Chapter 10
Meetings and Conferences

Extract *Highpoints*: The focus is on the preparation for meetings and international conferences, as well as their management and how to use them to advance diplomatic initiatives. Great attention is given to the role of conference secretariats, special committees, and staff. In addition, the roles of Administrative and Protocol Officer are introduced.

10.1 Why Hold Private Meetings and Attend Conferences?

Regarding the modern multilateral system, it used to be said by the League of Nations that it was a model for *diplomacy by conference*, a system of dialogue used to settle disputes or the need for international standards. The same could be said today of the United Nations and of many international organizations like OECD or the Red Cross movement and NGO conferences led by the DPI/NGO community[1] based in New York or the conferences led by InterAction in Washington, DC; ICVA; and CoNGO in Geneva, New York, and elsewhere. Conferences offer a major platform to use a single moment in time to impress many governments and institutions, especially useful to an NGO alerting the global community to a solution. In addition, people, institutions, and governments with which one might not otherwise associate attend the conferences. As an example, NGOs worried about the treatment of female migrants in a country might not have permission to cross the border; conferences offer an opportunity to either reproach governmental behavior publicly or meet privately with governmental representatives. Such "private meetings" happen during the preparatory stage conference, as part of the daily life of international organizations or in "the margins of a conference" (Fig. 10.1).

[1] UN Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organizations

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Fig. 10.1 Entering a conference hall (© 2012 LRoeder)

10.2 Short Meetings

Even a simple meeting requires serious preparation, if not a formal decision memo. That's because in any international conference, the most effective meetings are often held in corridors and side rooms. However, these side events can be as formal as those held in a mission; some sort of set of questions needs to be asked very similar to that needed for a major decision:

1. **Is a physical meeting needed**? Reporting at the end of the year that an NGO representative saw 20 diplomats might look impressive, but was anything learnt or the status quo changed? Did the meeting raise money? That is what matters. If a representative just wishes to impart information, a letter with attachments is often just as effective, perhaps phone calls or e-mails. In fact, personal diplomacy involving phone calls is often an excellent alternative to physical meetings, being quicker and not requiring travel.
2. **Why this particular mission**? There is only so much time, so what makes this venue important versus the others? Who will be visited? Does the contact have authority to make decisions?
3. **Understanding**. Does the person visited understand your NGO's concerns or the basic topic? If not, bring solid briefing material.
4. **New issues**. What new issues might the contact person raise? For example, if you are asking them for help, what happens if the contact asks for assistance on something? Be prepared.

5. **Is there an appointment**? Do not just show up. Set a date, time, and venue to allow the person being met to prepare and set up an agenda in advance. Make sure there is enough time to achieve the key goals. Request the meeting in writing and then follow up with phone requests. Be on time.
6. **Venue**. UN missions change, and some missions occupy more than one building. Make sure the address is correct. If time is available, scout the location in advance. Start with the Blue Book, which is published every September by the Protocol and Liaison Service of the UN.
7. **Report on the meeting**. HQ and other parts of the lead NGO need to know what happened and understand any recommendations the representative might have or new issues. That means notes must be taken, often a problem for a negotiator. A suggestion is that someone should be charged with note-taking; if that's impossible, once the meeting is over, be certain to immediately jot down all important points from memory, and if more than one delegation member attended, compare notes.
8. **Get items in place**. The right handouts in the right order keep meetings smooth.
9. **Keep it simple**. Have no more than three goals in mind. Contacts are busy.
10. **Ask if the person being met has questions**. Orally summarize any agreement in case the person met has a different interpretation.

10.3 International Conferences

10.3.1 Why Attend?

International Conferences[2] and Seminars are:

- A great way to introduce a diplomatic initiative. Many such events have small meeting rooms or opportunities to raise ideas; if an NGO isn't certain how well an initiative's packaging will be received, a low-key test bed could be a carefully selected conference that deals with a related topic.
- Often the best way to advance a full initiative; to convince a large group of governments, international organizations and other NGOs, industry representatives,

[2]By way of interest, the first international conference to which the United States officially participated was the 1853 Maritime Conference in Brussels in 1853. Sponsored by the US government, it was established to create a uniform system of maritime meteorological observations. The conference was a technical conference due to the subject matter. Of course, many international conferences had been held before then with US government and NGO officials as observers or in their personal capacity. The United States also intended to officially attend the 1826 Panama Congress, but one delegate died at the sea, and the other was unable to attend while the event was in session. The first truly diplomatic conference was the First Red Cross Conference in Geneva in 1864 "Conference international pour la neutralization du service de santa militaire en champagne." American NGOs did however heavily participate in conferences, e.g., the General Peace Congress of 1851 in London and the 1848 General Peace Conference in Brussels.

and donors; and to formally support ideas through resolutions, declarations, and other public means.

- An excellent way of showcasing the inherent value of an NGO.
- Not a final destination rather a transit point in a long process, often the result of years of negotiations and the beginning of many more, sort of a milestone like the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, otherwise known as the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

International conferences and various forms of multilateral diplomacy have been around for a very long time. It is worth noting that in 1916, Leonard Woolf, working with Bernard Shaw, remarked that diplomats had a tendency to narrow negotiations in conferences to "the arrangement of the details of settlements already arrived at by negotiations" (Woolf 1916a). A century later, that is still often true. Frequently, the real deals are made in preparatory conferences, leaving summits and the named conferences to endorsements, which is why NGOs need to attend both. Don't just wait until the deal is sealed. Be part of the process from the beginning. NGOs need to attend conferences and seminars if they want to collaborate and influence the UN system, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the World Bank group, or other humanitarian international organizations. That way, NGOs can help develop broad-based agreements or at least learn what others are doing. Some will have a very narrow geographic focus such as in 2012 when a member of the Gender Network (GDNET) set up a seminar "on woman's rights and acid throwing of women in Pakistan," with a focus on the District of Lodhran, Pakistan (Baloch 2012, April 10). However, even though such a seminar is small, it can have a major impact on a local topic and be an energizer for larger regional and international conferences.

Though few in number in the early days of the UN, regional and international conferences have increased in frequency and are a popular tool for all international organizations and major NGOs, often have prime ministers and presidents in attendance, and are an exciting opportunity for old-fashioned lobbying and diplomacy. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) was attended by the Emperor and Prime Minister of Japan and high-level delegations from 160 governments, along with 40,000 interested delegates from NGOs, Universities, media, and industry. Forty-seven thousand attended the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio and 50,000 debated the rights of women in Beijing in 1995. But they don't have to be large to be useful. A much smaller Global Risk Forum (GRF) hosts the International Disaster and Risk Conference (IDRC) on a biennial basis in Davos, Switzerland, and those meetings are an outstanding opportunity for experts and managers from NGOs, international organizations, and governments to meet in an intimate setting well suited for real interaction.[3]

[3]The purpose of the Global Risk Forum is to "bridge the gap between science and practice, to promote the worldwide exchange of know-how and experience, to target solutions and promote good practice in integral risk management and climate change adaptation for an improved understanding, assessment and management of disasters and risks that affect human safety, security, health, the environment, critical infrastructures, the economy and society at large, to provide and manage a network for decision-makers, practitioners and experts from politics, government, IGOs, business, science, NGOs, media and the public" (Amman, Goals of the Global Risk Forum).

Some scholars will argue that conference diplomacy is different from multilateral diplomacy, unless the conference consists of only one or two governments; that is too precise a parsing. Conferences are usually but not always about making a deal. They are also often about convening experts to discuss the latest science or decide upon the usefulness of a project or to explore an idea, e.g., the sustainable risk reduction meetings of OECD, which convene experts to develop experiments that show how to avoid tomorrow's potential disasters. But whatever the reason for the conference, it will be a great venue for some NGOs to network and lobby, and it is also important for someone on the NGO staff to track conferences through the various UN secretariats or through NGO umbrella bodies like ICVA, CoNGO, and InterAction in order to find which will be of the most value.

Although like the opening meeting of the Friends of Syria in February 2012, conferences are often led by senior officials, even Ministers—supported by middle-level staff, this isn't always so, as seen by the 2001 Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem, which was led by middle managers (FAO: Corporate Services, Human Resources and Finance Department 2001). Either way, virtually any such conference presents networking opportunities. If an NGO is thinking of developing a diplomatic initiative, the team leader should consider sending staff members to related international conferences well in advance just to introduce themselves to participants. After all, they will be the ones who will decide their agency's policies on the topic of interest. Showing up shows seriousness of purpose, and exploratory conversations are bound to help a delegation refine thinking.

Especially for NGOs wanting to host a conference, another factor to keep in mind is that these events are very expensive, often costing tens of millions of dollars, when one combines the costs of the secretariat with travel costs of government, IO, and NGO delegations. In other words, when an NGO builds its annual budget for conferences, it probably will have to be very selective, especially given the current economy. As for attending, having been delegates to a great many of these events since the 1970s, the authors tend to think that the focus on costs by donor nations is overdone by many NGO managers. There is no question that conferences cost money; consider the opportunity costs of not attending as well as the values gained from networking and inserting positive statements in outcomes documents. This was the approach taken in 2004 when the government of Japan asked Roeder to support for the WCDR in Kobe. He was then the Policy Adviser on Disaster Management in the IO Bureau. Roeder insisted that the conference have a well-defined outcomes document that changed the status quo and that it be the beginning event of a decade of changes in risk reduction practices like the Earth Summit in Rio or the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Earth Summit II or Rio +10) in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Japanese ended up turning WCDR into one of the most important international conferences in history by creating the Hyogo Framework for action, an action plan for reducing risk.

NGOs are in the business of changing the status quo, through lobbying or negotiation; while budget staffs must be listened to, they should not be able to dismiss the networking and educational values of conferences. Such events pave the way for arguments that enhance lobbying and negotiation. It all must be seen as part of the same package. Even if an NGO is not there to advance specific language, it can build alliances. That can lead to an important negotiation at a later date. The NGO might also wish to use those events to build awareness of its issue years in advance and find potential supporters, not just among the institutional Decision Makers but the community at large.

Another reason to attend an international conference is to learn how an institution works. Perhaps an NGO wants to ask the World Bank Group to support a project, but the staff has never met a World Bank official. Before going to one of the banks in the group, the NGO should send staff to attend the Annual Bank Conferences on Development Economics (ABCDE). This series, which began in Washington, DC, in 1988, advances new theories of development and is an excellent platform to see what the bank, the UN, and donors are thinking. Without presenting any formal initiatives, the staff can learn a lot about development programs and procedures, enough to prepare for formal meetings or find donors.

Some NGO leaders told us they were worried about being lost in a large conference, that their ideas would not be noticed; that's a misplaced fear if the NGO prepares and performs well. NGOs are often being more effective than government delegations. Consider the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction is an international agreement that bans antipersonnel landmines. It is usually referred to as the Ottawa Convention or the Mine Ban Treaty and was concluded by the Diplomatic Conference on an International Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Land Mines at Oslo on 18 Sept. 1997. What makes this special to the NGO community is that while the Convention is an agreement between governments, NGOs began the initiative, in particular the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), which helped draft the treaty. Indeed, the ICBL had a formal seat at the table in all of the diplomatic meetings leading up to the negotiations and then during the negotiations themselves. ICBL later was awarded the Nobel Prize for its efforts. And that's not the only example. There are many others (UNOG) (ICBL).

10.4 The Delegation Administrative and Protocol Officer

For reading ease, various functions have been combined into a single role of ***Administrative and Protocol Officer***; this officer furthers an NGO-led diplomatic initiative, not a general support for the NGO back home. Remembering as well that small NGOs have limited resources, this specific function might be accomplished by a single person or a group of people from allied NGOs, some physically a part of the delegation and others perhaps in an HQ; that will depend on many factors, intra-NGO politics, available resources, etc., and the nature of the negotiation. But for purposes of this book, the function of Administrative Officer will be treated as an official physically part of the delegation. In summary, the Admin Officer:

(a) ***Manages security issues:*** If there is no security adviser. That's very important in field operations and could also be crucial in a huge international conference, if only to reduce theft of laptops.

(b) ***Manages physical communications:*** This is everything from setting up Internet networks to acquiring cell phones. It is very important to maintain communications between team members, negotiating partners, and HQ throughout a negotiation; if an Internet room is provided on the conference site, check the reliability of the connection. What mobile phone system is used? Should mobile phone be rented for each member of the team? In Somaliland, three different SIM cards go into the mobile phone. Some countries just need one and others two.
(c) ***Sets up meetings:*** This could be arranging for a conference room or transportation to making sure everyone is in the same hotel, etc., and the proper briefing material is available for the delegation.
(d) ***Visas, maps, currency, and transportation:*** Frequently, no visa is required, but if the delegation is multinational, make sure the member have a visa in advance, if one is needed. Definitely, do not make the common mistake of obtaining a visa at the border. While many countries permit this, like Dubai and Kenya, significant delays can occur, as well as additional charges. In addition, a visa can be denied due to some misunderstanding. If a visa might be needed, best to obtain in advance, and if there is any chance the delegate may return, he or she should obtain a "multiple entry visa." Once the delegation leaves the airport or road entry point, transportation, currency, and maps will be needed. All of these should be obtained in advance by the administration officer. The delegation may also have to buy currency at the border if the host country has a "soft currency" and then sell the remainder on departure at an unfavorable rate.
(e) ***Budget:*** Every delegation has a budget. It is essential that the Admin Officer pay the bills and make sure that the delegation operates within its budget. It is assumed the HQ team has a parallel officer.
(f) ***Protocol:*** While every member of the delegation should be familiar with the rules of protocol, especially the chief negotiator, it is good to hand on deck an expert (see Chap. 11).

10.5 The Delegation Office

Small NGO delegations may not need a formal office, but a large delegation or any delegation planning on a lot of meetings, perhaps a party, may find it wise to rent space and install equipment. An office can also be used to stow large demonstration items like posters that would not fit in a hotel room. In some cases, the office will be on the conference site if a lot of use is expected during the day and in other cases at the hotel for after-hours work and meetings. This is a judgment and budget call. Some teams will even have dedicated phones, TVs, and computers installed to enable 24/7 (permanent) phone contact with home base or the ability to write reports, have late-hour meetings with the team, and watch breaking news. If a delegation can afford it, it should obtain a refrigerator for its own food and drink—much cheaper than a minibar and healthier. Make sure there is plenty of bottled water on hand, no alcohol.

10.6 Learn the Compound Layout in Advance

UN compounds often operate in old structures. The FAO HQ is in the Mussolini era Department of Agriculture Building in Rome. The main compound in Geneva was the League of Nations, but some structures date from before World War I. UNESCO and Nairobi compounds are confusing, as is OCED in Paris, so a suggestion is that if the delegation has never been to the building or compound, obtain a floor plan or find an escort; being late for meetings can kill opportunities. New York's main compound is deteriorating, so as a result of the UN Capital Master Plan (CMP), the entire complex is being renovated. Over half a century in age, the buildings are no longer safe or secure (UNGA resolutions 57/292, 60/282 and 61/251, and 62/87). With a projected cost over nearly $2 billion, the construction and renovation of the New York compound, begun in 2009, will continue for some years and impinge on NGO access, especially the ability to host meetings or social functions, and it is harder to display material. This is because of reduced available space and the right of national delegations to preempt NGO reservations.

10.7 Preconference Tactics

10.7.1 The Sequential Negotiation Technique

There are several methods to prepare for a complex negotiation involving many players. The sequential negotiation technique is on. Suppose an NGO or coalition wishes to take on as complex a negotiation as upgrading the rights enjoyed by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), bringing them more in line with those enjoyed by refugees. Current handling of IDPs by humanitarians is covered by an IASC document known as The Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement, published by OCHA (UN OCHA 2004). See also *Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms* (Representative of the Secretary-General 1996). While IDPs do have rights, the responsibility for IDPs largely rests with the national authority. If the internationally recognized rights are to be significantly expanded, that would require bringing on board many governments, probably from each region.

One reason multilateral diplomacy is hard is that many players are usually involved at one time, governments, perhaps NGO delegations, and international organizations, and it is a well-known fact that the more negotiating partners there are in one room, the harder it can be to come to consensus, to identify sticking points or even avenues for success. Often the negotiating partners will operate on rigid instructions from their capitals. For the hypothetical negotiation on IDPs, one needs to remember as well that in the UN, negotiations could involve all 192 member states, as well as many departments, international organizations, and influential NGOs. Some may not have much stake in a specific negotiation like upgrading IDP rights, but all can either vote or influence the vote. This can place a delegate at a disadvantage in the UN General Assembly or ECOSOC meeting. It can also be a disadvantage in a small conference setting. One mistake or fuzzy choice of words will be heard by all of the other delegates at the same time, and under the normal rules of procedure, once a delegate speaks, he or she must listen to everyone else's reply before speaking again.

Another way to look at this is while a delegate only gets one chance ordinarily to lay out the plan; the group which is listening gets many opportunities in a compressed space of time to misunderstand, change the meaning of the delegate's words, and undermine the initiative, even if unintentionally. Thus, due to the nature of such discussions, the underlying rationale behind contrary positions might not be as clearly understood to the NGO as would have been the case in a private bilateral discussion, where there is more give and take. Even if the delegates are friendly and use short statements, the wait for a second statement by the presenting NGO delegation can be very long. The group experience can then become one large, counterargument, with one constructive criticism feeding into others, a verbal tsunami that weakens an NGO delegate's ability to parse the subtle nuances presented by each individual player and then craft a reasonable stand that carries the day forward.

In one situation examined for this book, an NGO team leader consulted with the lead NGO's allies and required the chief negotiator to present an idea to a group of national delegates at the UN who were friendly towards the NGO coalition's general concept. Unfortunately, they were also unfriendly towards the way the package was framed. Though HQ had been forewarned of this problem by the chief negotiator, the team leader said the allies disagreed with the negotiator's assessment and needed to see their rendition of the package presented. That was their right of course. HQ always has the final say.[4] They insisted that the chief negotiator move forward with their formulation. Unfortunately for the initiative, the national delegates quickly talked the idea down, with one negative statement after the other in the space of about an hour, which was the maximum time allotted for the meeting. This is also something any negotiator needs to keep in mind. Time is a precious commodity, especially for UN missions. The staffs are usually very overworked.

The day was saved when the chief negotiator proposed a draft reformulation in the last minutes of the allotted time, but that could only take place after everyone had spoken. The delegates did agree in principle to the new formulation but were visibly upset over the initial tactic of presenting a package that had already been rejected in private meetings. As a result, the positive momentum which existed prior to the meeting was lost. Quite apart from the mistake of ignoring "intelligence," the team back at HQ had unwisely chosen a front attack approach, presenting the controversial package to a large group of decision makers with no time for serious debate. chief negotiators do make mistakes, so it was not unethical to require the chief negotiator to re-propose a rejected idea. However, given the intelligence the chief negotiator provided to HQ, which was based on many interviews in NY, if the HQ team felt strongly about its own formulation, a wiser approach might have been a "sequential negotiation," but it does require significant planning and expenses.

[4] We also need to keep in mind that the chief negotiator might have been incorrect. It does happen.

In the "sequential negotiation" technique, a chief negotiator can cause any one delegation to respond to his or her presentation in private, without any other delegation being aware of what the others have said. This tactic also allows an NGO delegation time to strengthen/refine weak points in its own position along the trail to a formal conference where the stakes are higher. Larger NGOs will have an easier time of it; small NGOs can definitely use this method if they pool resources with friendly NGOs in a coalition.

In the hypothetical example, once the team decides who to meet along the road (which requires much analysis), the KM (knowledge management) team should study the probable positions of the contacts. Then, starting with the friendliest and ending with the least, the chief negotiator should visit the appropriate ministries in each country (Foreign Ministry, plus expert ministries) or agencies. Preparation may also require engaging local NGOs for intelligence best contacts. The entire preparation process will be very time-consuming, probably involving much use of social media between partners.

Starting with the first contact, the chief negotiator examines the official's comments on the draft text, discusses alternative language, and enquires as to what the contact thinks will be the reactions of other governments or international organizations. *If the NGO cannot afford to visit all of the needed contacts, choose a representative sampling*. As the chief negotiator moves along the route, keeping HQ informed, the proposal will probably have to be adjusted with the team leader coordinating with allies. Assuming the allies agree to reasonable adjustments, now the chief negotiator can arrive at the office of the last contact with what is likely to be the strongest package. This also changes the psychology of the negotiations, because ministers, Agency leaders, and their staff will respect the expense and effort required for such a personal venture. Further, because the discussion of the draft proposal has been split across individual meetings instead of clumped into one, the NGO gets ten times as much time with contact. The players will also have reacted to their guest in private, thus giving the chief negotiator valuable intelligence needed to offer language adjustments without compromising values.

This is a tough economy, so the budget-meisters may balk at this idea, especially as the chief negotiator may have to entertain some decision makers along the route; when the budget officers complain, remind them of the discussion on challenging the axioms. Also remind them that by the time the last contact is visited, the NGO delegation will be talking to the toughest opponent with the advantage of language the others are likely to accept. That's the value of prior consultations. Even if the last contact does not concur with the revisions, this effort will gain the NGO delegation much respect, placing the NGO in a strong position at the conference:

> An alternative to physically conducting each session in person is to hold meetings online, using one of the many available video conferencing services like Skype or social-media. That technique is perfectly legitimate, especially when taking into account costs; nothing beats personal contact and the value of meeting over meals or short walks. It is similar to developing this book, which came about by taking parts to experts around the world before presenting the entire product for public consumption.

10.7.2 Building Allies in Advance

Tactics are situational. In the above case of the overly insistent HQ, a sequential tactic might have been an effective tool, but other methods can work just as well. Suppose an NGO team has worked for years on a text and a conference has been announced to agree on a final version. Even if the sequential method was used, do not assume that because the tour was made, the revised/improved text will be "the final word." Influential governments might propose a surprise text. Roeder had to do this regarding the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Emergency Telecommunications, which had been initiated by an NGO, the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), and supported by UN agencies, and some governments would not survive US Senate confirmation. At the time, he was in the Department of State, and the US government definitely supported the ARRL's initiative, knew they had engaged in a sequential process of their own, and felt that relief workers around the world desperately needed such a Convention. In addition, Washington supported the UN's efforts to advance the Convention, led by one of the UN's foremost experts in emergency management, Hans Zimmermann; however, the government was also determined to change the text negotiated by ARRL, this because legal scholars felt elements of it were unconstitutional. Wanting a successful conference as well as an agreement on an alternative text, Roeder, who was chief negotiator for the US delegation, linked up with the German, British, and Canadian delegations by telephone and e-mail in advance and agreed to a joint draft which was then presented to the UN and the interested nations and NGOs on his first day in Geneva in 1998. ARRL was a bit upset at first, as were some UN folk, but the alliance represented important governments, and instead of jumping in too early, the US team very carefully and gently explained its concerns in the context of being helpful, pointing out that while the US government was arguing for a different text, Washington's goals were the same as those of the conference participants. That bridging point was very important, not to appear arrogant but instead as a friendly power looking for a common solution. The group agreed to use the American text, and the conference moved forward with further edits negotiated over time. There is no reason that an NGO wanting to initiative a convention could not pursue the same tactic, if it is willing to absorb the administrative and cost burdens.

Note Preconference private negotiation is common and often essential. On the eve of the San Francisco conference that would create the United Nations, there was still uncertainty about key elements of the structure, especially on the nature of the Security Council, so in the spring of 1944 and just prior to a final drafting session at Dumbarton Oaks estate in Washington, DC, the US team consulted regularly with the governments of Britain, Russia, and China to fine-tune. Surprises by the main victorious powers at the conference could have been disastrous, especially as once the war was concluded, the energy required to craft a new global peacemaking governance body might have dissipated under the pressure to rebuild the world's economies (Schlesinger 2003, p. 47).

10.8 Stress Management

The most famous example of stress at a major conference is probably that of Woodrow Wilson, who seriously damaged his health at the Paris Peace Conference, then went on a tiring rail trip to sell the League to the media and the public. Towards the end, he suffered an incapacitating stroke. Stress is always an issue in a negotiation, no matter the age of the delegate. Take it seriously. Although successful negotiations usually begin at ground level, NGOs should eventually negotiate issues at the highest level of government possible, attend UN conferences, and attend diplomatic and local UN functions. Do not worry that an NGO delegation does not represent a government. The delegation represents a serious topic. That is justification enough. Stress management will be important, however, in order for the chief negotiator and the team to be in top form. Failure to do these things can result in serious mistakes that will seriously undermine delegation goals; after all, the delegation is a group of egos that might not necessarily be used to working together and, in another setting, might not even associate with each other. Experienced, longtime negotiators will expect deference and not wish to do minor tasks. It is perfectly natural, if disquieting. Expect tempers to fray, mood swings, depression, and excessive happiness, all part of being a member of a normal delegation.

10.8.1 Appropriate Assignments Give Order and Reduce Stress of Confusion

A delegation chief should chair delegation meetings and agree on daily goals, as well as assign one or more agenda items to each delegation member. The delegation chief—or as formulated the function in this book, the chief negotiator—is in charge, but the team must work as a team, not a military unit. That requires leadership, not dictatorship. Typical assignments are (a) who reads a statement at the plenary sessions, (b) who negotiates which part of the text, and (c) who reports on progress. It is a good idea to have one officer tracking conference events and developing a daily report as a Microsoft Word document. Depending on the technical skills of the team, however, it may be wise to avoid spreadsheet and database software. As noted in the Chapter on Communications, also have an experienced Communications Officer.

The chief also needs to meet privately with each delegation member to make sure that person is relaxed and ready. If the member is new, it is good to ask why he or she is involved and for the chief to do the same. Share personal stories. Every member of the team will be full of zeal; taking the time to know motivation, strengths and perceived weaknesses, worries, etc., can avoid problems downstream. Plus, it shows that chief isn't just a boss. He or she actually cares. That will reap rewards when the going becomes tough, as it always does.

At the end of the day, the secretariat will make announcements, e.g., what is to be covered the following day? If they do not, some member of the delegation must raise the organizational placard in an appropriate plenary meeting and ask or personally seek out the secretariat. This is very important so that an important meeting is not missed the following day.

Predetermine what the team feels are the key issues and then track what other delegations say about those issues as the conference moves forward. These reports should not be verbatim; the idea is to develop a chart that shows in very simple terms what different NGO, IO, and government delegations think, perhaps in two or three words. Collating can be an effort, perhaps too much for a small delegation, but the effort of jotting down comments will be useful during the conference to identify potential allies or adversaries and be useful for research into tactics used at future conferences. There is no one way, whatever works best for the delegation.

A team breakfast meeting is a good idea, during which each member can digest a proper meal and report on his or her goals and what happened the day before. That way, the entire team has the big picture. This will also bring out disagreements; everyone should have a chance to speak, and all opinions need to be respected. This is also the time to link activities to the Journal if the delegation is at the UN. A daily UN Journal should also be examined, setting out meetings which agenda items will be covered in which rooms and at what times. Make this effort an integral item, but do not feel that the agenda must be taken in order. The chief negotiator or a designate should prioritize what is talked about.

When Roeder studied negotiations at the Foreign Service Institute, they taught to almost forget delegation members were humans rather almost as soldiers in the field, though as a former soldier, Roeder will tell you they are the most human of all. It is certainly true that one has to take care of the body. During the day, stay hydrated; keep coffee and tea intake low, and find time to exercise, perhaps by walking upstairs or in a nearby park. Delegates should avoid planning evening sessions and should put some healthy snacks and juice in their briefcase; negotiations can go well past the dinner hour. Be proactive. If there is a piece of an issue needing special attention, try to set up a meeting to deal with it as early as possible with the appropriate delegations.

10.8.2 Relax

Each member should find quiet time at night where for 30 min of uninterrupted time, he or she can sort out what happened during the day. In the morning, the chief should then ask the delegation about progress on objectives and what can be done to further them. Everyone needs quiet time, as well as an evening dinner, dancing, or light drinks where the work of the team is not discussed. Instead, the conversation should act as a release, be about anything other than the work.

Fig. 10.2 Luggage tag (Collection LRoeder)

10.8.3 Jet Lag

Do not ask teams to go on a long flight and then participate in serious talks on arrival. Even governments make this mistake. A few times when leading team on trade issues, Roeder noticed delegation members from one agency that arrived in the morning were falling asleep by late afternoon. Those who had been there for 2 days were fine, but the sleepy members had produced nothing of value that day, all because their agency wanted to save money. A better idea is to make sure that the entire team arrives in the morning one full day before formal negotiations. Require each delegation member to get plenty of sun on day one. The longer the flight, the more days in advance to arrive. For example, a 12 h flight requires 2 days of rest (Fig. 10.2).

The team should not sleep on arrival, if they arrive in the day. Instead, they should get out and about, moving blood through the body. If a beach is nearby, swim. Make sure everyone eats well and is hydrated, and then have a light team meeting in the late afternoon to go over last-minute administrative or policy issues. That will start to refocus the mind. The team then needs to unwind, watch movies, eat lightly, listen to music, and relax. Do not crash the night before negotiations. “Crashing” is a term that means staying up a night studying or rewriting. If lots of work is needed, bring enough staff to do it, and do not kill chances of a good night’s sleep. There are many dangers in crashing, not the least which is that if the team members just left a long flight and are tired, they can make serious judgment errors. On one mission examined for this book, the Chief worked with virtually no sleep and, then one evening, went into the delegation office to look up precedent. In the morning, a guard found all of the safes open! An NGO won’t have access to classified information but might have sensitive information like negotiation fallback positions. You certainly don’t want to leave those about.

Another recommended night action is to "organize the briefcase." This may sound silly; the chief negotiator would not think so the next morning if the team has to rush and at the conference site some member has forgotten a cell phone, conference pass, perhaps medicine, or position papers. Ten minutes of preparation the night before can save hours of worry the next day.

10.8.4 Delegation Size

The temptation exists to send as many delegates as possible to a conference, workshop, or meeting. Remembering that NGOs are nonprofit organizations, it is wise to resist large staffs. In addition, many events limit delegation sizes. Not only that, but an NGO is limited on the number of temporary ground passes that can be issued by its official representative.

10.8.5 E-mail/Phone Communications

Effective NGOs have always understood the importance of quick communications with members in order to share information or create an instant demonstration. In 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, poor diplomacy at the time could have led to a nuclear holocaust, and domestic politics could have led to a continuation of atmospheric nuclear tests, resulting in deadly pollution. To sensitize the American administration to the desire of many citizens not to go to test weapons, the NGO Women Strike for Peace (WSP), barely a year old, organized a national call system between lead ladies around the country who would then call local women in their cell to mount instant demonstrations. Conservative politicians called them Communists. They in turn joked that they were actually capitalists because the call system increased the revenue of AT&T by tens of thousands of dollars a month (Swerdlow 1993, p. 71)! Today of course, a similar movement would rely on social media.

Just as it was important in 1962 for effective anti-war activists to have access to phones, it is very important for today's NGO delegation to be in touch with each member. Each should have a mobile phone capable of texting, e-mail, and even web browsing; don't treat the texting or e-mails informally. WSP's phone calls were private. E-mails and text messages are not. As delegates get to know someone, the language tends to become "familiar." That is natural, but an e-mail is actually a written record—no less than a formal letter—and should be treated with respect.

Also, keep in mind that parts of the conference building may have poor telephony. An example is the UN General Assembly in New York and some of the basement conference rooms. Cell phones will not always work there, though open computers for delegations are in the hallways. As for computers, any delegates leave their confidential instructions on the hard drive or in the trash bin or perhaps leave themselves logged into their e-mail account. NGO delegations need to avoid that practice, or one's entire strategy will be open to the world. Ambassador Mary

Mel French makes a good point that e-mail is often misused, and accidents can seriously undermine diplomatic efforts, for example, replying to all with a criticism when the intent is to only send to one. It can be very embarrassing (French 2010). The same could be said of social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter, which are useful as convening tools for demonstrations or to set up a simple meeting; they can also convey too much personal information. Keep in mind that the people you are being negotiated with are likely researching your team. Every bit of data on the Internet about a delegation member is potentially a tool for the opposing forces to use to undermine your positions. Paranoid as that might seem, it is true.

10.9 Outcome and Discussant Papers

Discussant Papers and Handouts Many international conferences base their plenary debate upon participant reports, or perhaps the conference might have working groups that provide an opportunity to present a paper. In addition, very often, papers by NGOs, academic centers, and think tanks are quite welcome, as they offer thoughtful, fresh thinking without committing a government's hand ahead of discussion. Such papers might be provided by academic centers, think tanks, NGOs, etc. As a result, in addition, to coordinating position papers, the Study Team should commission papers for presentation. That will also require getting a speaker on the agenda for either the Plenary or one of the subordinate discussions, perhaps a technical working group. The delegation might even consider sponsoring a working group for this purpose, though a larger audience might be had by participating in existing working groups both as discussants with a paper to present and as a member of the audience with ideas to be heard. Related to this is the matter of handouts, posters, and other such material. Virtually, every conference allows for some distribution of handouts and locations for posters. Especially if a discussant paper proves impossible to organize, then a handout might be a good alternative.

Outcome Documents Virtually every conference has an outcomes document that reports on conference accomplishments, perhaps lays out contentious issues, and often sets out proposals for further work. In most instances, it is essential that the NGO delegation do its best to influence the government drafting officers to include language supportive of the NGO initiative and, if no outcomes document is planned, to recommend that one be created. Suppose an NGO is interested in potable water, inserting language on drilling water wells in a country with little such water might be a perfect tool to highlight the issue in a country of concern to the conference attendees and then use that experience to foster work on a global or regional scale. Then, it might be argued that an agreed mandate was provided by conference participants for the action, and from such a mandate, international budgets are often built.

There are circumstances where NGOs or civil society in general has lost faith in government negotiations and, instead of trying to augment the outcomes document, will instead attend the conferences but just use the energy to foster a civil society movement. This happened in 2012 in the Rio+20 Conference. The distain of civil society may be such that they actually repudiate the outcomes document (see Chaps. 15 and 16).

10.9.1 Example of Outcome Documents

The 23rd General Assembly of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (CoNGO) was held in Geneva, 5–7 Dec. 2007, at the International Conference Center in Geneva (CICG). For over 50 years, CoNGO has been an independent, international, nonprofit membership association of nongovernmental organizations. It facilitates the participation of NGOs in United Nations ECOSOC debates and decision making. CoNGO is most active at the major UN centers of New York, Geneva, and Vienna, but its work stretches out to all regions of the world. In 2007, the head of CoNGO needed a key note speaker on Climate Change, and as Climate Caucus had just been formed in New York with Roeder as one of the leaders, she asked him to speak.[5] Being asked to speak is always important, as it gives exposure, but instead of just agreeing to the request, Roeder asked to include comments on the impact of the climate on his NGO's issues. CoNGO's head agreed and also placed Roeder in the drafting committee for the outcomes document (CoNGO Conference on NGOs 2007b). The speech allowed a platform to push NGO's priorities, and because he participated in the drafting committee, the outcomes document "Call for Action" by the conference included endorsements of Roeder's issues. That was a lot to accomplish out of one negotiation; the end result was one of the oldest NGO alliances in the world agreed to make support another's issues as part of its official and effectively lobby for them as well.

10.10 Secretariat and Other Conference Bodies

10.10.1 The Secretariat

Conferences, international organizations, the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and other bodies have secretariats. The chief negotiator should get to know the secretariat very well. Depending on the nature of the negotiation and the importance given to it by governments, secretariats can be large or small. They are often made up of professional diplomats and international civil servants that provide continuity in the discussions as participating diplomats enter and depart with new assignments.

[5]Climate Caucus was a partnership of NGOs in the CoNGO and DPI/NGO alliances which examined aspects of climate change on everything from the impact on women to the indigenous.

A suggestion is to go to the G77 secretariat for advice on internal G77 rules or to set up appointments. As a treaty is being negotiated, the secretariat follows it, perhaps for years, staying connected with what worked or not over time. They serve the chairperson who may even have an elected Bureau (committee of conference members) elected by the negotiating parties to preside over plenary sessions and working groups.

In the context of conferences or official initiatives, the true client of the secretariat is the conference or the initiative, not home agency. It is their job to find a way to success, though not to advance a substantive agenda. As a result, a secretariat can provide clarity to NGO issues and be an effective mediator. The secretariat, through its chairperson, will also seek to find ways of stimulating collaboration between the parties. If an NGO delegation can appear to be useful to the goals of the secretariat, the secretariat can prove useful to the NGO at critical moments. In 2004 in preparation for the WCDR, the United States, Great Britain, and others regularly coordinated efforts with the secretariat in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to keep the secretariat informed. In return, the secretariat kept us well informed of preparatory developments as well, as it would have for any government who asked, especially regarding the roles of regional or interest groups like the LDCs (less developed countries).

Recommendation The NGO chief negotiator should introduce his or her team to the secretariat, share goals, and ask for guidance. In a real sense, the secretariat is there to help the initiative succeed; if the delegation can convince the staff that its issues are important, of added value, the secretariat will also help.

10.10.2 The Conference Chairperson

An NGO delegation should meet the chairperson and secretariat to impress them that it intends to make a constructive contribution. They in turn will think of the delegation in a positive light; remember it when members put their hands up to be recognized. For example, in 2006, Roeder attended the International Disaster Reduction Conference (IDRC 2006) in Davos, Switzerland, an annual risk reduction conference held by the Swiss Government in cooperation with other governments, the UN, the Red Cross, and civil society. At the time, he represented a British NGO and wanted to gain some significant exposure for its issues, so well in advance of the event, he called on the conference host on a regular basis, impressing on him the link between his British NGO's priorities and sustainable development. This eventually led to Roeder being selected as an honorary conference chair, which in turn enabled him to present a major address on his topic to some of the most important risk reduction experts in the world (Roeder, *Linking Animal Welfare and Human Survival* 2006). He was also invited to the VIP dinner to meet with the Governor of Harbin, China, who expressed interest in cooperation. That kind of success is rare but doable if a chief negotiator is prepared to be persistent (Amman, *IDRC Davos 2006 Conference Brochure and Program* 2006), in other words another example of how making an investment can reap rewards.

10.11 Credentials Committee and Rules of Procedure

Most major international conferences have some sort of credentials committee to make sure people attending have the right to be there, and NGOs are generally handled differently from national delegations. Assuming such a committee exists and follows normal practice, NGOs asking to attend will be asked in advance to certify eligibility, according to rules set in place in advance (usually on the conference website), and then to announce the chief negotiator, the deputy, and other representatives, often called "alternate delegates or alternative representatives" (Fig. 10.3).

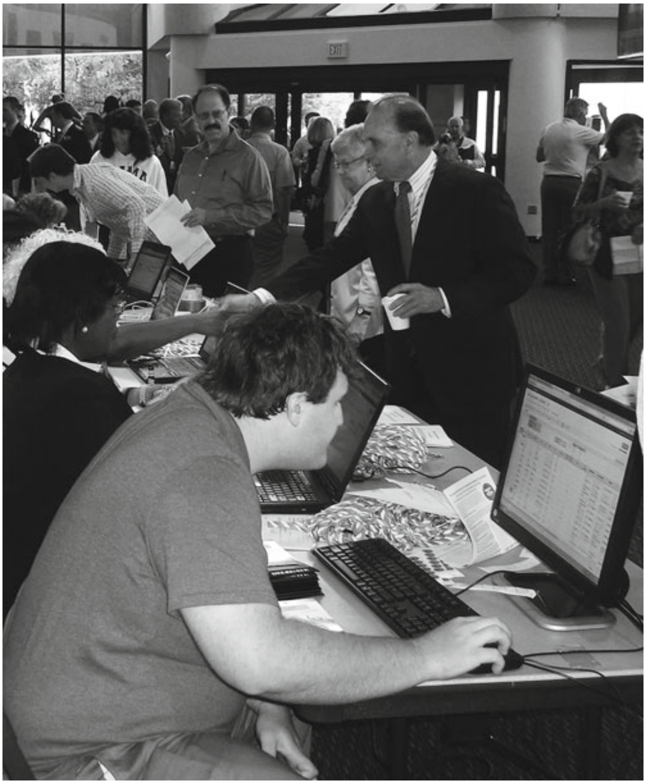

Fig. 10.3 Credentials Desk ((c) 2012 LRoeder)

In some conferences, NGOs (especially those with ECOSOC accreditation) have the right to speak, even propose language changes to resolutions, which is a powerful tool to advance NGO initiatives. This has been done many times, and NGOs often are accorded nameplates, just like a national delegation. But this is not always the case. A delegation might only be allowed to speak in workshops or perhaps provide a short statement in plenary after national representatives and senior UN officials have spoken. The rules might also limit delegation size. Nevertheless, no matter how small, all of these opportunities are tools to elevate NGO policies.

10.12 Role of the Drafting Committee

What if along the way, a delegate becomes stuck on a contentious issue and no one seems ready to agree to specific words? This happened in the Tampere Convention negotiations in a later session in Finland. To resolve the dispute, Roeder asked the delegation of Singapore to lead a special drafting committee on the issue of contention. Singapore is famous for its skilled diplomats, and this proved to be a good choice. The committee worked its way through the nest of problems and crafted language that protected all interests.

Drafting committees are challenging, draining experiences, often called "wordsmithing exercises." Quality is more important than speed, so one member of the delegation should be in the drafting committee. Hopefully, the text is fairly simple; it may be, however, that the delegation is involved in a much larger effort involving many governments and NGO interests. It can happen that as many competing texts emerge, none work. In that instance, the drafting chairperson may seek a compilation text. This will be welded together by the drafting committee and need refinement. Most of the time, the chair will then insist that all future edits be proposed in writing. Warning: An NGO delegation must be careful that its interests remain in the compilation text, even if the words are not the same. Unless the fresh wording destroys its interests, the delegation should also be willing to "work with the drafting committee." They are charged with finding a text that will be acceptable to the conference as a whole; the concepts must be packaged as central. Sometimes edits are done live, the text thrown up on a conference room screen; participants then raise their hands and suggest changes. This is a great process, but be careful to have a clear explanation for recommendations. Any process of cutting and refining can actually create a complicated text because of unneeded verbiage. The delegates want to go to dinner and would not usually challenge anything strongly put. This can lead to a lot of words being inserted which, if the document is not about the NGO priority per se, seem satisfactory to the governments involved.

Warning: Read every word so that NGO interests are not accidently impaled. Also keep in mind that it might not just be government delegations to worry about.

Other NGOs will be around. At Rio, 15,000 private individuals were present, and similar NGOs do not always agree. At the 60th DPI/NGO Conference in New York, Roeder led the drafting committee for an NGO statement on climate change and had to wrestle with otherwise friendly NGOs over language.

10.13 Example of a Mega-Conference: The Rio Summit

Because conferences are uniquely useful vehicles for advancing NGO issues, the Rio Summit, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), makes a good case study. However, NGOs cannot just look at a conference as an event. Like Rio, any conference is seen as part of a process. One also needs to examine the organization that emerged or might emerge from a conference as a potential tool for NGOs, such as the Commission on Sustainable development (CSD) which rose from Rio, and existing agencies impacted by the conference like UN Environmental Program (UNEP). Any major international conference could do the same, which is why Rio is a good model. Rio's outcomes documents were the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and two treaties on climate and biological diversity, an authoritative statement of principles on forests, and an 800-page document called Agenda 21. The latter was a compendium of guidelines and recommendations for policies and actions by governments, NGOs, and IOs on environmental, economic, and social issues. The documents were negotiated by 182 governments, with 118 sending their heads of state/government. Many tens of thousands of NGO officials also attended. This is the wave of the future, big conferences with luminaries in attendance.

Remember that summits usually follow a long line of conferences and meetings, and the 1992 Rio summit was no exception; NGOs should enter the process early. For Rio, the process began with 1982 negotiations, leading to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone layer, the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the 1990 revisions to the protocol. They were the first international agreements aimed at preventing harm to the environment. So, Rio has a legacy, but it also almost died.

The Tampere Convention negotiations were stalled for a few days when the US delegation argued for text changes, but in that case, the delay was done in the spirit of reaching a consensus. At Rio, negotiations almost fell apart when the US government refused to sign the Biodiversity Treaty. In addition, Arab delegates pushed for references to Israel's occupied territories, which, while important to Middle East peace, were not central to the environment. Oil exporting states tried to strip away language implying that petroleum was bad for the environment. Standing in the middle of that kind of debate, it may be hard for an NGO to be heard, which is why, for some conferences, the *sequential negotiating proposal* should be considered. Such a procedure could allow an NGO to acquire a fair, quiet, and detailed hearing in ministries free from distractions; perhaps NGO drafted language might then be incorporated into instructions from Foreign Ministries to their delegations.

The Rio Summit also represents the increasing encroachment of complex interlinking negotiations requiring an understanding of culture, law, and science; that offers opportunities for NGOs, though the intellectual logistics of handling this kind of complexity can be formidable for any delegation, which is why NGOs (large or small) often are more effective in coalitions. In 2008, Roeder led a discussion with the G77 on an NGO issue in New York and used scientific briefs by respected experts in the field to make the case (Lanier 2010). They were based on recommendations of a coalition and were very effective.

The Rio process led to the 31st Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and beyond. It was not one event, in other words process based on many years of work. For example, the Montreal Protocol alone took 4 sessions over 9 months. What this teaches when considering NGO initiatives is the importance of not looking at conferences as stand-alone events but as movements, with stepping stones, each an opportunity for NGOs to inject their agenda, even if the overarching theme of the conference process is not about an NGO's primary goals. In addition, because so many different conferences are related, no one NGO can staff them all, although a major foreign ministry might do so through its embassies and missions. NGOs should work with umbrella bodies like InterAction and in coalitions.

As a follow-up to Rio, in December 1992, the Commission on Sustainable Development[6] was established. CSD is a functional commission to follow-up implementation of the UNCED, also known as the Rio Earth Summit. Based at UN Headquarters in New York, CSD is composed of 53 UN members, elected to 3-year terms. During its first decade, the CSD met formally 4 weeks annually to consider specific sustainable development issues and to promote implementation of internationally agreed development goals. At the 2002 WSSD in Johannesburg, governments called for specific reforms of the CSD, including limiting negotiations in the sessions of the Commission to every 2 years, limiting the number of themes addressed at each session, and having CSD serve as a focal point for discussing partnerships that promote sustainable development, including sharing lessons learned, progress made, and best practices. NGOs have found a home in the CSD through implementation of Agenda 21. At the CSD's 11th Session (Apr–May 2003), members developed a multiyear program of work to address a series of "thematic clusters" and crosscutting issues, all opportunities for NGO interaction.

[6] Sustainable Development is a catchall for issues like risk management. In the past, disasters were considered temporary disruptions that could be managed only by response or their impacts reduced by technical interventions. Today, we know that risk management is intertwined with sustainable development and that risks like famine, epidemics, and economic depressions exacerbate the impact of disasters. This is one reason diplomacy can be complex. Will the proposed solution to one risk undermine efforts to solve others? Will the solution fit into a multinational grand strategy?