Non-Governmental Organizations Committee Recommends Special Status for 33 Groups, Postpones Action on 45 in Second Day of Session

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Committee on NGOs,

19th & 20th Meetings (AM & PM)

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The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations today recommended 33 organizations for special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and deferred action on 45 others as it continued its session.

The 19-member Committee vets applications submitted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), recommending general, special or roster status on the basis of such criteria as the applicant’s mandate, governance and financial regime.  Organizations enjoying general and special status can attend meetings of the Council and issue statements, while those with general status can also speak during meetings and propose agenda items.  Organizations with roster status can only attend meetings.

Action on several applications were postponed because Committee members requested further information including, among other items, details of their respective activities and projects, expenditures, sources of funding and relationship with international and regional organizations.

At the outset of the meeting, the representative of the United States asked the Secretariat to give the floor to civil society organizations for brief presentations.  However, some delegations opposed that request so that the rules of procedure be strictly followed.  Consequently, the Committee continued its consideration of new applications for consultative status and new requests for reclassification.

During the all-day meeting a representative of the International Service for Human Rights spoke to the contents of a letter sent on behalf of 230 NGOs from 45 countries around the world.  Expressing concern about the use of procedural tactics to delay or effectively block certain organizations from being granted consultative status, she noted that Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 acknowledged the breadth of NGOs’ expertise and the capacity to support the work of the United Nations.  She called upon the Committee to be apolitical, fair and non-discriminatory.

Some Committee members encouraged their colleagues to be open to the views of civil society organizations.  Describing constructive criticism as necessary to move forward, the representative of the United States said NGOs should be allowed to speak during proceedings.

However, other delegates voiced concern that the Committee did not have well-defined rules, a situation that hindered its work.  Echoing several Committee members, the representative of Pakistan stressed that the main goal was to streamline the functioning of the Committee.  There must be clear procedures as well as a certain degree of flexibility granting accreditation.

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations will meet again at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 25 May, to continue its work.

Special Consultative Status

The Committee recommended that the Economic and Social Council grant special consultative status to the following 33 organizations:

ERGO — Európai Regionális Szervezet (Hungary);

Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale Issues des Migrations – FORIM (France);

Global Autism Project (United States);

Global Energy Initiative, Inc. (United States);

Global Sourcing Council Inc. (United States);

GlobalPartnersUnited, LLC (United States);

HELPEOPLE Foundation ONLUS (Italy);

Imvrian Association (Greece);

International Authors Forum (United Kingdom);

Japan Association for Refugees (Japan);

Juristes pour l'enfance (France);

La Manif Pour Tous (France);

Lumos Foundation (United Kingdom);

Meezaan Center for Human Rights (Israel);

Municipal Art Society of New York (United States);

My Chosen Vessels inc. (United States)

Naija Worldwide Charities Inc. (United States);

New Generation in Action (United States);

Open Data Watch, Inc. (United States);

and Promotion du Développement Economique et Social — PDES (Switzerland).

Réseau Européen pour l'Égalité des Langues (France);

Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (Canada);

Sino-American Cultural Council, Inc. (United States);

Studium Generale Ambrosianum (Italy);

TaiWha Methodist Social Welfare Foundation (Republic of Korea);

The Heart Fund to Fight Cardio-Vascular Diseases — The Heart Fund — THF (France);

The National YWCA of Korea (Republic of Korea);

Transatlantic Christian Council (Netherlands);

UCT Int'l Culture Development, Inc. (United States);

Universalis Matter (France);

Universities Allied for Essential Medicines, Corp. (United States).

The Committee postponed consideration of the following 45 organizations:

Crisis Management Initiative ry (Finland) — as the representative of South Africa took note of the organization’s positive contribution in the area of peace and conflict resolution, and expressed support to its application.  The representative of the Russian Federation sought further information about its projects and activities in Ukraine and Moldova.

Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) (Republic of Korea) — as the representative of South Africa asked for an updated financial statement.  The representative of China asked how the organization maintained its independence given that it received funds from Government institutions.

Differenza Donna - Associazione di donne contro la violenza alle Donne – ONLUS (Italy) — as the representative of South Africa inquired whether the organization operated abroad.  She also asked for the latest financial statement.

Dreikönigsaktion - Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar (Austria) — as the representative of South Africa asked for disaggregation of funds.  The representative of Cuba asked about the organization’s activities and projects in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

ESIB - The National Union of Students in Europe (Belgium) — as the representative of China asked for further information about its activities in sustainable development.

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (Denmark) — as the representative of Iran asked how the organization maintained its independence as it received funds from the Government.

Fon Foundation.Org (United States) — as the representative of Cuba stressed that the organization had not responded to the questions posed previously.

Forum Droghe Associazione Movimento per il Contenimento dei Danni (Italy) — as the representative of Turkey asked about the countries in which the organization operated.

Geo Expertise Association (Switzerland) — as the representative of South Africa asked for an updated financial statement.

Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (United States) — as the representative of China asked the organization to clarify its position on Taiwan.

Global Forum for Media Development (Belgium) — as the representative of Cuba asked about the results of activities in Latin America and the Caribbean.  The representative of the Russian Federation asked whether the organization had observed any violations of journalists' rights in Ukraine.

Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (United States) — as the representative of South Africa asked for further information about activities and projects carried out in her country.

Global Zero (United States) — as the representative of China asked the organization to clarify its position on Tibet.  The representative of South Africa noted that “the elimination of all nuclear weapons” did not fall into the work of the Economic and Social Council.

HackerNest (Canada) — as the representative of South Africa asked whether the organization operated in Africa.

Hazar Strateji Enstitüsü Derneği (Turkey) — as the representative of the Russian Federation asked about its activities and projects carried out in 2014 and 2015.

HealthBridge Foundation of Canada (Canada) — as the representative of South Africa asked for further information on the term “health equity”, and inquired whether the organization operated in Africa.

Human Appeal International [UK] (United Kingdom) — as the representative of India sought clarification about its sources of income.

Institute for International Women's Rights - Manitoba Inc. (Canada) — as the representative of the Russian Federation asked whether the organization had undertaken any activities in Eastern Ukraine.

Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (Canada) — as the representative of China pointed out that Taiwan was listed as a country on its website, and asked for correction of such terminology.  The representative of South Africa asked whether the organization operated in Africa.

International Child Rights Center (Republic of Korea) — as the representative of Venezuela asked about the outcomes of activities carried out in 2015.

Jubilee USA Network Inc. (United States) — as the representative of South Africa asked whether the organization operated in Africa.

Jus Cogens (United States) — as the representative of South Africa asked for further information about the organization’s partnership with the African Union.

Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Turkey) — as the representative of South Africa asked for an updated financial statement.

Kehitysyhteistyöjärjestöjen EU-yhdistys KEHYS ry, EU-plattformen för finländska biständsorganisationer KEHYS rf (Finland) — as the representative of South Africa asked for an updated financial statement.

Kepa Ry, Kepa Rf (Finland) — as the representative of South Africa noted that 90 per cent of financial resources was provided by the Government.  She asked how the organization maintained its independence.

Landsrådet for Norges barne- og ungdomsorganisasjoner (Norway) — as the representative of South Africa asked how the organization maintained its impartiality as it received funds from the Government.

Le Monde des Possibles (Belgium) — as the representative of Cuba asked for updated information on financial expenditure.

Mangfoldhuset (Norway) — as the representative of Azerbaijan asked for further information about the sources of income.

NK Watch (Republic of Korea) — as the representative of Cuba asked for further information about the organization’s activities and projects.

Novant Health, Inc. (United States) — as the representative of China noted that the organization did not use the correct terminology for Taiwan, and asked for correction.

P3 Foundation (New Zealand) — as the representative of India noted that the organization had experienced a budget deficit.  He requested the organization provide the Committee with its plans to overcome that issue.

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. (United States) — as the representative of China asked for further information about its projects and activities.

Profugo (United States) — as the representative of India asked for further information about the organization’s counterpart in his country.

Promundo-US (United States) — as the representative of India asked whether the organization had an office in Asia and Latin America.

Red Iberoamericana de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales que Trabajan en Drogodependencias – RIOD (Spain) — as the representative of Nicaragua asked for further information about its current activities and projects.

Restored (United Kingdom) — as the representative of South Africa asked for clarification on how it planned to contribute to the work of the United Nations.  The representative of the United States stressed that the Committee did not have the right to stop an NGO from participating in the work of the Economic and Social Council.  The representative of the United Kingdom, participating as an observer State, noted that the mandate of the Committee was to encourage the representation of NGOs at the United Nations.

Stichting Child and Youth Finance International (Netherlands) — as the representative of South Africa asked for further information about the sources of income.

Syrian American Medical Society Foundation (United States) — as the representative of the Russian Federation asked whether the organization was carrying out activities and projects in partnerships with the Government of Syria.  The representative of Iran asked for further information about the sources of income.  The representative of South Africa inquired as to why there were no Syrians on the Board of Directors.

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (United States) — as the representative of South Africa asked for further information about the organization’s activities in Africa.

The Zahra Trust (United Kingdom) — as the representative of South Africa asked for further information about its activities.  The representative of Iran asked for clarification about the term “self-determination”.

Truth Foundation (Republic of Korea) — as the representative of South Africa asked about the location of its operations in Africa.

United States Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (United States) — as the representative of China asked the Organization to use the correct terminology for Taiwan.  The representative of India asked for further information about its training programme.

The representative of the International Service for Human Rights spoke to the contents of a letter sent on behalf of 230 NGOs from 45 countries around the world.  She expressed concern about the use of procedural tactics to delay or effectively block certain organizations from being granted consultative status.

The value of NGOs’ participation in the work of the United Nations was widely acknowledged, she stressed.  In fact, Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 acknowledged the breadth of NGOs’ expertise and the capacity to support the work of the Organization.  Given that, the 230 signatories to the letter requested that the Committee practice be uniformly applied, apolitical, fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, consistent and expeditious.  Further, they requested that the Committee actions not hinder the right of NGOs to have access to the Organization.

In the ensuing discussion, some delegations commended the crucial work carried out by NGOs.  The representative of the European Union called upon Committee members to be open to the views of civil society organizations.  Describing constructive criticism as necessary to move forward, the representative of the United States said NGOs should be allowed to speak.

Several delegates, on the other hand, expressed concern that the Committee did not have well-defined rules, a situation that hindered its work.  The representative of Pakistan pointed out that the lack of specific rules had been raised as an issue of concern, and the Secretariat had been requested to provide clarification on the official rules, although it had not done so.

He did note that despite that situation, work had been accomplished.  Nonetheless, the main goal was to streamline the functioning of the Committee.  There needed to be clear procedures, but also a certain degree of flexibility exhibited by Member States in granted accreditation.

The representative of the Russian Federation pointed to the “worrying trend”, whereby some countries that did not want to address certain issues utilized NGOs to carry out their political aims, which he described as an “appalling phenomenon”.   The delegate of Syria also expressed concern about the “politicization” of the work of civil society.

Also speaking were representatives of South Africa, India, Iran, Greece, Cuba, Mauritania, China and the United Kingdom.

Interactive Discussion

During the question-and-answer session, a representative of ESIB - The National Union of Students in Europe (Belgium) said his organization represented more than 15 million students in Europe, promoting their educational, social, economic and cultural interests.

The representative of India asked for further information about its partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).  The representative of Sudan asked for clarification on the term “student” and the sources of funding.

In response, he noted that the organization had been working with UNESCO for a long time in various projects and activities.  Furthermore, he said that its funding was based on membership fees; members were students of higher education.

The Committee then granted special consultative status to ESIB — The National Union of Students in Europe.

A representative of the organization, Hazar Strateji Enstitüsü Derneği (Turkey) addressed questions posed and summarized its activities and projects.

The representative of India asked about the number of members.  The representative of Iran asked for further information about the sources of income.

In response, that organization’s representative said there were approximately 100 individual and 10 corporate members.

The Committee then decided to postpone its consideration of the organization.

A representative of the Committee to Protect Journalists, Inc. (United States) said his organization promoted press freedom worldwide, and defended the right of journalists to report the news without fear of reprisal.

The representative of Cuba asked about its activities in Latin America and the Caribbean since 2011.  The representative of Iran asked whether the organization analysed the situation of journalists in the United States.

That organization’s representative acknowledged the positive change in Cuba.  He stressed that the organization was in touch with journalists working in that country.  Regarding its operation in the United States, he said that various reports had documented the lack of transparency and violations against journalists.

The representative of India asked about the organization’s activities in his country.

The organization’s representative described the situation in India as vibrant.  While expressing concern about incidents against journalists, he noted that the organization was in dialogue with the Government, sharing perspectives.

The Committee then decided to postpone its consideration of the organization.

A representative of Women Enabled said her organization advocated and educated for the human rights of all women and girls, with an emphasis on women and girls with disabilities.  It aimed at including women and girls with disabilities in international resolutions, policies and programs addressing women's human rights and development.

The representative of South Africa asked how the organization intended to contribute to the Economic and Social Council’s work.  India’s representative asked for further information about the organization’s cooperation with the Government of India.  The representative of Nicaragua asked whether the organization had any intention to operate in Latin America.

In response, the organization’s representative noted that the founder was considered to be an international expert in human rights programming and training in developing, transition, and post-conflict countries.  The founder also consulted with Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations.  In regards to India, she had spent several months working with local and national institutions.  In addition, the organization was developing a toolkit targeting women and girls with disabilities.

The Committee then decided to postpone its consideration of the organization.

A representative of Youth of European Nationalities said the organization was a dynamic and active network of youth organizations.  Its main goal was to work for the preservation and development of the rights of the minorities and ethnic groups.

Without posing any question, the Committee granted special consultative status to the Youth of European Nationalities.