

15 June 2012

Dear Marie Soveroski

We are writing to you as members of the Independent Review Panel of the INGO Accountability Charter, in order to give you feedback on the Report which you submitted for the reporting deadline in April 2012.

We would like first of all to thank you for your participation in this exercise and to recognise the commitment to accountability that this demonstrates.

Our approach to assessing the reports which we have received has been to focus on three dimensions in particular:

- How **complete** is the report in relation to the guidelines used?
- How strong is the **evidence** given for the self-assessment that each organisation has conducted?
- What evidence is there of **institutional commitment** to greater accountability and to using the reporting process to advance it?

On **completeness**, we acknowledge the demanding nature of many GRI requirements and recognise that not all of them are as material as others. In particular for smaller organisations, some requirements may be overly demanding. Nevertheless they give good guidance and we have attached a note that goes through the shortfalls against the reporting template in detail. In addition we have highlighted below areas where we felt, in particular, that your organisation could improve as well as other areas which we considered as strengths in your report.

On **evidence**, we looked in particular for references not only to relevant policy documents, but also to examples where the self-assessment was supported by specific action (for example, drawn from operational activities, whether successful or unsuccessful). It is important for us to see that the accountability commitments that you made when signing the Charter, lead to informed corrective action and ultimately improve the quality of your work.

On **institutional commitment**, we looked for evidence of top-level ownership of the report (for example in the opening statement signed by the Chief Executive); of using the report as a means of identifying areas of relative strengths and weaknesses in the organisation (as opposed to a box-ticking exercise); and of a systematic concern with accountability, including recognition of areas for further work. We would hope that progress in such areas would be high-lighted in future reports.

Since we first started assessing the reports we have noticed a **marked improvement in quality** and an improved commitment to accountability. However we have highlighted some common **areas for improvement**, in particular the indicators related to the environment (EN16, EN18), diversity and ethnicity (NGO4, LA13), how findings from programme evaluations have influenced internal learning and future decisions (NGO3), training in anti-corruption policies (SO3) and complaints handling mechanism in place (NGO2).

With regard to the **complaints handling mechanism**, we would like to remind Members that it is now a mandatory requirement for Charter Members to have such a mechanism in place. This is at the core of good accountability.

Regarding **diversity and ethnicity**, we would like to encourage Members to think about who is likely to be excluded from their work and programmes.

With regard to the generally weak reporting on **anti-corruption policies**, we would like to encourage Members to use the Anti-Bribery Checklist and Anti-Bribery Principles and Guidance for NGOs produced by Transparency International available under the following web-links: [http://www.transparency.org.uk/attachments/046\\_NGO\\_Anti-bribery\\_Principles\\_and\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.transparency.org.uk/attachments/046_NGO_Anti-bribery_Principles_and_Guidance.pdf) and <http://www.transparency-se.org/TI-ABC-20-point-anti-bribery-checklist.pdf> In case of specific interest you may also contact Stan Cutzach at Transparency International under [scutzach@transparency.org](mailto:scutzach@transparency.org)

In many reports Members just noted that they have the relevant policies in place but we feel that **more examples** of the policies in practice would be useful. Only when it is supported by evidence does the policy come to life and its usefulness can then be assessed.

Finally a word on the presentation. We value **succinctness and accessibility**. In some reports access to relevant information is made difficult by a lot of immaterial information being given at the same time. Please try and include only the essential information.

An interesting way of improving accessibility was chosen by some organisations, who integrated the accountability report into their annual report and gave links to the relevant indicators in a GRI table. To ensure a greater link between the **Charter commitments** and GRI reporting (focussing on transparency) we would like to emphasise our support for the Charter Board decision that all future reports should have a clear link between the Charter principles and the reported actions.

Please note that as a Panel we feel that part of our role is to encourage organisational improvement. To that end we are enclosing, for your information some examples of what we believe to be **Good Practice** in responding to some individual indicators, based on the GRI framework. This document consists of examples from all reports reviewed thus far and has been sent as an attachment to you per email. We would like to encourage you to look at this document as we feel this will be a good learning exercise for all Members to learn from each other.

#### Organisation-specific feedback to EarthRights International

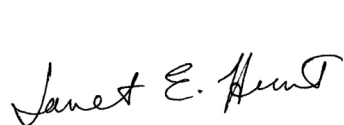
*This report has improved greatly from the last round which is positive and we welcome your frankness and honesty, however there is still room for improvement. The report is quite adequate in terms of **completeness**. **Evidence** could be presented more clearly by using examples. The comments are very general and this does not demonstrate a commitment to reporting in a thorough way. We would recommend looking at other reports and good practice examples to see how other Members have provided evidence. There are not a lot of signs of **institutional commitment** to accountability, and not a lot of evidence of strong learning. Your answer on local hiring (indicator EC7) is seen as a strength, however you may wish to consider presenting this information in a table in the future. The complaints handling mechanism is an area for improvement, in particular because it is now a mandatory membership criterion. Your report could be improved by being more specific and concise.*

*We would also like to remind you that your report will be published on the Charter website, should you want to remove some of the comments which are directed more at the Panel than the public.*

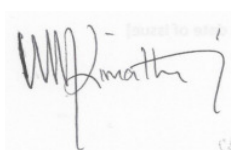
Our intention is that this letter, and any response that you may wish to provide, should be made publicly available on the Charter website, along with your organisation's report. You can find the reports that were reviewed previously on the Charter website under the section Charter Members/Member Reports. However, should there be errors of fact in the feedback above or in the more detailed note below on conformity with the reporting framework, we would of course wish to correct these before publication.

Should you have any comments we would appreciate a response by **13 July 2012**.

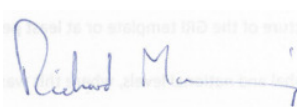
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet E. Hunt".

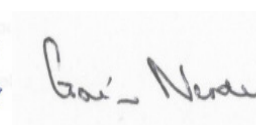
Janet Hunt

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wambui Kimathi".

Wambui Kimathi

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Manning".

Richard Manning

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gavin Neath".

Gavin Neath

## 1<sup>st</sup> Review Round 2012 Note on Accountability Report

Organisation: EarthRights International  
Reporting period: January 2010-December 2011

What GRI reporting level did the organisation report on?

- ☐ A  
☐ B  
☒ C

Did the Secretariat contact the organisation for further information before forwarding the report to the panel?

- ☐ Yes  
☒ No

Comment: -

### COMMENTS ON THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE REPORT

This is the resubmission of the organisation's accountability report first submitted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Round 2012.

#### Profile (recommended 28)

Number of Profile components the organisation reports on in total: **28**

Number of the recommended Profile components the organisation reports on: **28**

Number of additional Profile components the organisation reports on: **0**

Profile	Comments
<b>Strategy and Analysis</b>	
1.1*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report lacks a statement with the explanation that the Executive Director is on sabbatical and therefore unable to submit one.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed More information is provided in this report than the previous one. However, it includes limited information regarding the strengths/weaknesses of the organisation.</p>
<b>Organisational Profile</b>	
2.1*	Fully addressed
2.2*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not state how the activities relate to the organisation's mission and primary strategic goals.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed</p>
2.3*	Fully addressed
2.4*	Fully addressed
2.5*	Fully addressed
2.6*	Fully addressed
2.7*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on affected stakeholders/ beneficiaries.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed</p>

2.8*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on number of employees/ volunteers; assets/ liabilities; or on scope/ scale of activities.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed It is unclear if the report includes all assets and liabilities.</p>
2.9*	Fully addressed
2.10*	Fully addressed
<b>Report Parameters</b>	
3.1*	<p>Fully addressed</p> <p>The organisation has enlarged the scope of this report to cover the latest developments and covers the period January 2010 to December 2011.</p>
3.2*	<p>Not addressed</p> <p>The organisation indicates that the previous report covered 2010, but the previous report actually covered 1 February – 16 August 2011. The organisation should in the future commit to a regular reporting period, such as its financial year, and be explicit when stating what period the report covers.</p>
3.3*	Fully addressed
3.4*	Fully addressed
3.5*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on the process for defining report content.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed More information on the process for defining report content is provided in this report than the previous one however, it does not include information on the identification of the stakeholders expected to use the report.</p>
3.6*	Fully addressed
3.7*	Fully addressed
3.8*	Fully addressed
3.10*	Fully addressed
3.11*	Fully addressed
3.12*	Not addressed but not applicable
<b>Governance, Commitments, and Engagement</b>	
4.1*	Fully addressed
4.2*	Fully addressed
4.3*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not state whether the Board members are independent and/or executives.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed</p>
4.4*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not state any topics raised through the mechanisms in place</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed</p>
4.14*	Fully addressed.
4.15*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not state information on the organisation's process for identifying stakeholder groups.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed The organisation indicates that there are informal processes in place to identify stakeholder groups, but no formal process.</p>

\*: Recommended Profile components

### Indicators (recommended 18)

Number of indicators the organisation reports on in total: **18**

Number of the 18 recommended indicators the organisation reports on: **18**

Number of additional indicators the organisation reports on: **0**

Indicators	Comments
<b>Program Effectiveness</b>	
NGO1*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report only includes information on processes for involvement of stakeholders within one of the organisation's working areas.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed The organisation indicates that stakeholder groups can only be involved in one area of the organisation's work: training. However the organisation does consult with others such as advocacy partners.</p>
NGO2*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation claims that there are no policies involved in their work, other than internal policies.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed The organisation indicates that it has no formal feedback mechanism. The organisation is reminded that Charter Members are now requested to have a complaints handling mechanism for internal and external complaints.</p>
NGO3*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation states that there are no formal means established to monitor and evaluate their work.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed The report includes information on the system used for programme monitoring and evaluation however, it does not provide information on how results obtained contribute to internal learning, examples of adjustments, or on how these adjustments are communicated.</p>
NGO4*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on the organisation's tools for diversity analysis/ actions/ measures taken in relation to programme design and implementation.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed</p>
NGO5*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation states that there are no formal processes established to formulate, communicate, implement or change advocacy positions.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed The report includes information on how advocacy positions are developed however, it does not provide information regarding where the campaigns and positions are published or the process used for exiting a campaign.</p>
NGO6*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not give any information on the processes for identifying potential for duplication; promoting learning from others; or identifying opportunities for partnerships.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed Some information is provided in this report however this information is general and not concrete, and some examples would be useful.</p>

<b>Economic</b>	
NGO7*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include any information on how the use of resources is tracked.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed The report includes some information on the processes in place to track the use of resources however it does not identify the standards which serve as the basis for this tracking system.</p>
NGO8*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does only include information on the three largest donors.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed</p>
EC7*	<p>Partially addressed The report only includes information on the Asian and US offices, but not on the Peru office. The report does not provide information on the proportion of senior management hired from the local community.</p>
<b>Environmental</b>	
EN16*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation states that this “would be extremely difficult to calculate”. The report lacks information on greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Not addressed The organisation indicates that it does not keep records of greenhouse gas emissions, and does not mention whether it will put a system in place to collect this information in the future.</p>
EN18*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation states that this “would be extremely difficult to quantify”</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed The report includes information regarding some initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, the organisation indicates that it does not track greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
<b>Labour</b>	
LA1*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on contract type; full/part time or information on volunteers.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed Considerably more information is provided in this report than in the previous one. However, it is unclear whether volunteers work on a full time or part time basis. The organisation indicates that it does not use employment contracts.</p>
LA10*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on the average number of hours of training per employee per year.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed More information is provided in this report than the previous one. However, it does not provide information on the total hours devoted to training within each employee category or for volunteers.</p>
LA12*	Fully addressed



LA13*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The report does not include information on the governance body and employees based on age group.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed More information is provided in this report than the previous one. However, this information is vague. The organisation indicates that it “guessed” the ages of the Board members and staff.</p>
<b>Society</b>	
SO1*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation indicates that this is “a very hard indicator to measure”. The report lacks information on programmes in place to assess impacts of operations on communities.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed More information is provided in this report than the previous one and the organisation indicates that its programmes have positive or minimal negative impacts. However, the report does not provide information on how these impacts are tracked.</p>
SO3*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation states that it has no formal anti-corruption procedures.</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Fully addressed The organisation indicates that it does not have an explicit anti-corruption policy or procedure however, it has a whistleblower policy.</p>
<b>Product Responsibility</b>	
PR6*	<p><u>Comments from previous report:</u> The organisation indicates that it has nothing to contribute on this indicator</p> <p><u>Comments from this report:</u> Partially addressed More information is provided in this report than the previous one. However, it does not provide information on codes / voluntary standards related to fundraising applied across the organisation, or any complaints related to breaches of standards.</p>

\*: Recommended indicators

#### Organisation’s commitments for the future:

- **NGO3:** “We are seeking external support and advice on better systems for quantifying our successes and effectiveness as well as what could be considered failures.”