

**Annual Meeting of the General Assembly  
of the Geneva Social Observatory  
220 Route de Ferney, Le Grand Saconnex, Switzerland  
Thursday, 8 July 2010**

Annual Report of the Executive Director  
May 2009 to July 2010

During its sixth year, the activities of the Geneva Social Observatory (GSO) have focused on the implementation of the Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness. This has been a long-running project for the GSO. Phase One of this project was completed with a major publication and action plan for further involvement of the GSO, especially in developing a workplace strategy. Phase Two of the project involved the development and validation of a Workplace Strategy for Diabetes and Wellness, culminating with a special GSO Forum on 25 September 2008. In 2009, the GSO entered into a new implementation phase to introduce the Workplace Strategy in specific countries.

Meanwhile, the GSO Management Committee has been looking at the long-term benefit of the core mission of the GSO in facilitating a neutral space for multi-stakeholder dialogue on contentious social issues. A particular niche filled by the GSO is in the linkage of health and workplace issues, and the Committee has considered the possibility of GSO initiatives on mental health in the workplace, counterfeiting, and immigration. Finally, this report provides updates on changes in the GSO leadership.

**The GSO Project on *Diabetes and Social Responsibility***

The GSO prepared a ***Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness*** through extensive multi-stakeholder consultations culminating in a validation forum on 25 September 2008. The wide-ranging consultations included experts from the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, NGOs representing health professionals and patients' groups, trade unions, private companies, diplomatic missions, and academics.

Immediately following the September 2009 Forum, the GSO was asked by a representative of Merck/MSD to consider how it might implement the Strategy by adapting it to specific pilot projects. An unrestricted grant was provided for workshops and/or seminars in Poland, Russia and Turkey. These were carried out in June 2009 (Poland and Turkey) and September 2009 (Russia), with a participatory process that resulted in recommendations for further action.

Subsequently, on 6 May 2010, the GSO convened a consultative roundtable in Geneva to review the recommendations from the three countries with experts from the WHO, NGOs, diplomatic missions and the private sector. The roundtable participants made further recommendations. As a result, follow-up

proposals have been prepared for the three countries, and a template for implementation of the Workplace Strategy in other countries has been updated to incorporate these recommendations.

Unfortunately, the prospects for continued funding from Merck/MSD when the GSO started this implementation phase were not realized when the merger of MSD with Schering-Plough required significant budget cuts. Thus, other sources of funding are being pursued, and the GSO hopes to see further implementation activities in the fall of 2010.

### **Management Committee Reflections**

At the 2009 General Assembly and meeting of the Friends of the GSO, participants urged the GSO Management Committee to consider a variety of new directions, including social concerns in Africa, the challenge of integrating the informal economy, governance and the role of civil society, mental health and stress in the workplace, working with SMEs and trade and labour. It was recognized that a particular niche filled by the GSO is in the linkage of health and workplace issues. The Committee has explored the merits of GSO programmes on the impact of mental health or stress on the workplace and on immigration and its relationship to employment. These remain ideas for further discussion. The Executive Director has been approached by Sergio Marchi about the possibility of a joint project on immigration, with the GSO bringing in the significance of private sector interest as employers in supporting enlightened immigration policies. The Committee also discussed the possibility of a GSO role in the counterfeiting debate. Another idea that was proposed at the September 2009 Committee meeting was to return to the trade and labour field, as proposed in last year's General Assembly as well. .

### **Changes at GSO**

The Geneva Social Observatory has been fortunate to have a wide array of supporters who have contributed their time and resources to GSO programmes. The most substantial contribution of time has come from HRI, and efforts have been made to cover the costs incurred by HRI, at least in terms of specific project outputs. In addition, members of the GSO Management Committee have been actively involved in specific endeavours for the GSO, including their expertise on budgeting, auditing, or otherwise managing the GSO accounts.

We note with appreciation the service of Deborah Vorhies as President of the Association. We regret to announce the resignation of both Lorraine Ruffing and Brewster Grace, two of the founding members of the GSO. We are pleased that both Manzoor Ahmad and Bryan Deschamps have accepted our invitation to join the Committee, and their membership is to be confirmed at the 2010 General Assembly, each for a four-year term from 2010 to 2014.