For larger demonstrations, organizers will need to apply for permission at the the Governor’s Office 1 month in advance. Participants asked for clarity on protest regulations so unnecessary confrontations could be avoided, and were told that the Istanbul Police Department will post the regulations on protests on the website in a few weeks.

## DECISIONS TAKEN:

### **The Bank and Fund will:**

- Revise the CSO Planning Group ToR and include an ‘objectives’ section to include enhancing CSO interaction with the media and improve Bank / Fund transparency.
- Prepare an emergency procedure for if there are problems at the airport with contact numbers for people within the WB/IMF/Turkish government.
- Send the Planning Group information on the previous Annual Meetings.
- Inform the Planning Group if anyone applying for accreditation has the request refused by their Executive Director or the Turkish Government.
- Find out whether Russian can be one of the four language used to interpret three of the CS Forum sessions, if necessary substituting Spanish (since there are expected to be many Russian-speaking CSO representatives from the ECA region).
- Find out whether key Annual Meetings documents will be translated into different languages.
- Find out whether advance copies of the World Development Report on Climate Change can be made available to CSOs.
- See if CSOs can be accredited as journalists and whether they can be allowed in the official press conferences.
- Inquire whether there would be Bank funds support for youth events during the Annual Meetings.
- Once the Bank / Fund receives the names of potential CSO representatives to sponsor, they will share the initial list with the CSO Planning Group.
- Check the terminology used in the process of consulting Executive Directors on CSO accreditation requested, and suggest a change from ‘screening’ to ‘informing’.
- Send the Planning Group a template which will make the requests for sessions for the CS Forum more uniform.
- Distribute contact details on Executive Directors to CSOs so they can more easily contact them in Istanbul and inform Executive Directors of the CS Forum and that CSOs will be contacting them.
- Request the Turkish Government to post information on visas and protest on their websites for regulations and the “rules of the game” are clear.
- Send official letters of invitation for visa purposes to CSOs who request it.
- Check the internet speed available in the CSO Space to ensure that it is broadband.
- Recommend several hotels where CSOs can stay, catering for different budgets.

**The CSO Planning Group will:**

- Provide WB with contacts other funders to possibly support the CSO Forum and CSO Sponsorship Program (Kuwaiti Development Fund and Tata Foundation were given as examples).
- Send names of CSOs to be sponsored and names of CSO leaders to be on Program of Seminar panels.
- Request a slot in the formal Plenary Session to present the findings from the CSO Forum sessions.
- Request that CSOs be accredited as journalists and for there to be several CSO press conferences in the press center.
- Be responsible for working throughout the meeting on summaries of meetings, and preparation for any plenary intervention offered.
- Work on the five thematic areas to draft paragraphs outlining the focus of their themes.
- Request a meeting with the Bank and Fund Board of Directors.
- Draft a final report evaluating this planning process and making recommendations for future Annual Meetings.

**The Turkish Officials will:**

- Check whether CSOs will be exempt from visa fees.
- Post regulations on demonstrations online with clear guidelines on how to request permits.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Rebecca, John, and Oykum will draft the meeting report, send to participants to review, and then the Bank will post it online.
- Group members will send names of CSOs to be sponsored and names of CSO leaders to be on Program of Seminar panels.
- Group members should also start sending proposals for policy sessions as soon as possible. By early August the WB staff will start drafting a schedule and by early September there will be a draft agenda. The WB will provide a proposal template to help standardize event proposals
- The small groups within the CSO Planning Group will work on each of the themes and provide paragraphs outlining the focus points for the website so that other CSOs are encouraged to stick to the themes
- The CSO Planning Group will have another conference call sometime in August.