

NGO Committee | States must put commitment to civil society into practice at upcoming elections

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The critical and constructive exchanges between civil society and States are all part of the mix at the current session of the Human Rights Council. Civil society engagement relies on accreditation, which lies in the hands of the much-criticised ECOSOC NGO Committee. With elections to the Committee in April, States have an opportunity to transform its practice and ensure that the participation rights of civil society are guaranteed.



On 16 April, ECOSOC will vote in the full 19-member NGO Committee, for the 2019 - 2022 term. Now is the time for States to put themselves forward as candidates and - in the case of ECOSOC members - ensure they limit their votes to States they truly believe will fulfill the mandate of the NGO Committee and consider applications for accreditation fairly.

In a [joint letter](#) several NGOs long concerned about the practice of the Committee, call on States to use the opportunity of the elections to shake up the NGO Committee.

'Membership of the NGO Committee matters,' say the NGOs, including ISHR.

The NGO Committee is mandated to recommend accreditation to NGOs 'in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations'. However, Committee members have used their membership to interrogate and malign NGOs, and block their entry into the UN.

'The NGO Committee is much criticised for letting political interests of its members influence how NGOs' applications are considered,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw. 'Not surprisingly, human rights organisations have the hardest time getting accredited.'

Whilst there are no formal membership standards - as there are in the case of the Human Rights Council, for example - Human Rights Council resolutions on civil society space provide highly relevant criteria. These include whether legal frameworks at national level are in conformity with international human rights standards; and whether or not a State takes decisive steps to prevent and address reprisals.

On Friday 16 March at 11am in New York, ISHR, Human Rights Watch and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) will hold a press conference on the upcoming elections to the NGO Committee. Join us by Facebook livestream at: <https://www.facebook.com/HumanRightsWatch/>

Watch the statement here:

[Read ISHR's statement delivered at the Human Rights Council here.](#)

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