



Barbados Association of Non Governmental Organisations

After Hours
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Dear Colleague,

You are invited to nominate three of your members to attend the National NGO Conference and Consultation on Saturday December 6th 2003 at Solidarity House from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. The theme of the Conference is “Working Together: The Way Forward”.

This is being held in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Transformation, with some collaboration from UNDP, CPDC and the CSME Unit and its success will mark the beginning of a new paradigm in NGO/Government relations which will see a shift towards greater NGO participation in national and regional decision making and policy making.

Further information is enclosed and please return all registration forms by Wednesday 3rd December 2003 to the BANGO Office at #7, 4th Avenue Belleville, St. Michael. Please call the office at 427-5001 if you are unable to return them by this date. Because of the short time period, please do not return registration forms by mail.

An electronic version is available which you can e-mail back to us. Send a request for electronic forms to bango@socamail.com or visit our web site at www.bango.org.bb .

We look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

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Roosevelt O. King
Secretary General

National NGO Conference & Consultation

Saturday 6th December 2003

Solidarity House

8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

1. Some 147 NGOs would by now have received invitations to attend this conference and consultation, with each NGO being asked to send three representatives. The reason for asking for three representatives is that there will be three workgroups in the morning session and three in the afternoon session and it is important that your organisation is represented in all six workgroups.
2. To assist you with the choice of representatives, the six workgroups will be as follows:

Morning

- i. Governance
- ii. Partnerships for development
- iii. Capacity Building

Afternoon

- iv. Environment
- v. Poverty Reduction
- vi. CSME & Social Development

3. It is therefore estimated that each of the three delegates from each NGO will participate in two sessions; one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Delegates should be members of the Executive of your organisation or should be competent to make decisions on behalf of the organisation.
4. The expected outputs from the workgroups are:
 - i. What are the achievable goals over the next year?
 - ii. Of these, identify long, medium & short term goals
 - iii. What are the practical steps to be taken to achieve these goals?
 - iv. Set a realistic timetable for achieving these goals over the next year.
5. NGO Representatives should be mindful that the timetable will require the participation of representatives from their organisation and hence the call for a realistic schedule. Participation will be at three levels: first there is consultation within the NGO itself then there is consultation within the sectors and then a consultation among sectors.

A Two Tier System

6. Since it is a fact that NGOs already have internal consultations, the objective of the conference and consultation is to establish sectoral committees and a national NGO Committee; and we hope to achieve the sectoral committees by the end of the conference. These two levels of consultations will set an agenda based on the needs of NGOs. First NGOs will be allocated to sectors. In the form attached, you are asked to identify the sector which best fits the work of your organisation.
7. The first item on the agenda of the sectors will be to set a date in the not too distant future to meet and elect a chairperson. These chairpersons will then form a National Committee. It is the objective of BANGO to service this two tier mechanism, by organising meetings,

taking and circulating minutes and generally facilitating and executing the decisions of both the sectors and the national committees.

Focal Point

8. This is a natural progression for BANGO which, over the past four years, has worked with and consulted with many regional and international organisations, including CARICOM and national government, to embrace the idea of a focal point for Civil Society.
9. We have also forged some linkages with the private sector and unions and all things considered, this places BANGO in a very pivotal position to take Civil Society forward. Having arrived at this point, it is now necessary to give effect to these efforts by organising NGOs in such a way as to reflect the widest possible participation of NGOs. This is where transparency and confidence in NGOs will be achieved.

Bottom-Up Approach

10. One of the requirements of a wide democratic process is the bottom-up approach. Inputs which come from the general NGO membership and move up is the best method of approach for decision making because all the major players would have made their contributions to the decision and become part of the decision.
11. The President or leader of any NGO is duly elected by its general membership to represent and speak on behalf of his organisation. The natural representative from any NGO is usually its leader, unless he/she has delegated this duty to another member.
12. This fact therefore resolves the problem of internal consultations within the NGO. Therefore having the leaders of NGOs coming together to form a sector legitimises the sector. This is because the leader will bring the decisions of his/her NGO to the sector. The decisions of Sector deliberations would then be taken to the National Committee for deliberation, to complete the bottom-up process.
13. By completing this exercise on 6th December, we would have established formal decision-making machinery for Civil Society. The National Committee will become the widest representative body of Civil Society in Barbados, since the considered opinions of the members of all NGOs will feed into it.

CARICOM & Regional Civil Society Links

14. An important aspect of the National Committee will be its link to CARICOM and international agencies. The National Committee will have an automatic seat on the CARICOM Civil Society Council which is being occupied by BANGO at present. All the other 14 CARICOM countries also have a seat on the CARICOM Civil Society Council

15. Together with our counterparts, we will make up the CARICOM Civil Society Council which will be the body that will interact with CARICOM and attend the COHSOD, COTED and other Ministerial meetings of CARICOM, including the Heads of Governments meetings
16. The CARICOM Civil Society Council started with the Forward Together Conference and Encounter with the Heads of Government in July 2002. At the time, BANGO was asked to select and lead a delegation of Civil Society to the Conference.
17. This task was successfully executed by BANGO. After the Encounter with the Heads, they issued a Statement, mandating the CARICOM Secretariat to set up a Task Force to make recommendations for the implementation of the recommendations coming out of the Conference.
18. Using what is now described as the Forward Together Process, the Secretariat called upon the delegations from each of the fifteen CARICOM states that attended the Conference to select one person from each country to make up the Civil Society Task Forces.
19. The Task Force completed its mandate in January this year with the recommendation to the Heads to set up a CARICOM Civil Society Council which will send representatives to meet with the organs of CARICOM COHSOD, COTED, etc. This recommendation was accepted by the Heads which then mandated the Secretariat to convene the Civil Society Council. Herein lies one importance of having a national committee.

National & International Recognition

20. International agencies agree that a national committee would be automatically recognised and that once such a mechanism is set up it will be hard to bypass it from a practical perspective, since it will be composed of a wide cross section of NGOs
21. This will tend to give the national committee instant international recognition and the opinions of the committee will be valued and sought after not only by international agencies but by Government as well.

Register Now!

22. Therefore, the importance of this conference on 6th December cannot be underestimated. Please return all registration forms by Wednesday 3rd December 2003.
23. The reason for asking for an early return of registration forms is so that we would know how many persons we should cater for, since lunch and refreshments during the breaks will be served.

Opening Ceremony

24. The opening Ceremony for the Conference will be held on Friday 5^h December at Frank Collymore Hall at 7:30 p.m. and Prime Minister Arthur or his representative is expected to give the feature address. Refreshments will be served.