

## DPI/NGO Conference opens in Mexico City

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After many months of preparation, international cooperation, and several video and audio conferences, a group of staff members from NGO Relations in the Department of Public Information left New York this past weekend for the **62nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference**, which opens on Wednesday in Mexico City.

The team, led by Maria-Luisa Chavez, Chief of NGO Relations, has spent several months working with the Mexican Government, NGO planning committees, **UNIC Mexico City** as well as other UN offices, such as the **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, to get the conference underway.

This year's conference is turning out to be a unique experience for the UN staff and the partners involved. It is the first time that the conference is being held outside the comfort and logistics of a United Nations facility.

For 60 years, the conference has been held at Headquarters in New York until last year's historic conference hosted by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** in Paris, France, to mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of **Universal Declaration Human Rights**.

"The uniqueness of the Conference lies in the planning process," says the co-chair of the Conference, Charles Hitchcock. "I have been overseeing planning committees of 20 individuals each in Mexico City and New York City. Never before have we had such international cooperation in the planning process," he said at a press conference in New York prior to his departure to Mexico.



Since March 2009, the planning committee in New York has met its counterpart in Mexico 17 times via videoconferences and has held many audio conferences to iron out several issues, including speakers for the event, the roundtables, the workshops and the exhibits.

### Spreading the net

About 1400 delegates from 70 countries, representing more than 350 Non-Governmental Organizations and civil society registered to take part in the Mexico Conference. This year's conference has also seen the largest youth participation.

For the staff of NGO Relations, the most exciting part of taking the conference on the road is the opportunity that smaller NGO's get to be part of the conference. This year, an unprecedented number of Mexican and Latin American NGOs – 43 – were accredited to be associated by the Department of Public Information ahead of the conference.

"A lot of coordination has gone on the ground," said Gail Bindley-Taylor Sainte of NGO Relations on the collaboration between the NGO community and the Mexican government, which had offered to host the conference.

"This conference is being run and organized by the NGO's themselves," she told iSeek, adding, "The idea is to make the conference more diverse, build interest in the UN, the issues and the work of the NGO Section." Mexico, she said, has bent over backwards to facilitate the conference.

## **The 62nd conference**

The meeting is aiming to highlight effective ways in which civil society can contribute to the advancement of disarmament and peace and as a result, promote sustainable development.

The organizers are hoping to jump-start the process of NGO participation in educating and lobbying their respective governments about the need to make meaningful progress in the deliberations of the **Non-Proliferation Treaty meeting to be held at the UN Headquarters in 2010**.

Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon will address the gathering on why the world must disarm as his "**WMD-We Must Disarm**" campaign gathers momentum towards the **final countdown to International Day of Peace on 21 September**.

For staff members interested in deepening their knowledge on issues of disarmament, the conference proceedings will be a good source of information. Four roundtables, several breakout sessions and over 20 late afternoon workshops will be held over the next three days, offering many opportunities to delegates to present and discuss the topic in detail.



Some of the topics being discussed include weapons of mass destruction, the control of small arms, the size of military spending, and what lies ahead if leaders do not work to reduce global defense spending.

The President of the 63rd General Assembly Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann will welcome guests in a video address. The keynote addresses will be delivered by Miguel Marín Bosch, a renowned Mexican diplomat and collaborator with the Nobel Laureate Ambassador Alfonso García Robles, and Jody Williams, Nobel Prize Laureate and founder of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines.

Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Mexico will make remarks at the opening ceremony.

A final resolution on disarmament is expected to be issued at the end of the conference, and copies sent to the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

**Download the Conference poster to your desktop**

The Department of Public Information graphic designers created the Conference poster in **English** and **Spanish**, available for downloading for use as a desktop wallpaper on your computer. To set the image as the background on your computer, open the language version of your choosing and use the right button on your mouse to select the "set as background" option.