



Dear Ms. Mezoui, H.E. Al-Qahtani and Mr. Al-Ansari:

Date: October 12, 2011

Reference: H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations met representatives of NGOs.

"There is no dialogue without civil society". Neither progress!

http://www.lightmillennium.org/2011_26th/aturlon_66th_ga_president_al_nasser.html

It was a great privilege and opportunity to attend the Oct.4th NGOs meeting with H.E. Mr. Al-Nasser, President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly, and needless to say this meeting was of utmost significance to us. I thank the President and the entire team for this very promising dialogue with the NGOs.

There have not been any meetings with the prior presidents of the 65th or the 64th Sessions. In particular, I had personally sent a letter to the attention of H.E. Mr. Treki, President of the 64th Session of the GA on some issues and ideas. However, during the last two or three years, there has not been an active dialogue between the Office of the President of the GA and NGOs. For this very reason, Mr. President has given us so much hope and expectations for further developing this dialogue.

Thanks to President Mr. Al-Nasser, and also each of your personnel encouragement, I would like to put in writing my proposal related to the "freedom of expression." My proposal is something similar to the "Intercultural & Interreligious Dialogue" High Level Meeting. To my knowledge, there has not been any HL meeting or a dedication theme of the GA on "freedom of expression", which, I consider, forms the basis and is the essence of everything that UN covers and cares for, including the MDGs, UN-Women, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNAO, UN-AIM, and all other UN entities along with Article#19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is one of the founding principles of the UN. Yet, "freedom of expression" is not included as one of the "it must be accomplished" goals of the MDGs; nor has there been an HL meeting on this issue. Hence, I consider that there is a major gap between the UN's fundamental document and its visions and programs on the HL, or as part of MDGs Goal and Action Plan within the context of promoting effectively and efficiently "freedom of expression" both on the member states level as well as globally.

In particular, we are very lucky and privileged in the U.S. that "freedom of expression" is in the first amendment of the Constitution, which is protected and encouraged both by the Constitution and Communication Act. But this is not the case, in particular, for the developing countries, and in most cases, for the least developed countries. For this very reason, I propose the GA Office organize a High Level meeting, which will be dedicated to the "freedom of expression", which also won't be limited to restrictions or censorship practices in "press, movie, arts" in some countries but for the world community.

Another concern, which I mentioned at the meeting, and embedded with a proposal, was: Instead of limiting access, and restricting more and more NGOs' involvement, in particular, to the GA - Annual Gatherings; each UN associated main NGO or all NGO reps whether with the

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DPI or ECOSOC; should attend all the sessions (if it is not during their first year of the associations but perhaps within the second or third consecutive years). This should be/must be mandatory for all the UN associated NGOs, in particular, because, some of the NGOs also work within the UN system *such as undercover diplomats!* Therefore, only those who care for the issues that their HQ asks from them or limited to their areas of interest be involved. On the other hand, NGOs are the only direct channel to promote the UN Visions, Resolutions, Accomplishments and Programs to general public and various communities on the global level. In this context, journalists have a greater access, as they are able to cover/present the ideas their media company is interested in; or when there is no conflict of interest on certain issues and among major media companies worldwide. In contrary to the UN accredited journalists, NGOs have direct access to people, communities, and also they have more capacity to reach out to people on the ground and various communities and hence reflect UN programs into their program.

Based on my observation over the last 5 years, most of the NGOs have shown interest to attend the GA-Annual Gathering, mainly for the following four countries along with the *Opening Session* of the GA each year: United States, Israel, Iran and Palestine. With this in mind, the NGO reps should know the whole spectrum of the world, each country's general concern and international concern, which potentially would serve to decrease tensions in between various communities and nations through their NGO reps on the ground through their programs, if this were to become a mandate of the UN-GA.

In addition to the above ideas, involvement of the Committees under the General Assembly, the path and related mechanism could also be open to both DPI and ECOSOS associated NGOs in the form of "**friends of**" the **First, or Second, or Third, or Fifth or the Sixth** committees, or through a newly developed mechanism. Initially, this idea was introduced by the Ambassador of Sudan (in 2007 or 2008) during a similar meeting, where I personally had followed it up but with no result.

In this e-mail, I have attached several photos from the meeting, which might not be the best photos but could very well serve as visual recordings of the meeting.

Once again, thank you Mr. President, Mr. Ansarit, Mr. Mutlaqlaw, Ms. Mezoui, and Ambassador Chowdhury.

Sincerely yours,

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