

EU initiatives on Caste-based discrimination

Highlights

European Parliament

- In April 2012, the European Parliament adopts resolution P7_TA(2012)0126 on Human rights in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter, including implications for the EU's strategic human rights policy. The resolution includes the following two articles on caste-based discrimination:

>> 111. Condemns all forms of human rights violations committed against people discriminated against on the basis of work and descent, and the limited access to justice for victims; calls on the EU and its Member States to endorse the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent;

117. Recommends initiatives for EU legislation to ensure that attention is paid in EU human rights policy and cooperation instruments to eliminating caste discrimination, and action in caste-affected countries, including Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Yemen. <<

- A hearing on caste discrimination in South Asia is organised jointly by the Subcommittee on Human Rights, the Development Committee, and the Delegations on relations with India and South Asia respectively (February 2011).
- The European Parliament's report on human rights in the world 2009, adopted 16 December 2010, includes the following text on issues related to caste:

>> 81. Calls for the recognition that minorities such as indigenous groups and people discriminated against because of their caste are disproportionately vulnerable and subjected to torture.

165. [...] regrets the lack of results from the human rights dialogue with India and is disappointed that the issue of caste-based discrimination was not discussed during the last human rights dialogue; <<

- In a report on the EU-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations the European Parliament calls upon the European Council and Commission to work together with the Indian Government to move towards ending caste based discrimination and reaching out to Dalits and Scheduled tribes and specifically to tackle bonded labour issues affecting the two communities (June 2009).
- In June 2008 four European parliamentarians co-sponsor a hearing on caste-based discrimination in South Asia in collaboration with IDSN.
- In February 2007 the European Parliament adopts European Union Resolution B6-0021/2007 on the human rights situation of the Dalits in India. In this resolution the institutions of the European Union call upon the Government of India to report on progress of the human rights situation of Dalits in India, and to take due note of the CERD Concluding Observations from

review of India in February 2007.

- In December 2006 the Committee on Development conducts a hearing on caste-based discrimination.
- Since 2001 and till date the European Parliament has in several resolution texts and Annual Human Rights Reports called for the elimination of discrimination based on work and descent.

European Commission

- In April 2009, the EU Commission decides to commission IDSN to undertake a study on caste discrimination in South Asia and requests IDSN to provide operational guidance on programming.
- In June 2009, a three day regional EU Commission workshop on Minorities, Indigenous People and Dalits is held in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- EIDHR instruments 2005-2006 and 2007-2011 contain references to caste-based discrimination; Dalit organisations are eligible to some calls for proposals
- EIDHR and other EU financing instruments have since 2005 provided funding to various civil society actions to end caste-based discrimination, including the International Consultation on good practices and strategies to eliminate caste-based discrimination in 2011.
- ECHO India takes action to address caste-based discrimination humanitarian relief (2011)

European Council

- At its May meeting 2010, COHOM hosts a hearing on caste discrimination with IDSN participants and receives IDSN recommendations "Towards an EU policy framework for the effective elimination on discrimination based on work and descent." COHOM decides to request a Head of Mission report on caste discrimination in India, and to pursue the topic in Annual Human Rights Dialogues.
- In November 2009 a briefing on caste discrimination with COASI and COHOM members is hosted by the Swedish Presidency; represented as speakers are three Dalit leaders.
- In June 2007 COHOM decides to pursue an initiative to ensure the publication of the completed studies of the former UN Sub-Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, including the final report on Discrimination based on Work and Descent (see below). This initiative was taken by the EU at the 10th session of the Human Rights Council, which lead to the adoption of Human Rights Council decision A/HRC/10/117.