



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/1/NGO/10
27 June 2006

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
First session
Agenda item 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”

Joint written statement* submitted by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH), the International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAW), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, and the FIAN - Foodfirst Information and Action Network, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 June 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights appeals for a drafting mandate to be granted to the Open-Ended Working Group to consider options regarding the elaboration of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Individually and on behalf of the international NGO Coalition in which all submitting organisations are members, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), the Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme (FIDH), the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) and the International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific (IWRAW Asia-Pacific) welcome the significant progresses made in the discussions on an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The NGO Coalition actively participated in the last session of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) in February 2006, where a unique momentum in favour of the adoption of a useful instrument for a better protection of economic, social and cultural rights (ESC rights) arose. On this occasion, a great majority of states highlighted the need to develop and adopt a comprehensive complaint mechanism –including all rights and all levels of States' obligations- taking stock of efficient provisions and arrangements under similar international procedural instruments related to other human rights treaties.

Accordingly, a big majority of states as well as the NGO Coalition expressed themselves in favour of a renewal of the mandate of the OEWG as well as its transformation to allow proceeding with the drafting exercise. In this regard, the NGO Coalition is of the view that the OEWG mandate should be for three years with the possibility of further renewal after this term.

Moreover, the NGO Coalition supports the proposal made by numerous delegations during the OEWG session in February 2006 according to which the Chair of the OEWG, Mrs Catarina de Albuquerque, should prepare and present a draft Optional Protocol to the next session of the Working Group. This draft should reflect the discussions and outcomes / achievements of the three first years of the OEWG and should serve as a basis for the drafting negotiations. The Human Rights Council should look at this issue and renew the OEWG mandate at its June 2006 session in order to give enough time to the OEWG Chair to conduct consultations on the draft. Eventually, the NGO Coalition would like to reiterate its will to pursue its active and constructive participation in the process and would highly welcome the involvement of relevant experts from various backgrounds to inform the future discussions arising during the drafting process.

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