

## **LUNGOS CHAIR ADDRESS TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF LUNGOS – OCTOBER, 2007**

Invited guests

Government representatives (state actors)

Dear members

Fellow Board members

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning, and welcome to your AGM.

2006/2007 has been a very eventful period for LUNGOS and a number of your organisations.

During the period LUNGOS has faced many challenges, been confronted with both opportunities and threats.

We have even sailed through “storms” and “rough seas”. But despite all that, we have remained focused on our objectives of building a strong and vibrant NGO apex organisation committed to the development of a respected and responsible civil society capable of participating as partners in the process of socio-economic development of the country and its citizens through the various projects and programmes being implemented by your individual organisations. LUNGOS has already embarked on a project aimed at building your capacity to enable you to engage effectively in policy dialogue with the state actors so that development is really “people centered”. In others words LUNGOS’ role is to empower you dear members so that your NGO can fully participate in the process of decision-making which will affect the lives of your members, clients, citizens, families, children, women, disabled, old people, including our physical and social environment. Simply speaking, society as a whole.

Some of your programmes have been much easier to implement than others. However as an organisation, we must remain focused and committed to achieving our objectives. At the end of the day what we do must be for the benefit of society and ultimately the country as a whole.

Looking back over the year, I would like to cite a few successful actions and projects. We recruited a very capable, experienced and dynamic Executive Director who shares our vision and is fully committed to the realization of LUNGOS’ objectives .The EU/UNDP civil society NGO capacity building project was launched earlier this year and is progressing well. Several training workshops have been organized under the project and many of your organisations have or are benefiting from such training programmes.

As part of the project, a needs assessment was carried out to identify areas where NGOs and civil society need training for their sustainability including training to enable your organisation engage in policy dialogue for effective participation in decision making alongside the state actors at national level.

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in policy dialogue for effective participation in decision making alongside the state actors at national level.

### **OUR CHALLENGES**

We face several challenges.

LUNGOS has a secretariat of two dedicated full-time paid personnel plus a trainee clerk who for the time being is being paid under the Ministry of Employment's training scheme for young school-leavers.

Members are currently paying a small membership fee of SR.200/-

In addition, we receive an annual grant from Government which when put together is still not enough to cover our core and fixed costs.

There is a need to look at our income generating activities including our membership fees to ensure the sustainability of LUNGOS core activities including staff costs.

Until now LUNGOS has been providing everything for more or less free whilst demand for its services has continued to increase. The status quo is no more realistic and needs re-visiting.

### **OUR CURRENT STRENGTHS**

We currently have a capacity building project for NSAs financed by the European Union and managed by UNDP Mauritius. Under this project which is expected to last for another two years, funds have been made available for training of NGOs and NSAs to enable them address their critical, medium and long term needs. We have also set up a training Academy of Civil Society so that we can sustain training of civil society after the EU/UNDP/LUNGOS project ends and also to ensure that the training being delivered takes into account our cultural background and peculiarity by using local trainers as much as possible. This will also ensure as much as possible. This will also ensure that the training funds stay in the country for our socio-economic.

We have already concluded negotiation with government on a Memorandum of Understanding for a Government/NGOs Framework which hopefully will be signed by both parties soon. Our website has also been launched. During the year, LUNGOS members have also undertaken several initiatives, details of which you can read on the list of activities annexed to my report.

For the immediate future LUNGOS needs to conclude the following:

- (i) Secure its operational budget income and set up a strong fundraising committee by involving key partners and stakeholders to try and diversify its income sources.
- (ii) Increase its membership base and review membership fees in conjunction with cost of services.
- (iii) Conclude the Memorandum of Understanding for the Government/NGOs framework.
- (iv) Revive its various commissions, for better and more effective networking of NGOs and civil society organisations.
- (v) Launch the Seychelles Chapter of the Economic Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOC).

### **OUR WEAKNESSES**

Our biggest weakness is our inability to recruit a full-time programme manager to assist our members with project writing for the benefit of civil society as a whole and for the socio-economic development of the country.

On behalf of the Board of LUNGOS, I also wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all those NGOs who have remained active and resilient throughout the year and participated in LUNGOS' programme of activities.

I wish you a very successful and challenging year 2008.