

Message from Cyril Ritchie, President, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO)

I warmly congratulate Rare Diseases International and EURORDIS on the organizing of this International Policy Event, which constitutes a "Great Leap Forward" from the launch last November in New York of the CoNGO Substantive Committee for Rare Diseases. Both your organizations, together with the Agrenska Foundation, were instrumental in bringing that initiative to fruition. Now, with your powerful commitment, your professional competence, and your determination, rare diseases will be increasingly taken into account in the United Nations health agenda and in the Sustainable Development Goals.

CoNGO has almost 70 years of promoting cooperation between civil society constituencies and the United Nations, and is ready and glad to lend its voice to this new thrust. Your work on rare diseases is a further illustration of the many ways in which the United Nations and Civil Society - including scientists, academics and community practitioners - can join forces to improve the well-being of humanity.

Civil Society and the United Nations have many shared values and shared goals. Putting rare diseases on the international map is yet one more example of the beneficial synergies that result when persons of goodwill come together to build on existing institutions and - as the UN's Agenda 2030 says - to leave no-one behind.

May your deliberations be intense and fruitful. Please be assured that CoNGO will communicate the outcome through its networks and information channels. And I personally look forward to working with you as present and future partners in the noble cause of achieving and extending The Right to Health.

Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO
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