

Annual Report of the Managing Director Geneva Social Observatory July 2005 to May 2006

During its second year, the activities of the Geneva Social Observatory (GSO) have included the implementation of multistakeholder dialogue on HIV/AIDS and social responsibility, the development of proposals on other issues, the continued publication of the monthly *GSO News*, the introduction of a GSO Website and a substantial effort to amend the GSO Statutes. Some highlights relating to these activities are described in this report.

1. HIV/AIDS and Social Responsibility

The main thematic issue focus of the GSO in 2005 was a Programme on HIV/AIDS and Social Responsibility. The overall purpose of the Program was to improve understanding of how the private sector and the world of work might be better integrated into a comprehensive campaign against HIV/AIDS and to promote partnerships to implement that aspect of the comprehensive campaign.

The first phase of the Programme consisted of a series of multistakeholder roundtable meetings organized by the GSO during the first half of 2005. The objective of the initial phase of the Programme was to:

- Provide a mutual learning experience for participants;
- Stimulate partnerships between actors and constituents; and
- Build a multistakeholder action plan.

The results of the first three roundtable meetings in February, April and May 2005 were presented in the 2004-2005 annual report of the Managing Director to the General Assembly.

The roundtable series led to the formation of a working group to develop an umbrella action plan on social responsibility and HIV/AIDS. The working group decided to concentrate on the informal economy in Africa and to develop an action plan and a mapping exercise on the informal economy, including any information on programmes to combat HIV/AIDS in the informal economy, in selected African countries. The GSO convened two planning group meetings in July and September and carried out the preliminary work on a mapping exercise. An expanded Forum on HIV/AIDS and the Informal Economy in Africa: Building a Multistakeholder Action Plan took place on 20 October 2005 in Geneva, Switzerland to build on the draft umbrella plan that the working group had put together. With detailed input from working groups at the October forum and a third planning group meeting, a revised action plan was prepared.

The action plan was presented by the GSO at two different sessions of the ICASA 2005 meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in December 2005, one organized by the ILO and another organized by the World Bank. Included as another appendix to this report is a modified version of the PowerPoint presentation of the Components of a Multistakeholder Action Plan that was presented at ICASA 2005.

The third phase of this Programme has been directed to proposals for funding a number of action items that effectively follow-up the proposals that emerged during the initial phases, namely:

1. Continuation of the mapping exercise
2. Revision of the umbrella action plan to reflect ICASA 2005 inputs
3. Continued and expanded networking
4. Development of an interactive website
5. Dissemination of good practices
6. Assisting the development of new projects and programs
7. Conducting research on targeted issues of concern

A strategy paper has been submitted to several prospective donors, but no funding has yet become available.

2. The Development of Proposals on Other Issues

It will be recalled that in its first year the GSO Management Committee had identified three thematic issue areas for the promotion of multistakeholder dialogue. In addition to the issue of HIV/AIDS and social responsibility, the GSO program has included an exploration of options pertaining “the role of corporate governance and corporate social responsibility in the regulatory debate for promoting more equitable globalization and development” and “the impact of supply chain management, including the debate over outsourcing, in the context of the more general issue of global full employment and social protection.

With regard to the corporate governance/CSR issue area, the focus has been shifting to specific sectors. Two in-depth reports have been prepared for GSO News, one in November 2005 on “A Checklist for MC6”, which is an assessment of the issues before the WTO leading up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference (“MC6”) in Hong Kong; and the other in February 2006 on “Changing Multistakeholder Models involving NGOs and the Private Sector”. Pre-proposal discussions have been held with interested parties on CSR as it impacts the services negotiations at the WTO and on CSR as it relates to international trade and health. A more detailed proposal has also been prepared for a roundtable series on “Diabetes and Social Responsibility”, with background research carried out by an intern in the beginning of 2006.

New CSR sub-themes have also been discussed by the GSO Management Committee pertaining to SMEs and the informal economy, and a member of the GSO Management Committee has been tasked with refinement of the issue for further consideration.

Similarly, on the supply chain management issue area, the focus has shifted to a specific sector, the apparel and textile sector. An in-depth report was prepared for *GSO News* in October 2005 on “The Phase-Out of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing”, and further work has been done on prospective funding sources by an intern in the beginning of 2006. There continues to be strong interest in proceeding further with this sector-specific sub-theme, and a member of the Management Committee has volunteered to take the lead on this.

3. Continued Publication of the Monthly *GSO News*

In addition to occasional in-depth reports, the monthly *GSO News* features news on developments at WHO, WTO, ILO and many other Geneva-based organizations, as well as other selected developments on global social issues. This is a subscription service for ten issues a year, prepared on a monthly basis with the exception of August and January. It offers detailed news articles on ten to twelve events of interest, leadership changes in the major organizations, and a listing of forthcoming events. This is sent out to subscribers electronically. A separate *GSO News Digest* with a short sentence on each covered event is sent out electronically to a larger list of non-subscribers with an invitation to subscribe. Back issues of *GSO News* are eventually posted on the GSO website.

The Management Committee has deliberated on how to improve subscriptions to this news service. One development that has been recently implemented is to introduce new payment options, by sending out bulletins de versements and by providing an on-line option for payment by credit care. Management Committee members have also volunteered to engage in active marketing of the newsletter. A separate report has been prepared for the General Assembly on the current status of newsletter subscriptions.

Several interns have been helpful in doing research for various news items, but the actual preparation of the newsletter has been done by the Managing Director. The editing work has been handled by Lucy Howe López, with support from Ralph Doggett.

4. Introducing a GSO Website

At the request of several participants during the first and second phases of the program on HIV/AIDS and Social Responsibility, we were able to introduce a GSO Website, which was activated on 15 March 2006. This has made it possible to place all of the reports of GSO roundtable and forum events on the Internet, as well as the umbrella action plan, the mapping exercise and other

related materials. It is also where the back issues of *GSO News* are posted. The Website is at www.gsogeneva.ch. It should be noted that extensive uncompensated work was put into making the arrangements for the site and preparing the materials for posting on the site.

5. Amending the Statutes

A substantial effort has been exerted by the Management Committee and the Managing Director this year to amend the GSO statutes. We have also been fortunate to receive the pro bono legal guidance of John Iglehart, who has met with the Management Committee and the Managing Director on several occasions and has prepared several drafts of the amendments to the statutes at our request. The proposed amendments have been put forward to the General Assembly. Among the changes are the introduction of a two-tiered membership structure, the establishment of a Secretary-Treasurer position on the Management Committee, changing the title of the Managing Director to "Executive Director", establishing that the Executive Director is a voting member of the Management Committee and of the Association, and modifying the provisions for enhanced procedural flexibility of the Management Committee and the General Assembly. This has been a lengthy process that reflects the first round of statutory adjustments for the GSO as it grows and adapts its statutory framework to the ways that it operates in practice.

Respectfully submitted:

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Geneva Social Observatory

Geneva, 10 May 2006