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IDSN application for ECOSOC Status – the longest pending NGO application

The history of IDSN’s application for UN accreditation

The International Solidarity Network (IDSN) has since 2007 sought to be accredited as an NGO with the United Nations in order to be better able to monitor and influence the work in the UN on caste discrimination. The application was first **considered** at the Regular Session of the Committee on NGOs in January 2008. Since then, the application has been deferred at all following regular and resumed sessions of the Committee on NGOs, i.e. for 9 years.

During this period [IDSN has received 82 written questions, to which IDSN has always provided full, transparent and timely responses](#). During the process, no objections have been made to IDSN’s application on technical or procedural grounds. All 82 written questions have been posed by one member of the Committee, namely India, resulting in continuous deferral of the application by the Committee. Many of the questions contained similar content, or were responded to in the application or in previous replies.

Application deferral - challenges for the work of IDSN

For IDSN’s work, it remains a big challenge that the organisation’s application for ECOSOC accreditation has not yet been granted to ensure its free and effective association with the UN. Consultative status would provide for easy and direct access to various UN bodies, including the human rights mechanisms. Particularly, being able to attend and observe all proceedings of the Human Rights Council, submit written statements and make oral interventions to the Human Rights Council would streamline our work and greatly enable IDSN’s engagement with the UN. The continued questioning of IDSN is unreasonable; it is furthermore very time and resource demanding for an NGO.

In October 2014, the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the context of multilateral institutions to be considered by the UN General Assembly, highlighted IDSN’s application for accreditation as an NGO with the UN (ECOSOC) stating.

“The case of the International Dalit Solidarity Network, an international NGO focusing on caste-based discrimination and other forms of discrimination based on work and descent, is particularly troubling: since 2008, the Network has received 64 written questions from the Committee, all raised by India. It is now the longest pending application before the Committee.”

On October 28 2014, in his presentation to the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur criticised India for arbitrarily blocking IDSN from obtaining UN consultative status calling it “clearly unacceptable, wrong and unfair”. Many States speaking at the General Assembly noted concern that the NGO committee, meant to ensure inclusion of civil society at the UN, is acting in a manner contrary to its purpose. Norway specifically highlighted, “The continued deferral for seven years of the International Dalit Solidarity Network’s application for accreditation as an NGO with the UN ... is in our view unacceptable and the situation should be rectified.” Please read the [IDSN news piece](#). The Special Rapporteur also raised the case of IDSN at a Human Rights Council Side-event “Transforming Global Governance”, organised by CIVICUS, on March 5 2015.

IDSN submitted input to the report in July 2014. Furthermore, IDSN submitted the [IDSN's ECOSOC case to the Urgent Appeal Mechanism](#) as an individual case for due consideration by the SR on Peaceful Assembly and Association and the SR on Human Rights Defenders in October 2014. IDSN also submitted the case as letters of allegation to the SR on Peaceful Assembly and Association in 2012 and 2014. Furthermore, as in 2012, IDSN submitted the case to the UN Secretary-General's annual HRC Report on Reprisals in May 2014.

Furthermore, on 23 March 2015, IDSN and fourteen other international and regional NGOs sent a joint [open letter](#) to US Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry, urging the US to take leadership in supporting IDSN's application for UN consultative status. Please read the [IDSN news piece](#).

In 2015, ISHR published a [Practical Guide to the UN Committee on NGOs](#). The Guide was launched both in Geneva and New York where IDSN's Executive Director spoke on the case. For the [Geneva launch](#), the Vice-President of the Human Rights Council gave a speech noting concerns from several stakeholders about the large number of deferrals and perceived lack of transparency in Committees decisions on consultative status of NGOs.

Exclusion and reprisals against Human Rights Defenders

IDSN is concerned that the current working methods of the NGO Committee and in our case, the continued questioning by India, exclude IDSN from freely associating with UN organisations in contrast to the principles of non-discrimination, equality, participation, transparency and accountability, laid out in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 and works against the criteria for NGO participation stipulated therein. This continued and deliberate obstruction of the granting of ECOSOC consultative status to IDSN, on no legitimate grounds whatsoever, amounts to exclusion and reprisal against a civil society organization hindering its legitimate work with the UN.

Links to more information

[Read the detailed note on IDSN's ECOSOC application process](#) with a chronological overview of all questions

[More information about the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association – in relation to IDSN's case](#)

[Joint open letter to US Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry from IDSN and fourteen other international and regional NGOs](#) urging the US to take leadership in supporting IDSN's application for UN consultative status, March 23 2015

[US: Protect freedom of expression at UN for human rights organisation fighting caste-discrimination](#), ISHR news article March 25 2015

[The International Service for Human Rights](#) (ISHR) highlighted IDSN's battle to obtain ECOSOC consultative status, April 4 2014

[European Parliament Resolution on Caste-based Discrimination October 2013](#) (P7_TA(2013)0420)

In 2016, ISHR submitted a [joint open letter](#) signed by 230 NGOs voicing their concern to ECOSOC about restriction of NGO participation in the UN.

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