

LANDSFORENINGEN FOR BØSSER OG LESBISKE

Handbook Concerning UN Accreditation for LGBT Organizations

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2. Foreword

In 1994 ILGA lost its UN accreditation, and in 2006 the first smaller LGBT NOs (non-governmental organizations) were accredited as “NGO in special consultancy with the United Nations”. This happened as a result of a long and hard process, trying to obtain this status. The reasons for wanting the accreditation were many. Among them were the strong and apparent need for international recognition of issues concerning LGBT people, and the need to take debates of sexual orientation and gender identity to a higher level concerning human rights¹.

This paper is intended as a hand book for the accredited organizations, concerning their work in the UN, how the UN works internally and what gives the best results. The paper also aims to work as a guide for LGBT NGOs that are new in the international field, so that the wheel does not have to be reinvented for every LGBT organization, which gets the UN accreditation or intends to get it. The information sharing aspect of this book is important, as most LGBT organizations are small and have limited resources available, especially when it comes to international work. That is also why others are encouraged to update the hand book by adding their own experiences and developments to it.

The paper has its basis in the Danish Organization for Gays and Lesbians (LBL), and the content of the paper is founded on agendas and questions present in the international department of LBL. However, the paper has been written with the objective of being helpful for LGBT organizations in other countries as well. The research for the book has been done both through regular research in books, articles and web pages and through a series of interviews with representatives from NGO and IGOs (intergovernmental organization) concerning their work, and association with other NGOs, governments and the UN. Among these was the Danish Institute for Human rights, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Danish United Nations Association, Soroptimists International, Danish Women’s council and Danish Disabled Union. These have been used to get a “behind the scenes” account of what creates results, and what does not, and to get guidance for working as an NGO within the UN system. Another important source has been the different organizations that specialize in facilitating the NGOs within the UN system - UN Non Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), International Service for Human Rights and the Danish

¹ http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategory=44&FileID=577

UN Mission. The information from the meetings and interviews are kept in LBL, and I advice others to create similar accounts from other countries.

2.1 Scope of the book

The scope of the paper is to be a source of general information for LGBT NGOs on the UN, when needed the information is more specified. It strives to provide advice from the point of view of an LGBT organization along with general information about the UN as such. In that way it can serve as a “LGBT UN book for beginners”, or as a book for information distribution and information preserving.

3. Introduction

This section of the paper is meant as an introduction to some of the most important topics and concepts which are important for understanding this paper, and for working within the UN.

One of the challenges of working in the area of international politics and lobbying is not the lack of appropriate terminology, but the diverse meanings and connotations associated with existing terminology. Many of the words used to describe issues in this field have different meanings in different countries and within different contexts, and the UN may have another interpretation of it again.

Besides this obvious point concerning the proper understanding of the words, this section also serves as an introduction for people who are new to the area.

3.1 What is an NGO?

A Non Governmental Organization, or an NGO, is a nonprofit making, voluntary, service-oriented or development oriented organization that work to benefit either the members of the organization, or other members of the population either in the host country or other places in the world – often third world countries. One of the most important characteristics is that an NGO is organized outside the institutionalized political structures, which mean that the organization is not linked to a particular government in a political way. The organizations are in this way also called “members of the third sector” indicating that they do not belong to the two big established sectors in the

international sphere - the private or the public sector. NGOs may receive some or all operating funds through a government department or body, and may have to be financially accountable to this political institution. But the NGO should only be responsible in a political way to its own administration and to the people or projects that stand to benefit or lose by the NGO's actions².

NGOs are diverse and vary in size from small groups within a particular community to huge membership groups with national or international scope. The work and activities of NGOs are also diverse, and can range from research, information distribution, lobbying for legislative change, community service to civil disobedience. Most NGOs incorporate a range of different forms of activities, which mirror their size and interests.

The UN poses a number of rules for recognition of NGOs they would want to work with. Among other things the UN demands that the structure and constitution of the NGO should be democratic. In this way the NGO should be able to present evidence that it has the authority to speak on the behalf of its members. One of the ways this is to be acted out by the NGOs is by them possessing a representative structure. By expressing their voting rights the members then exercise effective control over the organization's politics and actions. This is a way for the organization to keep the accountability towards the members, and in this way the liability as a trustworthy organization³.

NGOs are recognized by the UN as an important cooperation partner, but they do not have any voting rights within the system. And in order to work actively within the UN an NGO needs to be accredited (more on this later).

3.2 What is consultative status?

Consultative status is a specific type of affiliation between an NGO and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN, through which NGOs works in cooperation with the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, by submitting reports and making recommendations, and interventions in the area of its expertise. Organizations that qualify for status are also invited to attend international conferences called by the UN, GA special sessions, and other intergovernmental bodies⁴. The relationship is based on article 71 of the charter of the United Nations, and ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 now governs the consultative relationships between the council and NGOs. Depending on

² <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/CS-NTWKS/NGO-ART.HTM>

³ ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. Consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations para 10, 11, 12, 13

⁴ <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/faq.htm>

the meeting and the form of accreditation, NGOs may receive a ground pass allowing them to enter UN facilities, access to documents, permission to attend formal sessions, the opportunity to deliver oral and written statements, meeting spaces for NGO events, appropriate seating during public meetings and the chance to interact with delegates, UN staff and other NGOs⁵.

There are three forms of consultative status: General Consultative Status, Special Consultative Status and Roster. The different forms give different possibilities for the NGOs, but as a basis all the NGOs, when accredited, has the possibility of: attending UN meetings, designating UN representatives, being invited to UN international conferences.

General consultative status is given to organizations “...*that are concerned with most of the activities of the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies*”. Unlike organizations in the other two categories these organizations have the possibility of proposing items for the ECOSOC agenda and speak at the ECOSOC.

Special consultative status is the status that is given to the LGBT organizations. Special consultative status is given to organizations that have special competences in a few of the activities concerned with the council and its subsidiary bodies. The NGOs with this status tend to either be smaller or more recently established than the NGOs in General Consultative Status. In this way the NGOs here are often national organizations with a fairly specific agenda, as LGBT rights. The accreditation allows NGOs to circulate statements at ECOSOC meetings at a maximum of 500 words, and circulate statements at ECOSOC’s subsidiary bodies’ meetings at a maximum of 1500 words. Besides this the NGOs can, if they get permission, speak at ECOSOC subsidiary bodies’ meetings. Special consultative NGOs, as well as general consultative ones, are required to document their work at the ECOSOC, in this way they have to submit quadrennial reports that document that the NGO have set their consultative status to good use, and that their work has in some way contributed to the work of the UN and the cooperation between the UN and the NGO. If the NGO has not used their status in any way in the quadrennial period, they risk eviction from the consultative status and are not permitted to file a new application for membership for years⁶.

The last consultative status is the Rooster. This is a list of organizations, which are considered to make occasional useful contributions to the work of the council or other bodies within the UN. The organizations will then be requested to be available for consultation on these specific topics.

⁵ ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, 56

⁶ <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/faq.htm>,

3.3 What is the UN?

It is not within the scope of this paper to give a full account of the UN, instead it is the intention to give a short introduction and explain the most important areas for the LGBT community in further detail.

The UN was formed out of the ashes of the League of Nations after World War II. From the very beginning there NGOs played a part. In this way several NGOs among them Rotary International and the Lions Club were invited to help draft the UN Charter. The UN came into existence on October 24 1945 after the charter had been ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council. The main aims of the UN were basically to maintain international peace and security. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights were rectified which shifted the focus to include promotion of softer values. Today the UN has grown to be the most important international political forums, and the areas under discussion have expanded to include as varied causes as economic development, world health, environment, peace keeping and refugees⁷.

The organizational structure of the UN is based on five principal organs – the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Secretariat and International Court of Justice. Only the organs important for this paper, that is the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, special events and the Human Rights Council, will be covered in the following.

3.4 What is the General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is composed of all the UN member states; it meets in regularly yearly sessions. In these sessions each state has one vote and most questions are decided by regular majority votes, important issues as questions of budget, security and election of member organs are subject to two-thirds majority. The GA can make recommendations on any matter within the scope of the UN – except the matters which are exclusively for the Security Council. The resolutions are brought forward by sponsoring states and the decisions made by the GA about these are not binding for the members. These resolutions are in this sense largely symbolic.

The GA does not officially cooperate with NGOs, and NGOs do not enjoy consultative status with the GA. But NGOs are allowed to participate in the GA's activities by invitation. NGOs are often invited to the special sessions, which the GA may call at any time during the year on special topics

⁷ Charter of the United Nations: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/index.html>

requiring debate, as for instance the HIV/AIDS Conference or the 1995 World Conference on Woman. Besides this the NGOs are actively involved with advocating both the GA when in session and the different permanent committees that the GA has working on different issues. Among other things the NGOs meet with delegates, offer position papers, host side events or participate in NGO parallel events⁸.

3.5 What is ECOSOC?

The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the principal organs of the UN, addressing economic, social, cultural, educational, health, environmental and other related matters. The 54 members of the ECOSOC are elected for a three year term by the UN General Assembly. The countries are designated on the basis a geographical representation. The Council meets twice every year in July for a four week session altering between New York and Geneva, and in April for a session especially concerned with economics. The council meetings are open for all members of the UN, but only countries presently serving a term have voting right. Decisions are primarily based on consensus agreements, but in case of voting they are determined by simple majority with each country having one vote⁹. Because of the multiplicity of subjects under ECOSOC's subject area the meetings are structured into segments the most important one being the "high level theme". Since 2001 the Conference on Non Governmental Organizations (CONGO¹⁰) has organized a NGO forum concerning the theme of the high level segment just prior to it. This gives the NGOs an opportunity to express their views and give their recommendations.

The year round work of the ECOSOC is mostly carried out through its subsidiary bodies, which meet throughout the year and report back to the Council. Beside these subsidiary bodies 11 UN programs and funds that work with economic and social affairs as the UN Development Program or the UN Children's Fund report to ECOSOC through their executive boards.

Article 71 of the UN Charter designates ECOSOC as having the responsibility of granting consultative status to NGOs. That makes it the one UN body that has the ability to establish rights for NGOs to observe and contribute to its work. The process of approving NGOs for official consultative status is handled by the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs. This committee is a standing committee that reports directly to the ECOSOC, it has 19 members that are elected on the basis of

⁸ Charter of the United Nations: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/index.html>

⁹ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=5510

¹⁰ <http://www.ngocongo.org/index.php>

geographical representation. The main tasks of the Committee are to evaluate applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by NGOs, they also consider the quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs¹¹. The fact that the ECOSOC is one of the most important organs at the UN and the fact that it is the institution granting consultative status also makes it a popular place for lobbying and NGO work.

3.6 Special Events

Side events and summits are not an integral part of the UN structure, but they are important for NGO lobbying. A side event is something that the individual member states can decide to host either by themselves or in cooperation with other member states. These are held aside from the ongoing discussions in the main organs of the UN. The member states may also choose to have special intergovernmental events focusing on urgent matters these may include world conferences, summits and special sessions. These may also include informal, interactive hearing convened by the GA either as a lead up to high-level meetings or dialogs on a range of subjects¹².

Conferences and summits are held when member states collectively agree that a certain topic needs an extensive political and public attention. Among these are the World Conferences on Women and the World Environmental Conference. These are designed specially to draw political attention to the topic, and are often well attended by heads of state and government. The conferences and summits provide a forum for member states to introduce emerging issues for debate and set political standards on important issues.

The events also mobilize governments, institutions and NGOs to advocate their case or lobby for action. They provide an opportunity for NGOs to engage with governments and UN officials, influence the political debate and raise issues that might otherwise “drown” or be ignored. Many of these events also include a parallel NGO forum. These provide a structured meeting place for NGOs and individuals that deal with the subject in hand. There is no official interchange between the formal event and the side event, but the two can effect each other to a great extend and often do¹³.

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/committee.htm>

¹² Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

¹³ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

3.7 What is the Human Rights Council?

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is a relatively new institution. A lot of issues concerning the HRC is still undecided or under construction and this paper will only refer to what is known now (December 2007) and what is important for understanding the paper or the LBGT case.

The HRC came to life as a successor to the old Commission of Human Rights which was a subsidiary body of ECOSOC set up to address human rights issues in the UN. The Commission of Human rights was the target of much of the lobbying of NGOs and accredited NGOs could make oral and written statements there. A rising criticism of the Human Rights Commission's lack of efficiency, excessive politicization and block voting weakened the Commissions ability to fulfill its mandate and hurt the institutions credibility. This led to the decision of creating a smaller body, a council, to oversee the human rights work¹⁴.

GA resolution 60/251 decided that the HRC should be a subsidiary body to the GA, which reports directly to the GA instead of ECOSOC. The resolution that sets out guidelines for the HRC also states that instead of meeting just once a year the HRC should meet at least 10 weeks pr year and for a minimum of three sessions. One of the new responsibilities that the resolution gave the HRC was to¹⁵: undertake Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of all states instead of a selected few. This is to be based on objective and reliable information of the fulfillment of each state's human rights obligations to ensure universal end equal coverage to all states. Another new feature is the election process, where the members of the HCR are elected directly by the GA and taking, besides the geographical distribution, the candidate's contribution to the promotion and protection of the human rights under consideration¹⁶. Any member that commits violations of human rights while in the committee can be suspended by two-thirds majority¹⁷. Beside these new functions the aim for the HRC is, as the Commission on Human Rights, still to address violations of human rights, serve as a forum for dialogue and cooperation concerning human rights, promote and educate about the human rights and finally give recommendations both with regards to development within the field and to the GA for further development¹⁸.

¹⁴ A new chapter for human rights ,International service for Human Rights

¹⁵ GA resolution 60/251

¹⁶ A new chapter for human rights ,International service for Human Rights

¹⁷ GA resolution 60/251

¹⁸ A new chapter for human rights ,International service for Human Rights

The changes in the human rights area can for the LGBT community mean several things. First of all the fact that the HRC is meeting more regularly can be a strain on the recourses of smaller NGOs because lobbying goes on throughout the year. The fact that so many things are still unresolved can also be a stress factor for NGOs. The changes are not only for the worse, and the professionalization of the work of the HRC benefits everybody who works within the human rights area. The fact that the HRC is still in a state of flux also means that the possibility of NGOs being able to leave a mark on the HRC is there. A way of doing this would be to try to lobby for LGBT cases to be part of the UPR, so that all countries when going through the Universal Periodical Review would be judged on their ability to secure the basic human rights for LGBT people, and to the ability for LGBT people to live a life without discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The same possibility for influence is apparent with the Special Rapporteur. Special Rapporteurs are experts that do fact finding missions to examine alleged human rights violations or they assess and verify complaints from victims of human rights offences. The Special Rapporteur role was a feature of the old Council of human rights and in 2007 after a review period the HRC decided to prolong the mandate. There are Special Rapporteurs concerning particular countries and cases as human rights in Palestine and racism and discrimination. As this feature of the HRC is also undergoing change and because new Rapporteurs are appointed when others end, this would be another apparent way to get the LGBT case heard. The LGBT case has previously been commented by different Rapporteurs, and several have stated their interest in receiving information on sexual minority issues falling within their respective mandates. The reports of these Rapporteurs, dealing with LGBT issues have not, however, always been viewed in a positive light from countries as Saudi Arabia and the USA¹⁹, but it is imperative to the LGBT case that Rapporteurs like these are “fed” with cases from the LGBT community. It would also be useful to lobby for the topic being an obvious part of more already existing Special Rapporteur’s area. The more visible the LGBT case becomes in these reports the better. In the long run a goal for the LGBT NGOs could be to lobby for getting a Special Rapporteur on the topic of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The HRC is the obvious institution for the LGBT NGOs to work within, even though the new features can be confusing, they also give possibilities. Another apparent reason is the content of the

¹⁹ http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategory=44&FileID=577

Yogyakarta Principles²⁰, which are constructed around the existing human rights. The previous Commission on Human Rights was also the forum where Brazil In April, 2003, with no advance warning, introduced the resolution “Human Rights and Sexual Orientation”. The resolution made a political spectacle, but was never passed due to its, for some states, compromising nature²¹.

The first part of the paper has provided an introduction to the most important concepts and institutions that is a part of working in the UN. These will then be set into context in the next part of the paper, which is focusing on the more concrete work of NGOs and how they navigate in the international system.

4 Interacting with the UN

This section of the paper focuses on the inner structure and workings of the UN. It will go into detail on how NGOs do their lobby work, both at the official and less official channels that the NGOs use. NGOs can choose to partake in the UN by using a wide range of strategies: monitoring agreements, briefing governments on concerns, circulating information in and outside the UN, advocating positions at international level and drawing the attention of the media. The focus is on direct work with the UN while a later section will elaborate on how to work “from home” and with the home governments.

This section is done mostly with help from interviews with already accredited NGOs that is already successful within the UN system the other major contributor is the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS).

4.1 How to get a UN accreditation

This paper is written primarily for LGBT NGOs that already have the accreditation, but since it is the fate of small size NGOs that the active volunteer members often change, or move on in the system, it is important to keep the knowledge in a physical form for new members. Besides that it can also serve as a source of inspiration for other LGBT NGOs that wish to get the accreditation.

²⁰ http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.htm

²¹ http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategory=44&FileID=577

Most of NGO participation within the UN starts with applying for accreditation. Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations sets out the legal basis for the partaking of NGOs at the UN and it gives ECOSOC the responsibility of accreditation²².

In order to even start the accreditation process, the NGO has to prove that the scope of its activities can be affiliated with the proceedings of ECOSOC's mandate. A letter of intent has to be sent to the NGO Section of the UN's department of the Economic and Social Affairs, which then sends an application package; this includes a questionnaire and requests for additional background information. The NGO Section has to receive the application and documentations before June 1 of the year before the NGO wishes to be considered by ECOSOC's NGO Committee. This Committee meets twice every year to consider the applications and on behalf of this it gives its recommendations for approval to ECOSOC. There are many requirements for obtaining consultative status²³, but the basic ones are:

- Activities of the applying NGO must be relevant to the ECOSOC.
- A democratic decision making in the NGO.
- The NGO must be in existence - officially registered with the appropriate government authorities as an NGO, for at least 2 years. If such registration does not exist the NGO must be documented in another way, e.g. tax registration.
- The basic resources of the organization must be derived in the main part from contributions of the national affiliates, individual members or other non-governmental components.

The road to consultative status is not always as easy and straight forward as it might seem from the above (as many LGBT organizations have found out). When entering the bureaucratic world of the UN the best advice is to be armed with patience and determination and to contact ILGA, who remains the expert in the area of LGBT NGO's accreditation²⁴.

5. Strategy

One of the most important issues for NGOs in the UN system is strategy. It is also the one issue that is most often forgotten by organizations when starting to work in the UN. The new and improved

²² Charter of the UN, art. 71

²³ See <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/faq.htm>, <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/res/1996/eres1996-31.htm>, ECOSOC resolution 1996/31

²⁴ <http://www.ilga.org/>

Human Rights Council makes the focus on strategy even more important as the year round work in the commission can be very stressful, time consuming and flat out impossible for smaller NGOs, as many of the LGBT NGOs are. Working without a clearly communicated strategy can sometimes make the work harder for the NGOs, because the objective is not clear, and the work at the UN does not pay off since no clear goal is set and no outside stakeholder know how or why to help.

It is a good idea to both have a long term strategy for goals to reach within the next 10 years and a more detailed one for within the upcoming five years and finally a short sighted detailed strategy for the next year or two. A potential rough strategy could be that the LGBT NGOs within the next two years will take important steps towards becoming a part of the Universal Periodic Review, so that all countries would be evaluated on how good they are at protecting the rights of LGBT people. The next goal could then be to get a resolution which is a formal decision used by the UN organs to express an agreement or conclusion, it includes a preamble which sets forth the basis for actions that should be taken. The final goal would of course be to get a declaration and then a convention on the rights of LGBT people, and even though it is a legitimate goal, it is probably still so far out in the future that it is not worth using any efforts on yet.

The strategy has to be so coherent and well developed that it is manageable for the different organizations to abide to it and incorporate it to their own missions. It also has to be easily communicated to outside stakeholders and partners. One of the most important issues, once the strategy has been agreed up on, is to communicate it to others in the UN system so that they will know where they fit in, in the plans.

Contact International Service for Human Rights²⁵ and ask them for help concerning the communication and the effectiveness of the strategy, they have been helping NGOs with strategic and representative issues for the last 20 years, and they have a wide knowledge of the area.

Let other NGOs know that the joint LGBT organizations will work actively for the Yogyakarta Principles, and that the goal is to be part of the UPR within the next 2 years. Let them know that a close cooperation will be mutually beneficial if they would help bring the case forth.

Start contacting the governments that are known to be positive to the LGBT case, and negotiate with them; ask what can be done in order for them to commit to the advertising of the LGBT case.

²⁵ <http://www.ishr.ch/>

When drawing up the strategy it is of course important to be aware of the politically sensitive area of sexuality and gender identity, but this should not become a reason for not pushing both NGOs and governments in the right direction, as it looks now no one else is doing it for the LGBT NGOs! Even though the UN political field is very rigid, the circumstances shift and sometimes unexpected players enter the turf and make new conditions. When NGOs first started talking about the rights for indigenous people 20 years ago it was a highly tense political area, dividing countries and NGOs alike, and now they are well on their way to get a convention on the topic.

It should not be ignored, that the LGBT case is “new” within the human rights area at least within an UN setting. Both in the fact that LGBT NGOs has just recently been accredited, but also in the case that it is a new field for the human rights experts who work professionally within this area - either as scholars or in the diplomatic field. In the academic forum it has long been a topic, but because of it being an international “hot potato”, diplomats have hesitated to go into it. This is now changing and the LGBT case now enjoy some of the “popularity” that the case of indigenous people has long had within the UN (cynical, but true). Potentially young diplomats could see it as a career move to focus on the LGBT case, and in this way aim to do something that would enable them to put their name on a document within the area. This would then both boost their own career as well as the LGBT case. These calculations may sound very much up to chance, but none the less it is openings like this that can help the LGBT case on its way, and looking for diplomats open to the case should also be part of the strategy.

6 Preparing for a meeting

Because of the large scale of the UN meetings and the multitude of people, countries, NGOs, IGOs and UN staff that participate, preparation is important, especially for smaller size NGOs who do not have the capacity to send a team of skilled UN experts and lobbyists. The more prepared the NGO is, the more effective their work will be. Developing a good clear and realistic advocacy strategy and logistical arrangement is essential.

6.1 Strategy and logistics

Before going to the meeting it is important to research by gathering documents that are available in advance, these may be previously negotiated resolutions, government statements etc. This is important not only to get an insight into the issue, but also to reveal the different positions being

taken on the issue of concern. It can also create awareness of the spectrum, of opinions and thereby provide information which may be significant to the strategic positioning of advocacy efforts - who to be aware of, who to support and who to count on for encouragement.

There is a multitude of meetings being held in the UN, and if time and money was not an issue several meetings a day could be attended. Since this is not the case for the LGBT NGOs, meetings should be considered and weighed up against the agreed upon strategy. What meetings are so important for networking, knowledge or influence that it cannot be afford to miss them. A calendar of meetings is available at the UN website, and meetings are posted well in advance²⁶. It is of cause important to keep updated with this, and to refer to it when planning and developing the strategy.

Preparation to a large degree also includes reaching out to other NGOs, governments, and the media. A short clear mission statement developed directly for the meeting is a good way to let others know what one hopes to achieve. In the same time it is a good way for the LGBT NGO to stay focused on the strategy.

The most important thing is of course to align with the other LGBT organizations. Make sure that opinions are connected so that no matter if it is only possible to send one representative from one organization or many representatives from different organizations, they are all capable of speaking on behalf of the other organizations. Remember to share information and network, so that when a different representative or NGO has to go to the next meeting, they do not have to start with a clean slate – they will have something to start out on. Cooperation and knowledge of each other's agenda is of course vital. Cooperation with other NGOs outside the LGBT community may also prove important, as a statement made on behalf of a wide selection of well stated NGOs will sometimes have more weight. Ask NGOs outside the LGBT world of their opinions and goals, and see if there is a basis for common ground. This also prevents double work and networking and information sharing may maximize both impact and resources.

Find out where the home governments stand – and for the European organizations in particular the EU as a collective. Find out who from the home government will be attending the meetings, as the UN meeting is often just a culmination of months or even years of diplomatic work done from home. Contact the officials to try to learn where the government has positioned itself, how open is it to change and how willing is it to be influenced by NGOs. The importance of a good cooperation

²⁶ <http://www.un.org/events/>

with officials of government officials can be very important if handled properly. Try to establish cooperation with the national UN Mission at the UN site where the meeting is held. They may be able to help with both practicalities and important inside knowledge, as they are permanently situated at the UN.

Find out which medias and journalists may be interested in the story, and send them press releases and other material before and during the meeting. It is often a good idea to contact individual journalists who previously have been positive to the LGBT case, and who might find it interesting to follow the story.

Concerning logistics it is important to establish links to UN staff at the Secretariats who are responsible for liaising with NGOs. The UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) track many meetings and can provide information and answers to questions regarding preparation and logistics²⁷. It is also important to locate Secretariat staff that are concerned with the topic and find out how to share information with them and make contributions to the reports²⁸.

6.2 The representatives

It is important that the persons sent to represent the organization or organizations not only are a well prepared “topic experts”, it also has to be multi-skilled persons mastering both writing and delivering speeches, working with the media and at the personal level; the representative’s ability to network, and to use a preexisting personal network is important. Preparatory meetings are normally held a year in advance of major conferences where most of the negotiation and deliberations are well on their way. It is a good idea to send representatives to these meetings and to send the same to the actual conference, so that network and recognition can work to once advantage. Intersessional meetings and activities organized by governments should not be misses either.

Many NGO events such as parallel events and NGO preparatory meetings take place in the days before the meetings opens, therefore it is important that the representatives arrive at least a couple of days before. Likewise it is a good idea to expect to have to stay at least a day after the meeting officially ends as meeting deadline is often passed, this would also be the time to talk with other NGOs concerning results and implementation²⁹. There are organizations such as International Service for Human rights that specialize in training courses for representatives from NGOs, national

²⁷ www.un-ngls.org

²⁸ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

²⁹ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

human rights institutions and other political actors from around the world in the use of international mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights, in the long run it may be helpful to contact them and maybe invest in their services³⁰.

Every year a form designating all NGO representatives must be returned to all the NGO Section and/or the Liaison offices, this has to be done even if no changes need to be reported in the accreditation form submitted the previous year. When the application has gone through the representatives gain a ground pass that allows access to United Nations buildings. These passes are restricted to persons who will be representing the organization at meetings or who will consult, speak and act on behalf of the NGO. Passes are issued for one year only, and they are valid from the day they are issued until the end of that year. Designated representatives must appear in person to obtain their passes (with photo ID cards) from the Pass and Security in accordance with the procedure established at each UN Office. Any changes in the representatives, address, fax or telephone number, etc. are to be communicated in writing to each UN Office. Temporary passes for accessing a specific meeting are issued for the duration of only that meeting. In that case a letter with information concerning the meeting and the new representatives has to be sent to the NGO Section or the Liaison office. Designations must be made only by the Chief Administrative Officer or highest elected officers of the Organization. Representatives may be appointed to the UN Headquarters in New York, Geneva and Vienna, as well and other UN facilities³¹.

6.3 Parallel events

Large international meetings may, as mentioned earlier, be accompanied by an NGO forum. These forums include workshops, panel discussions, demonstrations and other activities. The forums are always coordinated and organized by a host committee. Information on who to contact in order to host an event or in other ways be a part of this is available from the conference Secretariat. It is often a good idea to be active in these parallel events, as it is a good source of networking with other NGOs and also it is a good way to let others know what ones agenda is. When planning a side event it is important to think about what can be done to set the event that is being planned aside from all the other events, so it does not drown in the myriad of meetings, launchings, panel discussions etc. often a strong narrative story works – movies, a strong internationally known head

³⁰ <http://www.ishr.ch/>

³¹ <http://esa.un.org/coordination/ngo/new/index.asp?page=designation>

speaker. Food is also a good way of convincing people to come, hosting a lunch or a buffet interlinked with a meeting or an event.

When creating one's own agenda it is important to priorities for objects, issues, activities and resources and to understand that not everything is equally important and attainable. Have a clear image of the agenda, and what the goals for this particular meeting is, this is only possible if the research and preparation has been done so a meeting strategy can be laid.

7. Communication

Getting the message across in a clear and powerful way is of course the main objective, but within the UN that, again, is easily said that done because the communication at UN level is strongly regulated.

7.1 Etiquette

Meetings at the UN level are governed by strict rules, understanding these and obeying to them is important in order for the NGO to seem professional, and to lessen frustration and misunderstandings. Following protocol also allows for a more successful cooperation with NGOs, government and UN staff.

Governments are the most important players in the UN, and at the end of the day they are the ones with the voting rights, and the ones that negotiate and make the decisions. It is important to know when and where it is appropriate to contact governments. NGOs are not officially allowed to attend sessions of negotiation between governments, but sometimes NGOs have been able to observe or to have governments, which are positive towards the case, bring forward questions or statements inspired by NGOs. Many governmental meetings are closed to NGOs though, and much interaction with governments takes place before or after these meetings. Social functions as receptions and lunches are good for informal negotiations and networking. This networking may later transform into valuable information chains and willingness to meet for more extensive discussions. When approaching governments make sure that there is a clear agenda and that it is possible to present the main topics in a prompt and understandable way, the government officials are often busy. Written information may be useful, but have in mind that the diplomatic life is hectic and that written information alone may drown in the piles of paper that is already distributed. It is also important to

know who from a governmental delegation to pursue. Experts from ministries are likely to have a substantive knowledge of the subject, while professional diplomats have a better understanding of how to manage the case within the UN system. Ask around and find out who may be positive and open to the case. It is central to maintain the cooperation with the diplomats and experts that are positive to the LGBT case throughout the year so they can stay on top of the LGBT agenda and the LGBT organizations can stay on top of theirs. It is important to also note that official delegates are often moved around in the governmental system, and therefore it is important to keep up to date with who is in the system³².

7.2 Language

The official languages of the UN are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, the main ones being French and English³³.

To get involved in the discussion and make a suggestion demands an extensive knowledge of the debate, the negotiation and the positioning. This is because knowledge of any agreed on statements and wording/language choice will reveal the professionalism of an NGO. UN language is extremely subtle and highly legalistic, a comma can make a political difference and decide if a resolution lives or dies³⁴. Because this is the reality for the people working within the UN system it appeals to them if proposals made by NGOs are made within these frames. A radical statement in audacious language will often not be taken seriously.

7.3 Oral statement

It is not a given fact that NGOs get to speak at meetings; it is something they are permitted to do. NGO are often the last ones to speak at meetings, and if the meeting draws out this means that the speech is moved to the next day or the day after that. In order to be a successful NGO patience is therefore a key word, it is also important to have time limits and other regulations in mind. When the NGO gets to the podium the delegates have most likely listened to hours or even days of speeches. Therefore it is again important to prioritize, be clear and capture the “spirit” of the UN language. A good advice is to have no more than three key points, have the current debate in mind and refer to it with clear, specific proposals and support the proposals with facts and anecdotes that grabs the attention. The oral speeches do leave a little room for addressing the topic at hand at a

³² Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

³³ http://www.un.org/Depts/DGACM/faq_languages.htm

³⁴ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=5510

more narrative level. A strong speaker can make a difference for an NGO, but it is unlikely that a speaker can change an agenda or post radical new ideas. Combining efforts with other NGOs in a joint speech can strengthen the position also towards governments. In that case it is important to state which NGOs are represented and to have copies of the speech ready for circulation³⁵.

7.4 Written statement

A NGO with special consultative status has the ability to circulate statements at ECOSOC meetings at a maximum of 500 words and at the subsidiary bodies meeting at a maximum of 1500 words³⁶. These statements are a part of the information strategy in order to explain clearly what the priorities of the NGO are. Again it is a good idea to band up with several other NGOs in order to have strong backing for a statement, these have a tendency to be taken more serious, especially if the cosigners are “important” NGOs that are well established within the UN system. A broad band of cosigners both on a geographical and topical level also have importance, as this shows that the issue is important not just to a small group of people, but for a wider section of the world’s population. The concerns of the use of language are of cause an issue when writing a statement. Write within the terminology of the UN officials and be clear and targeted³⁷.

8 Local work

UN work is not only done at the UN, the most important work is sometimes the work that is done in the national countries before, after and during the meetings.

8.1 Follow up

The UN agreement is only the first step in the process of achieving the aims expressed. The UN deliberations and decisions do not mean anything, if they are not followed up on at the national level. It is the national governments that, to a great extend, are responsible for changing the obligations into reality. NGOs can play an important role in forcing the national governments to keep their promises. This can be done by observing and encouraging national governments and international agencies to follow up on their promises. Use the official final agreement as verification of what the national government needs to do. Contact the relevant governmental

³⁵ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=5510

³⁶ <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/faq.htm>

³⁷ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

departments and keep a close bond with the officials who have been contacted during the meetings, in order to hear of any progress and to lay pressure. Find out how other countries have dealt with the implementation of the new agreements, and see if that would be a way for the national government to go. Also keep in touch with other NGOs that have become a part of the network during the UN meeting and share problems, concerns and progress with them. Make clear to the national governments that you will keep following them until the rightful implementations have been made³⁸.

8.2 To work from home

It is costly, especially for smaller NGOs, to be physically present at UN meetings particularly if the preparatory meetings, NGO forums and follow up meetings are added to it. This strains the NGO's resources, not only the financial, but also the personal as many NGOs have to rely on the members wanting to use their vacation time or take time off work in order to work for the NGO. That is why many NGOs focus on what can be accomplished without being physically present at the UN. The work done from home is often as important, or perhaps even of a greater impact than the work done at the UN level. And fortunately a great deal of work can be done without being physically present at UN meetings, events, etc. Long before a meeting in the UN starts, national NGOs can begin to lobby their own national governments by contacting them with issues important to the NGO, and by speaking to the delegates going, in order to open them up for issues or for lobbying being done by other NGOs at the UN. It is also possible to make suggestions on politics, provide inputs to country reports, and advocate for the incorporation of NGO topics. It is also efficient to create a general awareness in the public about the topic at hand, either by educational campaigns done by the NGO, or by using the media to spread the message. This would then create a greater pressure on the government and hopefully, if efficiently enough, help set a political agenda that could benefit the NGO's case. It is also possible and important to oversee the progress and outcome of the deliberations at the UN from home, this can be done through the UN webpage and other channels of information that have been build up, for instance with other NGOs that have the possibility of participating, or by a good cooperation with governmental officials. This information can be used influencing a local debate concerning the issues, or in the cooperation or lobbying with the local government. In any case it is important for the NGO to keep informed on what goes on, as this has impact on the how the NGO should conduct its work in the future.

³⁸ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015

When working from home the quadrennial review of the NGO's UN work has to be kept in mind. The NGO has to be aware of the fact that a report with the NGO's contributions to the UN has to be submitted, and that the contributions stated have to be valued as important enough for the NGO Committee to wish to prolong the cooperation. In that light not all work can be done from home, a part of the work has to be done with closer affiliation to the UN³⁹.

³⁹ Guide to the UN System for NGOs(2003) http://www.un-ngls.org/site/article.php3?id_article=551015