

19 July 2017

To: The President of ECOSOC and Bureau Members, all ECOSOC Member States Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York

Excellencies,

We are writing in regard to the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Committee on NGOs.

We wish to thank ECOSOC for its decision to webcast open sessions of the NGO Committee, encouraging greater transparency in and accessibility to the Committee's proceedings. We welcome the fact that no State opposed the resolution on improving the working methods of the Committee. States acknowledged that all NGOs should be able to follow consideration of their applications.

Webcasting is a good first step. To ensure that the accreditation process is more fair and objective, the working methods of the Committee still need further improvement.

ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 para 61 (a) provides that the NGO Committee is *'responsible for regular monitoring of the evolving relationship between NGOs and the UN'*. The resolution specifies that the Committee *'shall hold'* meetings with accredited NGOs before each of its sessions and at other times as necessary, to discuss *'questions of interest to the Committee or to the organizations related to the relationship between NGOs and the United Nations.'* The resolution states that a report on such consultations is to be transmitted to ECOSOC for appropriate action. As far as we know, no such meetings have been held, in recent years.

Regular meetings between the Committee and accredited NGOs are essential to build a more constructive relationship between the Committee (as well as the ECOSOC) and NGOs. They could help to address the wide range of challenges faced by NGOs in engaging with the UN.

In the absence of formal opportunities to engage with the Committee, including during the meetings envisaged in resolution 1996/31, on issues of general concern, NGOs have sought to address the NGO Committee briefly at the start of Committee sessions. However, on the two most recent occasions these attempts have been rejected. The Committee's refusal to engage with NGOs on general topics of concern is in contradiction to its responsibilities outlined in resolution 1996/31.

The ECOSOC has a duty to ensure that the Committee fulfils its responsibilities fully and effectively. We accordingly request that the ECOSOC remind the NGO Committee of its responsibility to convene at least one meeting with NGOs before each session, beginning with its next session in January 2018.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International
Article 19
Asian Legal Resource Centre
Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS)
CIVICUS
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
CONECTAS
Corporación Humanas, Chile
Freedom Now

Hawaii Institute for Human Rights
Human Rights Watch
International Commission of Jurists
International Service for Human Rights
International Federation of Settlements and
Neighborhood Centers (IFS)
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the
Advancement of Human Rights
Legal Resource Centre
Outright International