

## **ISHR oral statement for meeting between NGO Committee and ECOSOC – accredited NGOs: 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

In 1996 ECOSOC members had the right idea. They understood the relationship between the UN and NGOs to be an evolving one with potential for a growing appreciation of the value of CSO engagement and of the technical advances to facilitate that engagement.

ISHR very much appreciates the opportunity to participate in this first dialogue monitoring the relationship between the UN and NGOs.

From its inception, the UN was a common project between political and civil societies with recognition that contributions by civil society were key to better outcomes. Over time it has become ever clearer that for the UN to be effective it requires a diverse civil society to bring human rights analysis to the system and to push for the system to be fit for the purpose of protecting rights.

However, in engaging civil society actors have faced attack despite the fact that reprisals against civil society are counterproductive – they undermine the effectiveness of the UN (as well as being unconscionable individual violations).

Recently unfounded and un retracted accusations of terrorist affiliations made against NGOs have become more common, including where the NGOs in question were not even allowed to respond or defend themselves, as required.

Promoting civil society engagement and the protection of those that engage is a basic, minimum requirement in relationship between UN – NGOs.

With all the aforementioned in mind ISHR would like to make the following recommendations:

- States should encourage a positive understanding of the role of civil society and be prepared to place ensuring the rights of civil society above other interests.
- Rules and regulations relating to NGO participation should be grounded in principles including of accountability, due process, and transparency.
- States, including members of this Committee, must refrain from making unfounded accusations, against individual or NGOs
- Any such allegation must be supported by credible evidence and shared with the NGOs in sufficient time to allow them a reasonable opportunity to respond.
- Video conferencing – as trialed in this meeting – is a key way to enable a more diverse, national level voice in UN spaces. Technological advances should be explored to deepen engagement, particularly from developing countries.

ISHR looks forward to the continuation of these dialogues, as is mandated.

We believe the relationship between the UN and NGOs should evolve toward a point where the expertise of civil society is harnessed to the greatest degree possible in the service of the purposes of the UN Charter.

Thank you Mr. Chair.