

**Annual Meeting of the General Assembly
of the Global Social Observatory
220 Route de Ferney, Le Grand Saconnex, Switzerland
Tuesday, 10 July 2012**

Annual Report of the Executive Director
July 2011 to July 2012

During its eighth year, the activities of the Global Social Observatory (GSO, formerly known as the Geneva Social Observatory) moved into active engagement with the global campaign against non-communicable diseases and in support of multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue, collaboration and action. The GSO convened a series of three roundtables in 2011, participated in NCD-related events in Moscow, New York and Geneva and launched a Colloquium Series on NCDs for 2012.

Meanwhile, the GSO Management Committee has been discussing a statement of principles for the GSO to clarify its role in facilitating a neutral space for multi-stakeholder dialogue on contentious social issues. The Committee has also agreed to review the statutes and to adopt a new membership policy. Finally, this report provides updates on changes in the GSO leadership and closes with a discussion on future GSO activities.

The GSO Roundtables on Mobilizing Multistakeholder Action to Address NCDs

Building on the GSO Workplace Strategy on Wellness and Diabetes, the GSO developed proposals for a series of roundtables on the four non-communicable diseases that were being addressed in the forthcoming High-Level Meeting on NCDs in New York in September 2011. This was ultimately fruitful, with funding pledged by Medtronic, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer and Sanofi-Aventis for a roundtable on ***Mobilizing Multi-Stakeholder Action to Address Non-Communicable Diseases*** in Geneva on 8 April 2011. The outcome from that roundtable was shared with others at a WHO Global Health Forum for NGOs and the private sector in Moscow on 27 April, which the GSO Executive Director attended. With additional funding, the GSO also held a second roundtable on the same subject, this time in cooperation with the Council for Multilateral Business Diplomacy, in Geneva on 1 June 2011. The Executive Director attended the informal consultation with NGOs and the private sector held under the auspices of the President of the UN General Assembly in New York on 21 June 2011.

GSO reports were prepared and distributed for the 8 April and 1 June roundtables, and the Moscow Global Health Forum, while a consolidated statement of priorities for action was prepared and distributed at the 21 June event. This consolidated statement was also distributed at the NCD Summit itself in New York, and the Executive Director actively participated in numerous

side events associated with that September summit. Finally, the 2011 series of roundtables concluded with a follow-up to the September NCD Summit, convened in November 2011. A report and a set of highlights were prepared, but this event also triggered a more participatory process for 2012.

On popular demand from participants at the November roundtable, the GSO established a Working Group on NCDs that started meeting on a weekly basis to plan a 2012 GSO Colloquium Series on NCDs, to focus on specific aspects of the global NCD situation. The Working Group prepared a web-based survey on issues that served as the basis for identifying the priority issues for the Colloquium Series. Medtronic also commissioned further research on partnership policies in the UN system.

At the beginning of the year, the GSO held a “Launch Event” for the Colloquium Series on 10 January and incorporated a new participatory format, the “café politique” format, which was successful in producing further input on priorities for the Colloquium Series. In addition, the participants adopted a “Statement for Multi-Stakeholder and Multi-Sectoral Engagement on NCDs”, building on the highlights from the November 2011 roundtable and distributed to the WHO Executive Board members. The participants also requested the GSO to develop its own statement of principles.

Continuing with the GSO Working Group on NCDs as the planning vehicle for GSO activities, the GSO has convened three events in the 2012 Colloquium Series in March, May and July. The first two events featured a focus on the risk factors associated with NCDs, while the third event featured a focus on equitable access to NCD prevention, treatment and care. Funding is now coming from Medtronic, Sanofi and Eli Lilly, as well as in-kind support from Unilever. The café politique format has been used at the March and July events, and a broadened GSO Working Group on NCDs expects to draw on the outputs from the café politique exercises to build a set of unique GSO messages regarding multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral engagement on NCDs. The Working Group also expects to plan at least one more Colloquium Event in late September or early October and to produce a sort of “white paper” on key messages.

In addition to these events, the GSO participated in consultations in late April 2012 at the WHO on the development of a monitoring framework with indicators and targets for NCDs and monitored the debates on NCDs at the World Health Assembly in May. The GSO also participated in a “world café” exercise during the Geneva Health Forum in April and as an NGO at the Rio+20 Summit in June.

Management Committee Reflections

In February, the Management Committee started a process of developing a basic statement of principles for multi-stakeholder engagement and broadened it to include guidance for membership policy. These were further discussed in May,

with specific revisions of a draft statement of principles and instructions for a new membership policy and a review of the GSO statutes. These items are being presented to the General Assembly for its advice and guidance.

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 and Ralph Doggett as Secretary/Treasurer of the Association. Both are completing their current terms this year. We also welcome new Committee members Mireille Quirina and Julia Seyer, both of whom have become active contributors to the Committee and to GSO events.

Looking to the Future

GSO support for multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboration on NCDs has evolved in the past year and a half to build a basic set of messages that are unique to this approach on NCDs. The GSO Working Group on NCDs is acquiring a leadership role in promoting a range of outputs for greater impact in advancing this approach. We will have a fourth Colloquium Event on NCDs, most likely in late September or early October, to elaborate more fully on the key messages for equitable access to NCD prevention, treatment and care. While the original work plan was to have a fifth event in November focusing on empowering people to manage their own health conditions, the GSO Working Group on NCDs may choose to modify the work plan to concentrate on enhanced visibility of the key messages from the four events. Also, the May Colloquium Event featured some preliminary discussions on national-level action, and the GSO may explore how this might be further developed. The GSO is grateful to the project funding from Medtronic, Sanofi and Eli Lilly and in-kind support from Unilever, but more funding will be needed to continue the project.

The GSO may also have the opportunity to apply its basic participatory format to a project involving nutrition and health. There is an inter-agency initiative on Scaling Up Nutrition in the UN system that has encountered a diversity of views about engaging with the private sector in multi-stakeholder collaboration. The GSO may provide the right format for tackling this challenge. Of course, this will require a new search for project funding, just as we are challenged to find continued funding for the NCD project.

Finally, we are looking to start an active membership drive for the GSO. The General Assembly needs to consider how to articulate the benefits of membership as well as to update the statutes in this regard.