



SUBSCRIBE

LOG OUT



2008 CIVICUS World Assembly

Natalia Kiryttopoulou

⊕ View related content by region and theme

Article featured in the September 2008 issue of Alliance magazine

Event 2008 CIVICUS World Assembly: Acting Together for a Just World – People, Participation and Power

Date 18-21 June

Venue Glasgow, Scotland

Organizer CIVICUS

Almost 1,200 delegates from more than 100 countries attended the 8th CIVICUS World Assembly this year that took place in Glasgow on 18-21 June. Grassroots activists, women’s groups, faith-based organizations, international NGOs, public and private donors, intergovernmental organizations – all gathered together to discuss the role of civil society worldwide in creating a more just world.

This year’s theme was People, Participation and Power. A mix of plenary and workshop-style sessions addressed the issue of civil society influencing, accessing and contributing to all levels of governance, from local government to high-level international forums. The common theme of the discussion, both inside and outside sessions, was that of participation and voice as a means for exercising accountability at all levels in the international governance and aid system.

Highlights of the assembly included the participation of UK's Secretary of State for International Development, Douglas Alexander, who commented on the limitations intergovernmental organizations pose to people's participation in governance. Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organization, was also there. Although it is an encouraging development to see representatives of such powerful institutions participating in a global civil society gathering, I feel that in this case, it did not work particularly well. Pascal Lamy, for example, limited himself to explaining basic notions of international law and using principles such as the sovereignty of states to avoid engaging in any meaningful debate about reimagining the current international trade system.

But lively discussions did take place in the Intelligent Funding Track sessions on the rights of the people on the receiving side of aid to have their voices heard and represented in the aid system's decision-making processes. One of my take-aways from the discussions is that platforms like CIVICUS offer an opportunity for civil society to be more strategic and effective in influencing the politics and institutions of development finance.

We all lived a very emotional moment when outgoing Secretary General Kumi Naidoo announced that human rights activists Netsanet Demissie and Daniel Bekele, who had been imprisoned in Ethiopia for more than two years, had finally been released and were there with us. With the Zimbabwean crisis and the extension to 42 days of the maximum time that police can hold terror suspects in the UK hanging over us, the Assembly served as a platform for voicing concerns about the shrinking space for civil society and human rights around the world. The International Center for Not-for-profit Law and Cordaid presented the Civil Liberties Prize to Mark Sidel for his work on the effects of the war on terror on civil society. Mary Robinson, one of the Elders of our global village, launched the 'Every Human Has Rights' campaign to assure respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, now 60 years old. And we all marched in the streets of Glasgow to claim it.

As for the future of CIVICUS and the World Assembly, the motto is 'change in continuity'. After almost 10 years of service, Kumi Naidoo handed over the position of Secretary General of CIVICUS to Ingrid Srinath, his 'dream successor' as he called her in his speech at the members' meeting. It is hoped that the appointment of Ingrid, ex-Chief Executive of Child Rights and You, will bring new force in increasing CIVICUS's visibility and securing a sustainable financial base. Kumi will remain in the CIVICUS family as honorary president and will dedicate most of his time to writing a reflection on the last ten years of working on the development of a global civil society.

This was the last of three years of the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organizations hosting the assembly in Glasgow. The torch has now been passed to the Institut du Nouveau Monde in Montreal, which will be hosting the CIVICUS World Assembly for the next three years,

with the promise to hold at least one of the gatherings in a southern francophone country. A l'année prochaine, alors!

Natalia Kirytopoulou is Adviser and Research Associate of Keystone. Email Natalia@KeystoneAccountability.org

For more information

<http://www.civicus.org>

Share this page    

Comments (0)

Leave a Reply

Logged in as [David Bonbright](#). [Log out?](#)

Submit

Conference Report

1 September 2008

Author...



Natalia Kiryttopoulou

[View more from this author](#)

SHARE THIS PAGE



NEXT CONFERENCE REPORT TO READ

Faith and International Development Workshop / Jewish Funders' Network International Conference

Charles Keidan

2 June 2008

Alliance magazine

[Home](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Magazine](#)

[Alliance Extra](#)

[Blog](#)

[Conference Calendar](#)

[About Alliance](#)



[Browse by Location](#)



[Browse by Theme](#)



[Browse by Content Type](#)



Alliance © Alliance Publishing Trust 2008 | Charity Number: 1116744 | Company Number: 5935154 [Terms and Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy](#) and [Cookies](#)

Hand Crafted by [The Idea Bureau](#)

