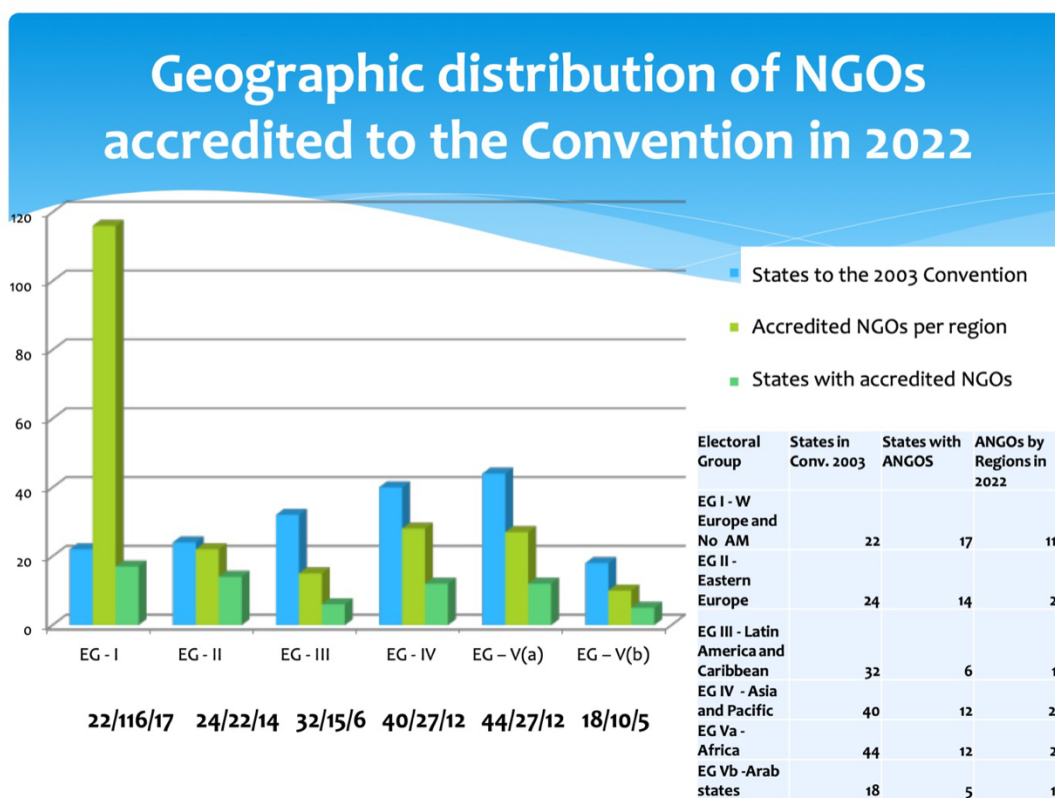


Annual Report 2022

Rationale

The unbalanced geographical distribution of accredited NGOs was identified as one of the major concerns by the General Assembly, the Committee and the Secretariat when the reflection process on the advisory role of accredited NGOs started at 12.COM in 2017. The concern on the unbalanced geographical distribution has been pointed out in numerous working documents of the governing bodies. Also, the ICH NGO Forum’s Reports of 14/15/16/17.COM put a strong emphasis on finding ways towards more balanced representation of ICH NGOs from all six regions.

As of 17.COM in 2022, the 2003 Convention has been ratified by 180 State Parties and 217 NGOs have been accredited to perform advisory functions for the Committee. As per ICH NGO Forum’s 2022 report to the Committee, the geographical representation of accredited NGOs is as follows:



Nature and Mission

The working group was established on December 19, 2020 during the 15.COM and was officially launched during the 16.COM in 2021 with election of the chair and secretary. The WG is a community of accredited NGOs from different

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geographical regions with an **aim to understand, address and overcome the issue of ongoing geographical imbalance of the NGO representation** in the ICH NGO Forum and the UNESCO 2003 Convention **by creating capacity building materials and practical information for the NGOs in the underrepresented countries.**

The working group focuses on proactively involving and activating the potential of accredited NGOs in under-represented regions and strives to understand the nature of needs and challenges faced by NGOs in different regions in order to effectively address the underrepresentation and adopt any necessary measures.

Activities planned for 2022

1. Official launch of the WG

2. during 16.COM on December 13, 2021:

- *Chair and the secretary were elected by consensus;*
- *Mission and activity plan was developed*

3. Online meetings on last Thursdays of every second month:

- *There were 5 meetings planned in total for January, March, May, July, September;*
- *Out of which **4 meetings** were conducted with 1 meeting cancellation in July due to summer vacations;*
- *The last annual meeting falls into November during the .COM meeting;*

4. Conceptualize the understanding of challenges that NGOs face in different regions:

- *One of the primary tasks of the WG in addressing the existing imbalance was to understand the challenges and needs that NGOs face in different regions. Thus, presentations of NGOs from different regions were initiated during the WG meetings. Based on these meetings and presentations, the WG prepared an outreach plan to recruit NGOs with potential for accreditation.*

5. Outline and develop outreach plan:

- *Carrying out separate online meetings with regional groups of accredited NGOs **explaining our purpose and goals** and **collect data on their partner NGOs** working in the field of ICH with a potential for accreditation. Focus – to look for partner NGOs in neighboring countries;*
- *Encouraging and rendering information support to potential NGOs from underrepresented regions/countries;*

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The Electoral Group V(a) Africa was chosen as the first pilot region for the outreach plan. The WG compiled a database of accredited NGOs in the EG V(a) and carried out two (2) online meetings with African NGOs explaining the purpose and goal of the WG and to collect data on other NGOs working in the field of ICH with a potential for accreditation. To overcome the language barrier, these meetings were accompanied with simultaneous French<>English interpretation to enable more participation. The main focus was to look for partner NGOs in neighboring countries. ANGOs participating in the meetings also shared some common challenges that the NGOs in the African region face when it comes to accreditation – language barrier, lack of knowledge of the Convention and the process of accreditation, lack of expertise and experience – overcoming which was suggested might assist in overcoming the ongoing imbalance.

In the process of its activities, the WG faced quite a few challenges – lack of ANGOs proactive participation being one of the main ones. Unfortunately, even though the meetings were online over Zoom with simultaneous interpretation – it was not enough to draw enough participation of ANGOs in the meetings as we had only several ANGOs participating in the first meeting, therefore, the WG decided to have a second meeting, but none of the ANGOs have showed up. The number of participants during the regular WG meetings leaves much to be desired.

6. Take first steps in developing capacity building materials specially targeting the underrepresented regions;

The WG drew up a list of possible **soft measures** based on the result of the meetings with African ANGOs:

- *to create short infographic videos on the basic texts and concepts of the Convention;*
- *to create short videos on how ANGOs have benefited from the accreditation and how it enriched their activities in the field of ICH;*
- *to prepare leaflets on the accreditation process.*

Thus, based on our WG's activities and discussions, we would like to recommend the Forum to start a reflection and discussions on the possible hard measures along with soft measures in addressing the present unbalance in representation of NGOs. For example, to consider:

- a mechanism when priority for accreditation is given to underrepresented regions to reach certain percentage and put accreditation from other regions on hold;
- a rotation-based accreditation, when maximum efforts for accreditation is given to a certain underrepresented region in one cycle;

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- one country-one voting system during ICH NGO Forum's GA – when all NGOs of the country can cast only one vote no matter the number of accredited NGOs the country has.

The above-mentioned activities along with soft and hard measures were presented during the annual WG meeting on November 28, 2022 in Rabat, Morocco within 17.COM and raised a fruitful discussion and resulted in the following:

- One country one vote system could be problematic in some regions, as some smaller islands from underrepresented regions might officially be a part of other countries from represented regions. Example of Liliane de Geus;
- The subregions should be more taken account and activated, as the Electoral Regions are so vast and diverse and, sometimes, it's difficult to work with them all at once, therefore, it's important to activate the subregions;
- Partnering and networking with UNESCO Category 2 Centers could prove to be useful as they can render much support in linking up various actors in the field of ICH and recruiting potential NGOs for accreditation;
- The terms NGO should be reconsidered and/or revised as in many parts of the world the term is somewhat narrow and leaves out associations, unions, groups and other forms of ICH and community organizations behind. Not all NGOs have official legal status, therefore, there is a need to find ways to include non-formal organizations;
- Make more attempts to ensure language inclusivity as many non-English speaking members of the Forum are left behind;
- In some regions, organizations do not see the point in getting accredited, therefore, the important message from ANGOs should be "Why is it important to be accredited? What are the benefits?"
- Think of ways to organize themed events to unite different members of the Forum under one umbrella and create platform for networking and cooperation;
- Utilize experience and resources of the ANGOs to support and coach non accredited NGOs in their country/region.

The activities for 2023 will be designed based on the result of activities in 2022 and general discussion held in Rabat.

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