



Official Newsletter of the Global Social Observatory
Geneva, Switzerland

Seventh issue, February 2014 (bimonthly)

Welcome to seventh issue of the [GSO](#) newsletter. The GSO aims to stimulate multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue and information sharing. The newsletter has three sections providing: updates on GSO activities; commentary on developments in international organizations and NGOs involved in addressing multi-stakeholder engagement; and upcoming events of interest.

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GSO-SUN Conflict of Interest Project – Global Concluding Conference, Geneva

Over 70 participants came together for the Global Concluding Conference on the Prevention and Management of Conflicts of Interest in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, hosted by the GSO and SUN Movement Secretariat at the Hotel Chavannes-de-Bogis, Coppet, Switzerland on 16 to 17 February 2015. Multi-stakeholder participation was primarily drawn from individuals who had participated in one or more of the consultation sessions or enhanced learning exercises that were convened by the GSO to develop or refine the guidance tools on conflict of interest. They included representatives from fifteen SUN Member governments, civil society, business and academia, as well as UN agencies and donor governments.

The objective of the Conference was to review the key messages and lessons learned from the overall project and to determine the appropriate direction for integrating the guidance tools on conflict of interest into a broader approach to stakeholder alignment. A Reference Note and Toolkit were first developed through a series of three multi-stakeholder Consultation Sessions in Geneva in 2013. They served as the basis for another series of four “Enhanced Learning Exercises” that were held in Ghana, Kenya, El Salvador and Indonesia in the course of 2014. The key lessons learned from the Enhanced Learning Exercises were integrated into a revised Reference Note and Toolkit that was presented at the Global Conference along with a Synthesis Report capturing the overall lessons learned from the project.

A meeting report is being prepared for the event and will be made available on the GSO [website](#) shortly.

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I. GSO Activities

GSO Proposal for Colloquium Series: “2015 Challenges and Opportunities: Contributions from the Geneva International Scene”

The GSO is developing a proposal for the convening of a Colloquium Series on “2015 Challenges and Opportunities: Contributions from the Geneva International Scene” to facilitate better understanding among the many stakeholders and sectors in Geneva involved in the Post-2015 and Climate Change agendas. The Colloquium Series will contribute ideas and recommendations from a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral perspective in support of partnering in the implementation processes of these agendas. It will identify and cultivate opportunities for complementary platforms for action among stakeholders and sectors that will integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are being proposed for a Post-2015 Development Agenda Summit in New York in September and the commitments that are being negotiated for the Paris Climate Summit in December.

The GSO has applied this multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach to a series of dialogues on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in 2014. The GSO convened a series of three roundtable events in April, June and September 2014 to stimulate dialogue and mutual understanding across sectors and stakeholder groups on food security and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, employment and trade. The purpose was to promote cross-cutting linkages and partnering possibilities on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The GSO also sponsored a panel discussion on linking opportunities to address sustainable consumption and production patterns, another proposed SDG, with trade at the WTO Public Forum in October 2014. Summaries of these events can be found on the [GSO website](#), along with a listing of the lead discussants for each event.

To continue this dialogue, the GSO proposes to contribute to the convening of a follow-on colloquium series in 2015 that seeks to broaden the linkages among the SDGs in the Post-2015 Development Agenda to the opportunities for mitigation and adaptation for addressing climate change. This will be done through a series of dialogues on selected specific cross-cutting issues in 2015, with the objective of using the GSO space

for constructive discussions, for broadened understanding about the perspectives and capacities of different groups, and for identifying and cultivating multi-stakeholder collaboration as part of the Geneva International Scene. The GSO proposes to convene a series of eight Colloquium Events from May 2015 to January 2016. Six Colloquium Events will be held in Geneva, and two will be held as side events in New York and Paris to highlight the contributions of the Geneva International Scene to both the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to the COP21 Climate Change Summit.

GSO members are invited to volunteer for a Steering Committee that will be convened to identify issue areas that are especially ripe for Geneva-based multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue and collaboration. The GSO proposes the development of at least four cross-cutting issues areas that would be presented for consideration to the Steering Committee. It is, of course, understood that poverty eradication is the primary goal of the SDGs. With that context as a given, possibilities for partnership development may include linking air pollution to health, weather management and gender empowerment; linking green jobs to health, food security and trade; linking nutrition to water and sanitation, rural entrepreneurship and agricultural productivity. There are many possibilities for combining trade and development concerns with sustainable consumption and production, healthy lifestyles, decent work, intellectual property, human rights, information and communications technology, and so many other areas of technical expertise based in Geneva.

Volunteers are invited to contact the GSO by Friday, 6 March 2015 if they would like to participate on the Steering Committee. More information will become available on the GSO website soon.

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Become a GSO member

The GSO’s mission is to promote and provide a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on contemporary social issues. Sign up for individual membership on our [website](#).

Some of our services include:

www.gsogeneva.ch

- Providing a neutral and inclusive forum for dialogue and collaboration
- Contributing to mutual understanding of diverse perspectives
- Facilitating a broadened search for solutions
- Promoting action and partnership building
- Serving as a clearing house for research on social issues

Benefits of GSO membership include:

- ❖ E-mail alerts of and invitations to all GSO events
- ❖ Receipt of all GSO meeting reports and papers
- ❖ News alerts on matters and issues of concern to ongoing GSO projects and initiatives.

GSO members are invited to take part in the annual General Assembly and hear first-hand oral reports from GSO officials and project leaders, and participate in discussions on GSO priorities.

If you are interested in becoming an individual member, please sign up [here](#), or [contact us](#).

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II. Commentary on International Organizations and NGOs

WHO Executive Board – January 2015 Outcomes

The WHO Executive Board had a complicated and long agenda that started with a special session for the Ebola emergency on 25 January 2015 and included debates on WHO reform, including a new proposed Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors (see separate article below). Other issues included review of WHO work on non-communicable diseases, nutrition and childhood obesity; health and the environment; antimicrobial resistance, malaria and vaccines; the Global Strategy on Public Health Innovation and Intellectual Property;

budgeting issues and revisions to the International Health Regulations. Our two interns from Kent State University, Megan Anderson and Emily Siebert, attended the EB and prepared a Webinar presentation that was delivered to a well-attended Internet audience on 11 February 2015. The Webinar slides are available on the GSO website [here](#). We mention a few highlights here on Board actions on the Ebola crisis, the follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition and the impact of air pollution on health.

At the opening of the special session on “Ebola emergency” on 25 January 2015, WHO Director-General Margaret Chan spoke about the challenges, the failings and the successes, noting that a review of the International Health Regulations in 2011 had warned that the machinery was not in place for a severe and sustained emergency. The UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Ebola, Dr. David Nabarro, acknowledged that “this has been the most challenging and difficult assignment I have ever had.” He reported on a multi-partner global response coalition that will continue to support the WHO for its technical work in the crisis.

The Board adopted a [consensus resolution](#) that contains provision for a conference on 3 March in Brussels to address sustainable recovery issues, a report by the WHO on its role in the UN emergency framework by March, and several reports to go to the World Health Assembly in May on an interim assessment of what happened in the response to the Ebola crisis, on review of the International Health Regulations, and from an ad hoc advisory group that is tasked with listing possible future outbreaks. It also includes provisions on protecting health care workers, expanding the capacity of a global medical team with emergency stand-by capacity, increasing disease surveillance capacity and compliance at the national level with existing International Health Regulations, linkages of vaccine development to the research and development programme for neglected tropical diseases, and the possibility of a contingency fund. There are also provisions for reform of the WHO in numerous areas and especially in the area of human resources.

With regard to the outcome of the Second International Conference on Nutrition, held in Rome in November 2014, both the WHO and the FAO are doing follow-up activities. At the WHO, the [Secretariat's report](#) on follow-up actions was debated at the Executive Board on Saturday, 31 January 2015. A [draft decision](#) sponsored by dozens of countries was approved to implement a variety of technical support activities for countries as well as collaboration with various UN mechanisms on nutrition to improve existing multiagency coordination mechanisms and to develop a global nutrition agenda. Another section of the decision provides for enhanced coordination with the Committee on World Food Security, the Global Coordination Mechanism on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and even the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement.

The WHO had significant impact on global awareness of the impact of air pollution on health with its [special report](#), issued in November 2014, showing that 8 million deaths per year are attributable to a combination of indoor and outdoor air pollution. This makes air pollution the largest environmentally-related cause of death and disability, and sets the stage for an active WHO role in environmental negotiations. The [draft resolution](#) introduced by Norway and Panama to authorize an activist role for the WHO on air pollution will go to the World Health Assembly in May. More generally, the EB did approve the recommendations for linking health to climate change and to the development of a revised global action plan on the environment and health.

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WHO Executive Board – Revising the proposed Framework for Engagement with non-state actors

At the Executive Board of the World Health Organization (WHO) in January 2015, Board members and interested parties debated a proposed new “Framework for

engagement with non-state actors”. This was the latest proposal in an overall reform effort at the WHO that has been under way for at least two years and that has included an earlier proposal that the World Health Assembly had requested the Secretariat to rewrite following a series of regional consultations in the fall of 2014. While many Board members urged the adoption of this revised proposal, many other members sided with a draft decision proposed by Argentina to have one more shot at yet another round of revisions and fine-tuning.

The new Framework continues with a four-way classification of non-state actors but includes revisions on how to treat international business associations as a separate category and on how to determine whether an NGO will be treated as a private sector entity for at least some purposes. More work is needed, said many speakers at the Board meeting, to identify the criteria for making such a determination. This led the drafting group to include a look at the criteria more generally for attributing a non-State actor to any of the four categories proposed in the revised text. These four categories, by the way, are NGOs, private sector, philanthropies and academia. The GSO, meanwhile, has favored an additional category for entities that are multi-stakeholder in nature.

Another related issue is how one might draw the line for engagement or non-engagement with particular industries in the private sector, above and beyond the current red line for the tobacco and arms industries. The draft text had suggested that *all* industries affecting human health might be thrown across the line, but at least one Board member suggested that this should at least be limited to those industries having a *harmful* effect on human health.

The revised proposal was debated at length on Tuesday, 27 January 2015 and a working group was established under Argentina's leadership to receive inputs for suggesting where further improvements in the draft Framework should be made. On Saturday, 30 January

2015, the drafting group had completed its work and reported back to the EB. The [draft decision](#) presented by Argentina provides for the convening of an open-ended intergovernmental meeting from 30 March to 1 April 2015. This meeting will act on specific proposals for amendments, inclusions or deletions of the current text were to be submitted by Member States by 16 February and will be distributed to Member States by 9 March 2015. Three days will be devoted to revising this text for transmission to the 68th World Health Assembly in May 2015. It will be channeled through the WHO's Programme, Budget and Administration Committee (PBAC) which is also intended to be the oversight body for implementing the new Framework in the future.

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Avoiding an Existential Crisis at the ILO

The Workers and Employers Groups of the ILO surprised the Governments at the opening of a Tripartite Meeting specially convened on 23 to 25 February 2015, before the ILO Governing Body session in March to resolve an impasse on whether the right to strike is recognized in international law. An eleventh hour compromise between the Workers and Employers Groups included a recognition by the Employers (and sought by the Workers) of "the right to take industrial action". It also included provisions sought by the Employers and accepted by the Workers. Their joint statement confirms the mandate of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, new procedures for adopting a list of cases for the LO Committee on the Application of Standards, clarification of special supervisory procedures, and the establishment of a new Standard Review Mechanism.

The Governments came to this special meeting looking for agreement on "the forms and framework" for the "suitable" exercise of the right to strike, based in large part on the "multi-faceted regulations that States have adopted to frame the right to strike". They had in fact worked out a consensus position that was in itself quite

remarkable, but they were not prepared to go beyond the terms of the special meeting. There were numerous pauses in the course of the three days for the Governments to reach a further consensus, but this was mostly to determine how to acknowledge the joint statement from the social partners (i.e. the Workers and Employers).

The Joint Statement of Workers and Employers Groups includes the basic elements of a compromise on the right to strike issue, along with other provisions to be worked out for the operation of the regular supervisory machinery of the ILO. As the US delegate stated at the opening of this special meeting, the ILO supervisory machinery is "regarded as one of the most advanced and best functioning within the international community" and it "has served the interests of governments, workers and employers throughout the world, and of democracy itself". The Governments, for their part, took note of the joint statement and the "willingness of the social partners to revitalize their dialogue" and expressed their support for a "comprehensive tripartite discussion at the next session of the Governing Body" on the provisions in the Joint Statement. Thus, the [official outcome](#) of this special meeting is to recognize that it "was conducted in a constructive atmosphere", with all statements made during the meeting to be "included in the report of the Meeting". We assume that the issues raised by the social partners' statement will indeed be added to the Governing Body's agenda – scheduled to meet from 12 to 27 March 2015.

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Climate Talks and the Geneva Pledge on Human Rights and Climate Action

Geneva hosted one of the key climate change talks in February when the "eighth part of the second session" of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) met at the Palais des Nations from 8 to 13 August 2015. The session went very smoothly and inspired the co-chairs to describe the "Spirit of Geneva" as setting the stage for an additional three negotiating sessions on the way to the Paris Climate Change Summit at the end of the year. The week also

produced a “Geneva Pledge on Human Rights and Climate Action”.

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The draft Lima Plan of Action that was presented to the ADP meeting was a text of some 39 pages that came out of the week’s deliberations with an expanded negotiating text of 86 pages. See the new text [here](#). The positive response to this was reflective of the feeling among the participants that the text now “enjoys the full ownership of all countries”. Observers of the ADP meeting point out, however, that the text has not resolved any of the major divisions that remain to be worked out for a successful summit in Paris. So much remains to be done at the remaining negotiating sessions in June, September and October.

One aspect of the Spirit of Geneva unfolded through the week in the form of a [Geneva Pledge on Human Rights and Climate Action](#). The delegate from Costa Rica announced the Pledge in the closing plenary, as something that will facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices, build capacity at national level but also work at a universal level with outreach activities to link human rights and climate action. The Geneva Pledge has been signed by eighteen countries so far: Chile, Costa Rica, France, Guatemala, Ireland, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia, Palau, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Samoa, Sweden, Uganda and Uruguay. See a report on the pledge [here](#). It is likely to pick up more, including when the 28th session of the Human Rights Council holds a full-day special event on the links between climate change and human rights on 6 March 2015. See the information on this in the Events calendar below.

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III. Upcoming Events

GSO events

GSO Webinar on Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Human Rights Council – 31 March 2015 at 14:30 CET (tentative)

GSO Management Committee meeting – 21 April 2015 at 10:00 CET

Key upcoming events of interest to the GSO

- HRC [28th Session of the Human Rights Council](#) Geneva 2 Mar - 27 Mar
- ISHR [Full Listing of Side Events for the 28th Session of the Human Rights Council](#) Geneva 2 Mar – 27 Mar
- UNCTAD [Looking at trade policy through a gender lens](#) Geneva 3 Mar
- HRC [Full Day Discussion on Human Rights and Climate Change – special session](#) Geneva 6 Mar
- UN [High-level thematic debate on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda](#) 6 Mar
- UNWOMEN [Commission on the Status of Women Fifty-ninth session](#) 9 Mar - 20 Mar
- ILO [323rd Session of the Governing Body](#) Geneva 12 Mar - 26 Mar
- UN [2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction](#) 14 Mar - 18 Mar
- WHO [First Ministerial Conference on Global Action against Dementia](#) Geneva 16 Mar - 17 Mar
- UNDESA [Post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs and targets](#) 23 Mar - 27 Mar
- UNCTAD [Expert Meeting on Cyberlaws and Regulation for Enhancing E-commerce Including Case Studies and Lessons Learned](#) Geneva 25 Mar - 27 Mar
- UNCTAD [Informal Expert Meeting on Consumer Protection](#) Geneva 27 Mar
- WHO [Open-Ended Intergovernmental Meeting on the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors](#) 30 Mar - 1 Apr

- UNCTAD [Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development, third session](#) Geneva 30 Mar - 31 Mar
- WIPO [Seminar on Genetic resources, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions: regional, national and local experiences](#) Geneva 30 Mar - 1 Apr
- WHO, Special Day [World Health Day](#) 7 Apr
- UNDESA [Second drafting session of the outcome document for the Financing for Development Conference](#) 13 Apr - 17 Apr
- UNCTAD [Global Commodities Forum 2015](#) 13 Apr - 14 Apr
- UNCTAD [Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development, seventh session](#) 15 Apr - 16 Apr
- Graduate Institute [IMF / CFD conference: Financing for Development](#) Geneva 16 Apr - 17 Apr
- UNCTAD [International Commodities Bodies Conference](#) Geneva 17 Apr
- UNEP [CCAC Climate and Clean Air Coalition High-Level Assembly](#) 19 Apr
- UNDESA [Post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations on the framework for monitoring and review of implementation](#) 20 Apr - 24 Apr
- ILO [Global Dialogue Forum on Employment Relationships in Retail Commerce: Their Impact on Decent Work and Competitiveness](#) Geneva 22 Apr - 23 Apr
- UNEP , Special Day [Earth Day](#) 22 Apr

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The Global Social Observatory (GSO) is an international organization founded in the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland in April 2004. The mission of the GSO is to initiate dialogue on social issues in order to encourage leaders to engage in a broadened search for solutions and policy coherence. This service is based on a participatory process in a neutral space that brings all interested parties together across national boundaries to identify solutions and policies that are coherent. These solutions can then contribute to policy-making at the governmental and intergovernmental levels. Visit our [website](#) for regular news and project updates.

Please send any comments, suggestions or feedback on the newsletter to [Michelle Botes](#)

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IV. Who We Are