



Historical landmark for DPI-WLCU relationship. From World Secretariat General

(Info related to World Council meeting-Beirut 2011)

The most important achievement of the WLCU in this century was its association with the DPI of the UN, the road to the achievement was a very long decade (9 years to be exact), and needed lots of determinations, patience, dedication and deep convictions. The “Team approach” prevailed in the achievers, as no one cared who will get the credit. We wanted to create a legacy to all of us. All these sacrifices was not in vain, as it took the WLCU to a higher level of performance, gave it an international recognition and shielded it away from any government interference.

Department of Public information (DPI) of the UN:

The subject of the WLCU-DPI relationship was opened before and during and after the World Council meeting in Beirut 2011. I was “questioned” by members of the past administration about some nominations in the WLCU NGO committee, insinuating a wrong doing, in front of the WP, who at a later date sent me a written note blaming me for “some nominations”.

It is worth it to write about the whole involvement of the relationship with the DPI, and *the “natural formation”* of the WLCU-NGO committee. In one way, we instructed each others about it and also we recorded historical events that shaped the face of the WLCU and the Diaspora forever.

2002, Las Vegas, USA: The 12th World Council closing session adopted a resolution calling for declaring the WLCU as an INGO aiming to apply for association within the United Nations various departments and councils.

2005 ,Sydney, Australia : Conclusion of the 14 world congress, Anis Garabet elected WP, Georges Abiraad became WSG , and Dr Nick Kahwaji (DWSG) put in charge of the NGO file. I believe the position still in effect. The administration of Anis Garabet decided to achieve the NGO status.

2006-2007 : While recognizing the involvement of Anis, Steve, and George, Dr Kahwaji was the driving force behind the preparation of the application of the association with the Department of Public Information (DPI), under the legal help of Attorney Steven Stanton, he did an extensive research to understand the system .

2007: WP Anis Garabet proudly filed the application (in 2 copies ,one for DPI in NY, another for UNESCO in Paris), and followed up on it for the following two years while keeping George, Steve, and Nick up to date.

De facto Anis ,George, Steve and Nick became the nucleus of the NGO committee.

2009: Anis was informed by an official letter addressed to him that the **WLCU became associated with the DPI**, the acceptance letter requested a chief administrative officer and two representatives from WLCU to be designated. Nick, who naturally became the main representative finds Mr Sid Chidiac (a second generation Lebanese from Australia, living in NY) and proposed him to be the alternate representative. Sid became the representative after an agreement with Anis, George (WSG) and Steve. Sid Chidiac, still our representative at the UN Headquarters. Lately and upon a request from the DPI to nominate a youth representative, Anis nominated Micheline Helou, a college student from NY, and informed the WSG about the nomination.

Annual Filing to the DPI: According to filing specification, Anis signed himself as the chief administrative officer (the Liaison with the DPI). He continuously supplied the UN with all needed info about the WLCU.

By logic, gratitude, seniority and respect to Anis efforts, he was naturally considered the head of the NGO committee. He became in charge of filing all official documents with the UN while keeping the leadership and NGO committee members posted with DPI news.

2010 Mar : Anis , Sid, Nick and Milad Sassine from Boston attended the “Orientation Session” of 2 days at the UN Headquarter in NY. During the meeting and after discussions between Nick and a French UN director (Flore Anne bourgeois), it was clear to us that the WLCU could deepen its relationship with the UN system by applying to the Economic Social Council (ECOSOC) and to acquire the “accreditation” and “consultative status”.

Anis and Sid agree on the importance of the matter. WP (Eid Chedrawi) and George were verbally informed.

Nick phoned Attorney Steve Stanton and discussed with him this option. He offers help, but we needed to start the application as we had very limited time and little knowledge. We should apply before the end of May 2010.

Elie Gedeon:

Elie is a dedicated member of North American region. He was working at UNDP as a Sr. Project Manager at the UN Headquarters. As he enjoys a deep knowledge of the UN

system, he volunteers to help. He was connected to Steve Stanton, and the team started collecting the documents needed to apply.

Anis, Steve, Elie and Nick worked exclusively at the ECOSOC file with daily contacts. The application was finalized on time. Anis filed the application right before the deadline.

Elie was *naturally* welcomed to join the NGO Committee due to his dedication and persistent follow up on the matters related to the ECOSOC application and to also benefit from his “know how”, his position inside the UN-Headquarters and dealing constantly with different staff and agencies.

The NGO committee was glad that Elie accepted to join; having him part of the NGO Committee was a big asset to the WLCU.

Elie , joined Anis ,George, Steve and Nick in the NGO Committee.

United Nations Information Centre (UNIC):

Reading the DPI acceptance letter (a sacred document by now) , the DPI asks the WLCU (and all associated NGO's) to coordinate with the UNIC that might exist in many countries and regions...

Based on part 6 and part 7, of the WLCU internal regulations (articles 32, 34 , 35 , 36) Nick, as a WSG, has delegated to two previously appointed Regional Secretary General the authority to start building up a relationship with the UNIC in their regions. He contacted these centers by phone and informed them about the DPI request and the WLCU intentions.

Since there is a UNIC in Ghana, and an invitation from Mr Chakib Rammal (Board of Trustee's president and the head of the organizing committee) to attend the celebration of the Lebanese emigration to GHANA.

I was aware of the importance to invite the representative of the UNIC, to our celebration.

As per article 32 of the internal regulations, I quickly asked Mr Chakib Rammal if he would like to be in charge of starting to build up a relationship with the UNIC in Ghana. Fortunately he accepted. I did send him an authorization letter and phoned the UNIC staff in Ghana office and informed them...

I truly believe that Chakib was the perfect choice. Upon his invitation, a delegation from the UNIC attended the Ghana celebration. Also by the same token, he invited General Emanuel Erskine (previous head of the UNIFIL-UN peace keepers in South-Lebanon).

General Erskine attended and greeted all of us. He offered to some of us a signed book about his duty in Lebanon.

During my speech in Accra I welcomed the UN delegations and mentioned the satisfaction of the start-up relationship between WLCU and UNIC.

It is worthy to mention that no complaint had been received on anything till now.

UNESCO: During Anis Garabet mandate: the WLCU applied to both the DPI and to the UNESCO for associationship. We received a deceiving letter in May 2007 from Marie Thibault head of UNESCO. A letter that did discourage us from pursuing the

needed requirements. We understood that little of our “past cultural activities “ fit the UNESCO requirements. The filing went into a deep freeze situation.

April-May 2011:Anis received the good news, by phone, from Kelly Razzouk (from Lebanese origin) , head of the US ECOSOC delegation, that we have a big chance of being voted in by diplomatic missions for “accreditation with ECOSOC”. He was informed that the WLCU has two remarks on its application:

1)- **first** :One voting delegate had a negative remark, he criticized us for illegally having the logo of the UN on our website WLCU.com. We acted very quick –after receiving the news from Anis, I phoned Georges Abiraad, and asked him to delete the UN logo from the website, he did it immediately over the week end ...

2)-**Second**: The Venezuelan diplomatic delegations, who usually **veto** American organizations**, was happy to vote us in but wanted more info about the GIBRAN Cultural centre in Caracas. Elie Gedeon quickly made a phone call to Venezuela to speak to Michel Assaf, head of the WLCU in Caracas. Michel’s wife informed Elie that Michel is attending the WLCU celebrations in Ghana. Elie had to call Michel at his hotel in Ghana and wake him up at 1:00 AM after midnight and connects him to Anis in Los Angeles. Michel spent a couple of hours thereafter summarizing a report about Gibran Square in Venezuela. He emails it the same night to Anis and Elie along with photos and illustrations. The report was mailed the same day to the UN.

Few days later, on May 19th 2011, Anis visited the UN headquarters in New York, attended the last session of the ECOSOC accompanied by Sid Chidiac, he and Sid conferred privately with the US and Venezuela delegations and briefed them again about the work of the Venezuela National council of WLCU presided by Michel Assaf. They were fascinated by the project...

Here, it is worth to know that *the Gibran project in Caracas gave us a great credit in the needed time; it showed that we are a viable international organization, with activities all around the world.*

On September 12th 2011, Anis receives an acknowledgement letter from the UN confirming the WLCU accreditation within the framework of the ECOSOC Council.

May 2011.Ghana world council meeting: the WSG informed the session that since we have positive news about the ECOSOC accreditation, it is time to reactivate the dormant application of the UNESCO (file in dormant stage since May 2007).

Attorney Steven Stanton proposed to help, and to guide us in the complicated process ,it was logic to ask, during the meeting, the president of the National council of France Mr Edmond Massih and the Regional President for Europe Mr Roger Hani (both French residents, and were attending the Ghana meeting) to be in charge of the application and to coordinate with George Abiraad, as he was the contact person with the UNESCO since the beginning.

The simple *natural* way of thinking is to ask Edmond and Roger to join the NGO committee, because they will be dealing with this committee and they will be working on the file and pursue the whole process for a long time to come as the UNESCO headquarters is in Paris.

No objection for the nominations was received during the Ghana world council meeting.

Roger and Edmond joined Elie, Anis, George, Steve and Nick in the NGO Committee,

2011 June : Nick, Sid, and Roger attended the two-days orientation session at the UN Headquarters in NY. (Roger came from France to attend and to familiarise himself with the system, in preparation of the International conference of the NGO in Bonn). It is worth noting that Maria-Luisa Chavez, the Chief of the DPI, asked if NGO's are dealing with the UNIC, I proudly explained about the positive Ghana experience and complained about the slow process to establish ties with UNIC in Buenos Aires and Canberra.

Confusion: some members from the past WLCU administration confuse the CIR Committee with the NGO Committee.

Here is my explanation:

CIR Committee : was created during the 12 world congress in Mexico in 2001. The CIR mission statement is to work according to Chapter 2, article 4 of the basic constitutional law of the WLCU. During the 16th World Congress, The WP Mr Eid Chedrawi appointed Mr Ibrahim Dagher as a Chairperson of the CIR, and upon his resignation he appointed Mr Joseph Hage.

NGO Committee : *Naturally* Created itself by Logic and need, determination and goodwill of the leaders who worked toward the WLCU recognition within the UN. Its mission statement (not limited to) is to maintain an ONGOING active relationship with the UN system with :

- DPI and ECOSOC for now ,
- Other future matters: UNESCO, UNICEF, Human Rights, etc...

The Seven Permanent members: *Anis Garabet, George Abiraad, Steven Stanton, Nick Kahwaji, Elie Gedeon, Roger Hani and Edmond Massih.*

I Consider the seven members of the NGO committee as permanent members, as no one had an equal related experience in the affairs of the UN system, I believe this committee is a self-regulating committee presided by Past WP Anis Garabet.

Representative to UN headquarters and to UNIC:

They are not considered permanent members and could be replaced if needed.

I plan to propose an amendment to the By-laws in the next world congress to regulate this committee. If someone has any proposal please let me know.

I truly believe that our “Union” needs an urgent restructuring to be able to excel and to accommodate itself with the demands of the 21 century.

Conclusions:

I would like to leave to all members to judge the vision, the work of the WSG and the correct policy of the World Secretariat General’s Team, of all actions taken toward acquiring, improving and maintaining an active relationship with the UN.

I pay tribute to all the NGO committee members for their dedication and follow up .

I praise all the delegates or representatives for the good work they did in Mexico (2009), Melbourne (2010) and Bonn (2011) and the UN headquarters every Thursday.

Our aim is to take the WLCU to a higher level of action and to give and maintain an international credibility to our organization .

God Bless you all.

Vancouver 14 Sep 2011

Dr. Nick Kahwaji D.D.S.

World Secretary General

World Lebanese Cultural Union. *Est. in Mexico 1959*

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