

NGO-IASC Monthly Meeting
11 May 2005
Notes



1: The dialogue with Islamic NGOs
(by Ayaz Ali, Islamic Relief)

Further to the discussions that took place during the High-Level Humanitarian Forum, where there was an understanding for a greater interaction between the humanitarian community and Islamic/Muslim NGOs and charities, Islamic Relief has undertaken a process to activate the role of the Islamic/Muslim Humanitarian sector.

In this context Mr. Ayaz Ali, from the Islamic Relief (a UK-based Muslim NGO), gave a briefing on the process towards the Proposed Cairo Conference on Improving Humanitarian Action and Space In the Muslim World.

Mr. Ali presented some of the major problems and constraints faced by Muslim NGOs, including the pressure from western governments, which has emerged after the events of 9 September 2001, based on the perception of Islamic NGOs being a cover for financing terrorism. This perception has heavily restricted the work of Muslim NGOs, and some have had to close down. The subsequent consequences of this have, among others, been an increase in poverty in host countries as well as an increased sense of alienation from the international community.

Mr. Ali stated the purposes of the conference and process leading to it as being threefold and closely linked:

- a) Building the capacity of government ministries in the Muslim World to enable civil society organisations to work professionally, ethically and with full transparency.
- b) Building the Capacity of the Muslim NGO sector to operate within the quality standards required by host communities, governments, international institutions and donors.
- c) Building bridges in the international humanitarian sector which will lead to understanding, cooperation and joint action on the ground.

Mr. Ali furthermore outlined the progress so far as well as the envisaged way ahead. The latter includes setting up a Conference Steering Committee and establishment of a number of working groups to look at thematic issues. The final stage, after the Cairo Conference, is to take the recommendations from there into a development phase as well as a UN Conference.

In the discussion following the briefing, participants focused on the issue of perception of the international humanitarian community in the Arab world and the need for capacity building among the Muslim NGOs including the need

from them to streamline and mainstream their organizations. Also, it was mentioned that Islamic NGOs often have more than a humanitarian agenda because they are set in a political environment often in opposition to their government. Finally, it was stressed that the Cairo Conference should not become a political event, and should focus on the humanitarian issues.

2: AOB

Ms. Joanne Clark, IRIN Liaison Officer, informed the participants about new movies produced by IRIN.

Furthermore, she mentioned the forthcoming “16 days of activism against gender violence” which will happen from 25 November – 10 December. For any further information on the 16 days of activism, please refer to the website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html#>

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List of Participants**



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