

## **Toronto Declaration of NGO Core Values**

Recognizing the numerous and serious challenges to peace and human well-being confronting individuals, families, societies, and nations, including issues of poverty, hunger, human right abuses, illiteracy, disease, wars, terrorism, inequality, environmental degradation, and so forth;

Realizing that these difficult and diverse problems cannot be solved adequately by governmental and intergovernmental programs and intervention and through commercial enterprise alone;

Appreciating the increasing importance, number, and diversity of non-governmental organizations (NGO)s that, comprising a Third Sector besides the realms of government and business, today play a momentous role in advancing solutions to the above-mentioned challenges, bringing unprecedented vitality and ability to bear on critical issues related to service, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution.

Utilizing the term NGO in its broadest context as any not-for-profit organization (non-profit-distributing organization) that is not part of or controlled by a governmental entity or established by intergovernmental agreement and that is organized on a local, national, sub-regional, regional, or international level;

Understanding the umbrella term NGO to encompass a broad, kaleidoscopic grouping of nonprofit organizations, charities, and civil society organizations that espouse a wide variety of agendas, causes, and ideologies, and which differ in size, resources, and organizational level;

Recalling that as institutions that do not place profit as their number one goal, NGOs tend to be among the most trusted institutions in society;

Acknowledging that there remain many non-principled actors among the Third Sector that act neither responsible nor ethical and that bring harm to the reputation of the sector;

Emphasizing the duty of NGOs to maintain the highest ethical standards and stay the course in terms of their own practices and founding vision of service;

Reaffirming the collective responsibility of NGOs to build a better world, and determined to establish a just and lasting peace and well-being for all;

Believing that addressing the global challenges can best be fostered through cooperation across national and institutional borders, including inter-religious, intercultural, and interracial work, and across artificial barriers of politics and ethnicity, and that generating the moral will to act across such different systems may require acknowledgement of global ethics;

Considering certain fundamental values as essential to conduct of NGOs;

We, the leaders and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations, gathered at the World Congress of NGOs in Toronto , Canada from November 8 to 11, 2007, affirm the following as among the basic NGO Core Values that should undergird the work of the Third Sector,

## **I. Service beyond self**

NGOs, on the whole, are founded to serve others. While responsibly maintaining itself, an NGO integrates self-development and individual concerns with public concerns, focusing on higher, broader, and more public levels of service. An NGO should conduct its activities for the sake of others, whether the public at large or a particular segment of the public. NGO practitioners are to be exemplars of genuine giving out of concern for the welfare of others without the primary goal of their own enhancement or profit.

## **II. Respect for human rights**

An NGO should not violate any person's fundamental human rights, with which each person is endowed, as recognized for example in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An NGO should recognize that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Article 1), and should be sensitive to the moral values, religion, customs, traditions, and cultures of the communities they serve. Recognizing that the family is a fundamental natural group unit of society promoting human rights and human dignity (Article 16), an NGO should respect the integrity of families. An NGO should respect each individual's right of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 18).

## **III. Maintain a vision**

NGO practitioners should be visionaries, not only seeing the reality of the world as it is, but also envisioning the world as it should be. NGOs should maintain their founding spirit and passion, keeping their tangible dreams while learning from their victories and failures.

## **IV. Responsibility**

NGOs, entrusted with a responsibility to the public, should take ownership of the task at hand, taking the initiative and proactively pulling together resources of all types in order to find and implement feasible solutions. NGO practitioners are to demonstrate ownership of their NGO, be accountable for the execution and outcomes of their NGO's stated and expected goals, and strive for excellence in their work.

## **V. Cooperation beyond borders**

NGOs have a shared responsibility to address the serious challenges confronting humanity. Significant progress toward world peace and global well-being can be fostered through inter-religious, intercultural, and interracial work, and across artificial barriers of politics, race, and ethnicity that tend to separate people and their institutions. NGOs should maintain ethical, cooperative relationships with other NGOs, and should partner where possible and appropriate for the sake of the greater public good. An NGO should be willing to work beyond these borders, within the limits of its organizing documents and with organizations and individuals that share common values and objectives.

## **VI. Public mindedness**

An NGO should have a spirit of public mindedness. Public money must not be misused for selfish purposes and all public assets are to be treated with utmost seriousness, as a sacred public trust. An NGO should exhibit a responsible and caring attitude toward the environment in all of its activities. An NGO should recognize that its conduct and activities impact on the public's perception of NGOs and that it shares responsibility for the public's trust of NGOs.

## **VII. Accountability**

An NGO should be accountable for its actions and decisions, primarily to the community it serves, and also to its funding agencies, the government, staff and volunteers, members, partner organizations, and the public at large.

## **VIII. Truthfulness**

An NGO should be truthful in its dealings with its donors, project beneficiaries, staff, members, partner organizations, government, and the general public. Any information given out should be accurate, whether regarding itself and its projects, or regarding any individual, organization, project, or legislation it opposes or is discussing. An NGO must be strongly opposed to, and not a willing partner to, corruption, bribery, and other financial improprieties or illegalities.

## **IX. Transparency**

An NGO should be transparent in its dealings with the government, the public, donors, partners, beneficiaries, and other interested parties, except for personal matters and proprietary information. Except as needed to protect human rights, an NGO's basic financial information, governance structure, activities, and listing of officers and partnerships shall be open and accessible to public scrutiny and the NGO is to make effort to inform the public about its work and the origin and use of its resources.

## **X. Nonprofit Integrity**

To maintain its integrity as an NGO, the organization is to be organized and operated as a not-for-profit organization, with any surplus generated through its operations to be utilized solely to help the organization fulfill its mission and objectives. The organization is not to be operated for the primary purpose of carrying on a trade or business, unrelated to the mission and stated objectives.

## **XI. Comprehensive viewpoint**

An NGO should seek to understand, without prejudice, the needs and circumstances of all sides in any conflict situation.

## **XII. Voluntarism**

Rather than required to exist by law, NGOs are formed by private initiative, resulting from the voluntary actions of individuals who have chosen to pursue a shared interest of concern. The

retaining of voluntary values and principles shall remain a primary force in the way of working of the NGO.

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*The Toronto Declaration of NGO Core Values was drafted, and affirmed on November 11, 2007 by the participants of the World Congress of NGOs, held in Toronto, Canada, November 8-11, 2007.*