

Joint Statement at NGO Committee consultation with ECOSOC accredited NGOs

13th December 2022

This is a group statement. We welcome the convening of this important meeting, mandated by paragraph 61(a) of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. However, we deeply regret that this is only the second meeting since 1996 and urge Committee members to fulfil this mandate and organise consultations with accredited NGOs prior to each Committee session.

Resolution 1996/31 acknowledges the breadth of NGOs' expertise, their capacity to support the UN's work, and the need to consider the full diversity of NGOs at all levels. The Committee on NGOs is the gatekeeper to civil society access, and entrusted with monitoring the relationship between NGOs and the UN. Yet, the Committee's practices violate its mandate.

Several Committee members ask repetitive and politically motivated questions to defer applications for consultative status for several years outside the scope of what NGOs are required to submit in their applications under ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. These arbitrary deferrals amount to de facto rejections - and affect NGOs working on human rights, democracy and the rule of law in particular. This is a form of reprisals against NGOs for attempting to engage with and contribute to the UN's work.

We urge the Committee to:

- Ensure applications for ECOSOC accreditation are considered in a fair and expeditious manner; and
- Allow applicants to participate in the Q&A sessions remotely via videoconferencing, providing the opportunity for immediate responses to questions and speeding up the process of accreditation.

Beyond accreditation, genuine NGO participation must be enabled free from the fear of reprisals. We urge the institutionalisation of hybrid modalities across the UN to enable inclusive and effective participation and to overcome barriers such as visa denials, resource challenges, and accessibility for people with disabilities.

ECOSOC and the Committee on NGOs are legally obliged to exercise their functions consistent with international human rights standards on the rights to due process, non-discrimination, and fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly. The depth of global challenges necessitates that NGOs working to promote the UN's work must be welcomed as partners, and not blocked due to arbitrary and political reasons.

Signatories:

1. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man
2. Amnesty International
3. Association for Progressive Communications - APC
4. Center for Reproductive Rights
5. CIVICUS
6. Conectas Direitos Humanos
7. CREA
8. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
9. GIN SSOGIE
10. Global Justice Center
11. Human Rights in China (HRIC)
12. Human Rights Watch
13. ICNL
14. IFEX
15. International Commission of Jurists
16. International Service for Human Rights
17. MENA Rights Group
18. Outright International
19. Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ)
20. SCM- Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression
21. Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SAWHRDN)
22. Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SouthernDefenders)
23. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
24. The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP)
25. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights