

30 January 2015

To: Mr Jorge Dotta, Chair of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations
And: Member States of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations
And: Alberto Padova, Acting Chief, Non-Governmental Organisations Branch

Dear Chair and Committee members

Transparency in reporting and coverage of meetings of the Committee in NGOs

ISHR is writing to express our concern regarding recent discussions within the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations as to how meetings of the Committee should be covered by the Department of Public Information. These discussions have included calls by some Member States to de-identify or not specify Member States by name in the coverage.

This development is concerning because the availability, accessibility and accuracy of public information on the Committee's meetings is essential to ensure transparency and accountability in the Committee's work, and of the process of review of NGOs seeking consultative status to the UN.

For the last 20 years, DPI has identified Member States by name in coverage and summaries of the work of the Committee. Any move to de-identify which State asked particular questions, made particular comments or put forward particular views would be a departure from established practice, would have the manifest effect of reducing the transparency of the Committee and, as discussed below, would be incompatible with the purpose and intent of ECOSOC Resolution E/1996/31.

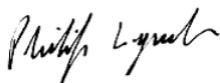
Transparency in the Committee is particularly important given that NGOs and others have criticised the Committee in the past for lack of transparency, fairness and due process in its work.

The meeting coverage provided by DPI is essential so that civil society organisations can accurately follow Committee proceedings and be aware of questions and decisions that affect them. The coverage is particularly vital for NGOs that are not based in New York, including national and regional organisations working across the globe, which do not have resources to attend the Committee's meetings.

As you are aware, ECOSOC Resolution E/1996/31, which sets out the legal framework governing the work of the Committee, calls on the Secretary-General to ensure 'wide and timely dissemination of information on meetings' and 'distribution of documentation' in order to facilitate the broad-based participation of civil society. NGOs are clearly entitled to have access to complete information about the consideration of their applications for consultative status or the review of their status by the Committee.

We respectfully request that Member States do not reduce the transparency of the Committee on NGOs by removing important information from the coverage of meetings.

Yours sincerely



Philip Lynch
Director