

Information Note to NGOs on the Durban Review Conference and its preparatory process

Background

In 2001, the United Nations organized the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa. The Conference, attended by more than 10.000 people from all regions of the world, adopted by consensus the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which remains the most important framework to date for the combat against racism and racial discrimination. In 2006, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 61/149, decided to convene in 2009 a Review Conference on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and requested the Human Rights Council to act as the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference. The Preparatory Committee planned to have three sessions. Its work is open to the participation of all Member States of the UN and members of specialized agencies and observers (HRC Resolution 3/2 of 2006).

Objectives of the Review Conference

The objectives of the Review Conference, as set forth by the PrepCom, are:

- To review progress and assess implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action by all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels, including assessing contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, through an inclusive, transparent and collaborative process, and identifying concrete measures and initiatives for combating and eliminating all such manifestations in order to bolster implementation;
- To assess the effectiveness of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms and other relevant United Nations mechanisms dealing with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to strengthen them;
- To promote the universal ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and proper consideration of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
- To identify and share good practices in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Lead-up to the Review Conference

In the lead-up to the Review Conference, two additional sessions of the PrepCom will take place in Geneva, from 21 April to 2 May 2008, and from 6 to 17 October 2008 respectively. Regional meetings are also scheduled to take place between May and September 2008. The Review Conference is expected to take place in the first half of 2009.

Up-coming Prep-Com session (21 April – 2 May 2008)

At the up-coming Prep-Com, which is expected to have a substantive focus, an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group is expected to be established in order to

start work on the draft outcome document to be considered at the 2009 Review Conference. In order to achieve its task, the Working Group is expected to collect information to be included in the draft outcome document. To facilitate this process, the OHCHR Secretariat has prepared a questionnaire that is already available on line at the following link

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/session1-documentation.htm>

Further information is available at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/>

NGO participation

Participation of NGOs is encouraged in the Durban Review Conference and in the process leading up to it, including the up-coming sessions of the Prep-Com and the regional conferences.

The following criteria and arrangements will be applied to ensure a wide participation of NGOs at the up-coming sessions of the Prep-com, as decided by the Prep-Com itself in August 2007:

(A) The mechanism established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996, and practices observed by the Commission on Human Rights, shall be the framework for participation of, consultations with, and accreditation of non-governmental organizations, while ensuring their most effective contribution;

(B) Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council are invited to participate fully in all the sessions of the Preparatory Committee, pursuant to Council resolution 1996/31;

(C) In the case of non-governmental organizations not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, but accredited to participate in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and its follow-up mechanisms:

(i) The Secretariat will send to Member States an updated list of non-governmental organizations not in consultative status, but accredited to participate in the World Conference and its follow-up mechanisms;

(ii) Non-governmental organizations in this category shall be invited to participate fully at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee, unless there are observations made by Member States within 14 days from the date they receive the note verbale with the list of non-governmental organizations mentioned above. The standard process established in Council resolution 1996/31 will be applied;

(iii) In the event that a Government raises questions concerning the accreditation of a non-governmental organization, the final decision shall be taken by the Preparatory Committee, in accordance with the standard process established in Council resolution 1996/31;

(D) In the case of non-governmental organizations not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and not accredited to participate in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and its follow-up mechanisms:

(i) Non-governmental organizations interested in the processes for the first time and wishing to participate in the sessions of the Preparatory Committee should submit applications to the Secretariat, in accordance with the criteria established in Council resolution 1996/31;

(ii) The Secretariat shall post on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the procedures and relevant forms regarding the participation of non-governmental organizations;

(iii) The Secretariat shall continue to review all applications received to ensure that they meet the requirements established in Council resolution 1996/31;

(iv) Where non-governmental organizations have had their consultative status withdrawn or suspended under paragraph 57 (a) or (b) of Council resolution 1996/31, the Secretariat shall include information as to the reasons for withdrawal or suspension including the date of the decision, in the list circulated to all Member States;

(v) The Secretariat shall send to Member States, on a periodic basis, the updated list of applications received. Member States may submit comments on any of the applications in the list within 14 days from receipt of the above-mentioned list. The comments of Member States shall be communicated to the non-governmental organization concerned, which will be offered the opportunity to respond;

(vi) In cases where the Secretariat believes, on the ground of the information provided, in accordance with Council resolution 1996/31 that the non-governmental organization has established its competence and relevance of its activities with regards to the work of the Preparatory Committee, it shall recommend to the Preparatory Committee that the non-governmental organization be accredited. In cases where the Secretariat does not recommend the granting of accreditation, it shall make available to the Preparatory Committee its justifications for not doing so;

(vii) In the event that a Member State raises questions concerning the accreditation of a non-governmental organization, the final decision on such cases shall be taken by the Preparatory Committee in accordance with the standard process established in Council resolution 1996/31;

(E) Indigenous peoples' representatives that are accredited in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/32 of 25 July 1995, and who express willingness to participate, shall be accredited to the sessions of the Preparatory Committee. Other interested indigenous peoples' representatives can also be accredited, following standard procedures established under Council resolution 1996/31.

NGOs wishing to participate for the first time in the sessions of the Prep-Com should fill this Questionnaire

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/ngo.htm>

Where to address accreditation requests and general queries?

Queries, as well as accreditation requests to participate in the up-coming Prep-Com session, should be addressed to:

Anti-Discrimination Unit

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights
48 Giuseppe Motta
CH 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 928 92 21

Fax: +41 22 928 90 50

E-mail: adusecretariat@ohchr.org