

## United Nations

In 2016, IDSN continued its close collaboration with members on preparing inputs for human rights mechanisms and participating in relevant UN events.

Dalit rights activists around the world observed the results of many years of advocacy efforts and sharing of country specific and thematic information on caste-based discrimination. Caste discrimination was addressed by several UN experts and by a number of human rights treaty bodies in relation to various thematic human rights issues. The Committees on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, all made recommendations to improve existing legal frameworks to combat caste discrimination for affected countries in Asia, Africa and Europe to meet their international obligations.

One of the absolute highlights from 2016, was the ground-breaking report published by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues on “Minorities and discrimination based on caste and analogous systems of inherited status”. The report stood as a clear outcome of many years of advocacy efforts, pushing for the UN to acknowledge discrimination based on work and descent (i.e. caste-based discrimination) as a serious and cross-cutting human rights issue affecting millions of people in different regions of the world.

### High Level Statements

In 2016, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein, continued to highlight caste as a human rights concern on par with other forms of discrimination. In the [foreword](#) for the Annual Report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein noted caste-based discrimination as one of the key human rights gaps in need of more monitoring reporting and in-depth investigation by the OHCHR.

In a [statement](#) for the 31st session of the Human Rights Council in March, the High Commissioner stated that caste discrimination still stands as a root cause of human rights violations in Nepal ten years after the end of the internal armed conflict.

In May, the High Commissioner proceeded to mention caste during his visit to the Brookings Institute in Washington, where he spoke of equality and justice as essential components for the construction of a peaceful world. A sentiment he repeated in the opening [statement](#) for the Human Rights Council’s 32nd regular session in June.

### UN Highlights in 2016

- **Special Rapporteur on minority issues published a ground breaking report covering the phenomenon of caste-based discrimination around the world.**
- **Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association called attention to the IDSN case at the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council and in his communication to the General Assembly.**
- **Special Rapporteur on slavery published a report on bonded labour, demonstrating the link between caste discrimination and bonded labour practices in a number of countries around the world.**
- **Special Rapporteur on Housing’s visit to India highlighted the need to address caste discrimination.**
- **The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Mr. Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein mentioned caste discrimination in a number of statements and commented on the situation in Nepal.**

---

**“Every individual must be clear in the knowledge that regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, opinions, belief, caste, age or sexual orientation, her equal rights are fully acknowledged.”** UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein, [statement](#)

---

Furthermore, in the 33rd Council session, the High Commissioner presented a [report](#) on the human rights situation in Yemen wherein he drew attention to the Muhamasheen community and their vulnerable position in the country’s ongoing conflict.

In connection with the IDSN General Assembly meeting in Geneva, the IDSN delegation also met with UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore. During the [meeting](#), Dalit leaders gave testimonies about the situation in their respective countries. Among them was Manjula Pradeep, Executive Director of the Indian human rights NGO, Navsarjan, who outlined a number of key issues in the struggle for Dalit rights. These include a high level of violence against Dalits, the ensuing impunity for human rights violations against them, multiple forms of discrimination against Dalit women and limited access for Dalits to resources, development, health and education.

**Special Feature**

## UN Expert's groundbreaking global report on caste discrimination



**“The issue of caste discrimination has touched me since the beginning of my mandate. It is unacceptable that 260 million people are considered inferior. This cannot be tolerated.”**

Special Rapporteur on minority issues Rita Izsák-Ndiaye commenting on the report at a side-event on ‘Minorities and caste-based discrimination’ at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

UN Photo/ Jean-Marc Ferré

The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, published the report ‘Minorities and discrimination based on caste and analogous systems of inherited status’, covering the phenomenon of caste-based discrimination around the world. The report was supported by a number of states at the 31st session Human Rights Council, where it was presented. Ms. Izsák-Ndiaye urged caste-affected countries to take urgent action to combat caste discrimination.

In the report the Special Rapporteur includes a number of recommendations to caste-affected states. She urges them to adopt legislation against caste discrimination; implement existing legal frameworks; conduct awareness-raising campaigns; and urgently develop comprehensive national action plans and budgets to combat caste discrimination.

The Special Rapporteur also notes that “women and girls are particularly vulnerable to caste discrimination, as they suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination owing to both their gender and unprivileged caste status.” Therefore, caste-affected states should take “robust action to eradicate such violations.” They should also promote the UN guidelines to eliminate caste discrimination – as should the UN Human Rights Council.

According to the report, caste discrimination is so embedded in interpersonal and communal relationships that overcoming it will “require not only legal and political responses, but also community-based approaches aimed at changing the mindsets of individuals and the collective conscience of local communities.” The report offers a thorough and systematic analysis of discrimination based on caste and analogous systems, describing it as a global phenomenon and a serious human rights violation infringing upon the basic principles of universal human dignity and equality. It stresses that caste-affected groups suffer extreme exclusion and dehumanization and are often deprived of their most basic rights. Moreover, caste discrimination perpetuates poverty in affected communities.

The report includes definitions and characteristics of caste discrimination, a global overview of caste-affected groups and a review of the international legal framework recognising caste discrimination as a human rights violation. It identifies areas of particular concern such as the right to life; access to justice; political participation; freedom of religion; the right to work; contemporary forms of slavery; the right to housing, water and sanitation, health and education; and humanitarian assistance. On a positive note, the Special Rapporteur also outlines initiatives and good practices addressing caste discrimination – in the UN system, national legislation and government institutions, and civil society.

This Dalit man works in debt bondage in Nepal. In 2016, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Urmila Bhoola, presented her report on “Debt bondage” to the Human Rights Council, finding this type of modern slavery to be a prevalent issue in a number of caste-affected countries including India, Pakistan and Nepal, where the vast majority of bonded laborers are from minority groups such as Dalits. Photo by: Jakob Carlsen.

## UN report on caste discrimination

The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Ms. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, published a ground breaking [report](#) covering caste-based discrimination around the world (see box on the previous page). The report was supported by a number of states at the 31st session of the Human Rights Council.

**“I hope that my report will be used as an advocacy tool in supporting the efforts of caste-affected communities and others who are tirelessly working to relegate caste discrimination to history.”** Special Rapporteur on minority issues Rita Izsák-Ndiaye’s opening [statement](#) HRC 31

The UN report is the first of its kind, focusing on caste-systems in relation to minority issues and documenting the global nature of caste-based discrimination, drawing on cases from South Asia, different parts of Africa, Middle East and Europe, and serves as a great tool for international advocacy.

Ahead of the session IDSN and Human Rights Watch submitted a written [statement](#) with recommendations for states and UN agencies. During the event itself Minority Rights Group (MRG) delivered an oral [statement](#) on behalf of IDSN, MRG and the International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and engaged in a number of meetings with state delegates and UN officials, including the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. IDSN also issued a [news story](#) on the release.

Inspired by the report on minorities and discrimination based on caste the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights hosted a side event under the same theme in Geneva on 16 March. The global nature of the issue was demonstrated by the selection of panelists at the event – apart from the Special Rapporteur herself, there were speakers from Nepal, Mauritania and the UK, and an expert on Yemen. IDSN issued a [report](#) on this event.

## UN Special Procedures

Throughout the year IDSN continued providing information and upholding a close dialogue with UN Special Procedures mandate holders, working under the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, by sharing information in consultations and meetings, submitting written input ahead of country visits and responding to questionnaires

## Forum on Minority Issues

### Caste discrimination in disaster relief highlighted at the UN

Speaking at the UN Forum on Minority Issues in November 2016 IDSN members delivered statements on how to consider caste in disaster response and recovery at the National level.

“South Asia region is one of the most disaster prone regions in the world, with over 215 million Dalits living there who are structurally discriminated and excluded in all aspects including the response, aid and rehabilitation process following humanitarian crisis,” said Deepak Nikarhil from the NCDHR, also representing ADRF and IDSN.

Bhakta Bishwakarma from the Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO) also spoke saying, “Disaster policies and programs have not been inclusive and sensitive enough towards the most marginalized - Dalit, women, children, people with disabilities, senior citizens etc. Despite a number of intervention by the government, the tangible changes have not been seen even after one and half year of the devastation. People are still waiting for sustainable recovery.”

for thematic reports. Furthermore, IDSN submitted a list of points for consideration for the Annual Meeting of Special Procedures, encouraging mandate holders to note recent UN initiatives addressing caste-based discrimination, and consider a joint initiative to address the issue.

After the Special Rapporteur on minority issues published her report on caste, IDSN and its members worked to utilise her recommendations and share the findings of her report. The report was presented to the Human Rights Council in March and has inspired a number of other mandates within the Special Procedures branch to consider caste in their submissions. The Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice included a direct reference to the report in their report on health and safety to the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council as did the Special Rapporteur on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.



In June, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Urmila Bhoola, presented her [report](#) on “Debt bondage” to the Human Rights Council. IDSN contributed to the report by submitting comprehensive written input with contributions from members in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Dalit Solidarity Networks in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In addition, DSN-UK collaborated with the Tamil Nadu based organisation Read on a [written submission](#) on Sumangali debt bondage schemes in India.

The final report presented debt bondage as a prevalent issue in a number of caste-affected countries including India, Pakistan and Nepal in various industries from textile mills to mining, construction and agriculture, where the vast majority of bonded laborers are from minority groups such as scheduled castes and Dalits.

Following the release of her report the Rapporteur made a [video statement](#) wherein she mentioned how caste affected groups along with other marginalised groups are disproportionately exposed to debt bondage schemes.

In April, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Lailani Farah, went on a country visit to India. Following her visit the UN expert [stated](#) that India needs legislation to combat all forms of housing discrimination against any individual or groups, and expressed concern about the continued discrimination against Dalits, affecting their access to housing.

The Special Rapporteur on minority issues went on a visit to Sri Lanka in October. In her end of mission [statement](#) she

urged the government to take concrete steps to protect Sri Lanka’s minorities. She noted that there were “remaining challenges” within Tamil and Muslim communities, including return of occupied land, missing persons, demilitarisation, release of security-related detainees, poverty, violence and discrimination against women, and caste-based discrimination.

In May, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights conducted a country visit to Mauritania and [reported](#) on continued caste-based exclusion of the Haratine community, from economic and social life.

In collaboration with Navsarjan Trust and People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), IDSN submitted a letter of concern to the Special Rapporteurs on minority issues, contemporary forms of racism and on torture and other cruel and inhumane or degrading treatment and punishment. The letter raised recent cases of violence against Dalits in Una, Gujarat. The case is explained in detail in the India chapter of this report. The letter contained recommendations for the Rapporteurs to take steps to address the case with the Government of India.

In total eight mandate holders addressed the issue of caste-based discrimination in their reports in 2016.

### **Forum on Minority Issues**

The 9th session of the Forum on Minority Issues took place in November 2016, under the theme “Minorities in situations of humanitarian crisis”.

## Ambedkar & UN

### Ambedkar commemorated at UN event

Prominent UN officials participated in a UN event in April to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of India's first minister of law, father of the Indian constitution and prominent Dalit rights activist, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The event, hosted by the Permanent Mission of India, was held in New York.

United Nations Development Programme Administrator and Chair of the United Nations Development Group, Helen Clarke, delivered a key note speech commemorating the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar. She stated that the visions and ideals of Dr. Ambedkar are as relevant today as when the Indian constitution was signed into law, noting that, "Reducing discrimination and exclusion in all its forms is at the very heart of the new Global Development Goals."

The event was marked by a number of Indian embassies around the world including the UK, Denmark, Guatemala, Indonesia and Kenya.

The thematic focus of the forum was inspired by the Rapporteurs latest report to the General Assembly, the theme of which she announced at the OHCHR sponsored side-event on minorities and caste discrimination for the 31st Human Rights Council session. The side-event included presentations on the obstacles caste-affected groups are experiencing in connection with humanitarian relief in Nepal and Yemen, where people who are considered to belong to "lower castes" are denied access to humanitarian aid. The report was released in August and contained information on Dalits in South Asia and the Muhamesheen community in Yemen, who are generally more exposed to war and disaster and are less likely to receive humanitarian aid.

IDSN members Deepak Nikarhil, from the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, Bhakta Bishwakarma from Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organisation and Purbhu Lal Satyani from the Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network, all delivered [statements](#) with inputs for the draft recommendations on how to consider caste in disaster response and recovery at the national level.

#### Treaty Bodies

Senegal, Pakistan, Nepal, UK, Bangladesh, Japan all received recommendations to address caste based discrimination from UN Treaty Bodies in 2016.

In January, the Committee on the Rights of the Child made

[recommendations](#) to Senegal to adopt a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discrimination against all groups including children belonging to lower castes. In June 2016, the Committee reviewed Nepal and recommended the State Party to conduct an evaluation of their National Plan of Action for Children with special attention to the children in vulnerable situations, including Dalits.

The United Kingdom and Pakistan were reviewed by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination during its 90th session in August. Prior to both reviews joint submissions were made to the Committee.

IDSN and the Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network submitted joint input for the list of themes and an alternative [report](#) on caste discrimination in Pakistan highlighting the need for disaggregated data, as well as the issue of forced marriage and bonded labour affecting scheduled castes in Pakistan. The Committee addressed all the issues in their [concluding observations](#) and made strong recommendations, recalling the General Recommendation 29 on discrimination based on work and descent and urged Pakistan to take immediate action to end forced conversion and forced marriage of Dalit women, and to prosecute and punish the abductors with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime. The Committee further requested the State party to include information on the situation of Dalits in the country, including relevant statistical data, in its next periodic report.

IDSN and DSN-UK also jointly issued an alternative [report](#) recommending the UK Government to activate the caste clause in the 2010 Equality Act and to formulate a national strategy to eliminate discrimination against descent-based groups in accordance with the CERD General Recommendation 29. In their [concluding observations](#), the Committee expressed concern that several provisions of the Equality Act 2010 had not been brought into legal effect, including the clause on caste-based discrimination. They also recommended the State Party to invoke this clause, prohibiting caste discrimination by law, and ensure access to effective remedies for victims of caste discrimination.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and Girls (CEDAW) examined Japan's record on women's rights during its 63rd session in February. The [concluding observations](#) included a number of observations about caste discrimination against Buraku women in Japan and highlighted low literacy levels, discrimination in the employment sector and underrepresentation of Buraku women in decision making positions. The Committee expressed its concern over the continued discrimination of this group and called on the Government to vigorously pursue efforts aimed at eliminating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by ethnic minority women including Buraku women.

An IDS-N team participated in the 65th session of the Committee on Discrimination Against Women in November, for the examination of Bangladesh and their adherence to their obligations to protect women from discrimination.

IDS-N and BDERM submitted a joint [alternative report](#) to the Committee ahead of the review and the IDS-N team participated in an informal consultation in November. Afsana Amin (BDERM) gave an [oral statement](#) to Committee members on discrimination against Dalit women in Bangladesh, emphasising the need to accelerate the enactment of the proposed Anti-discrimination Act, collect disaggregated data on gender and caste, prioritise political participation and ensure access to health for Dalit Women.

During the constructive dialogue with the Bangladesh state delegation the Committee posed a number of questions on Dalit women, demanding a concrete timeline for passing the Anti-Discrimination law to protect the rights of Dalits. Caste was mentioned in the [Concluding Observations](#), which noted the lacking implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Bill and expressed concern over discrimination against Dalit women in the form of abductions, sexual harassment, rape, and lack of access to public services and resources. The Committee recommended that Bangladesh collect data disaggregated by caste in all areas under the convention.

In November, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held a consultation with Civil Society. The purpose of the consultation was to explore new ways for the Committee to engage with Civil Society Organisations and collaborate to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. In collaboration with DSN-UK and Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization, IDS-N jointly prepared a [written response](#) focusing on caste discrimination for the examination of Nepal and United Kingdom.

The issue of caste discrimination was raised by the panelists including Committee members. Chairperson Anastacia Crickley and Claire Thomas from Minority Rights Group noted the challenges in addressing discrimination against Dalits in relation to the Sustainable Development Agenda. Deepak Nikarhil from the National Campaign on Human Rights, delivered a statement on the global nature of caste-based discrimination. While acknowledging the importance of CERD General Recommendation 29, Nikarhil called for a greater recognition of caste as an important component in racial discrimination around the world. In response to the question - "how can CERD improve collaboration with civil society", Bhakta Bishwakarma from the Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO) said that the Government's failure to deliver a state report is a barrier for collaboration between the Committee and Civil Society.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, the process of formulating indicators to measure the implementation of the SDGs over the next 15 years was continued by the Inter Agency Group of Experts. Although the Development Goals are focused on reducing inequality and eliminating discriminatory practices, the targets and international indicators fail to address or mention discrimination based on work and descent. In her thematic report on discrimination based on caste the Special Rapporteur on minority issues also recommended states to include caste specific indicators in their implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Caste systems and discrimination based on caste is a global issue and a root cause for many of the goals and challenges that the international community has agreed to eliminate by 2030. IDS-N and its members will continue to campaign for caste to be considered in the implementation of the UN Goals.

IDS-N submitted input for a [paper](#) published by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) on "Human Rights in the Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Section 4.3 of the paper on "Measuring discrimination" refers to the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, encouraging states to consider including caste-specific indicators.

---

**"Development of specific indicators and data collection initiatives should be considered when defining additional national indicators and approaches to supplement the global [Sustainable Development] framework. Such an approach could imply, for example, the development of indicators to address caste-based discrimination."** Danish Institute for Human Rights on "Human Rights in the Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

---

IDS-N produced a [brief](#) with recommendations for the implementation of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was shared with relevant stakeholders during the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council and in connection with the Annual full day thematic discussion on the human rights of women.

In the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development in July, the President of the 10th cycle of the UN Human Rights Council, Choi Kyonglim, included concerns regarding caste discrimination in his inputs to the Forum which follows up the 2030 agenda. By doing so, the President recommended governments around the world to include caste issues in their work to implement

Cows were at the centre of a case of atrocities against Dalits taken up by the European Parliament in 2016. The case covered an incident in Una, Gujarat where a group of Dalits were beaten and publicly humiliated by dominant caste 'cow vigilantes' for skinning a dead cow. Photo by Jakob Carlsen

the Sustainable Development Goals. Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) chair Paul Divakar, and co-chair Durga Sob, spoke on the panel at the UN High Level Political Forum official side event 'Leave No One Behind: Ensuring Inclusion of the most marginalised and socially excluded communities in SDGs'. The event was not organised by IDSN but brought important attention to the need for SDG indicators to address caste-based discrimination specifically.

IDSN and the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) also issued a joint [press release](#) in connection with the 4th Global Women Deliver Conference held in Copenhagen in May, calling on participants to address discrimination against caste affected groups and indigenous people. In relation to the implementation of the SDGs, IDSN noted that Dalit and indigenous women often face limited or no access to health care due to poverty and discrimination which also affected their access to education and other key areas of the 2030 Development Agenda.

## ECOSOC Application

The Committee on NGOs once again posed questions to IDSN, thereby deferring the IDSN application for consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the 9th year in a row. This makes it the longest pending application before the Committee. Ahead of the Committee session in June, IDSN participated in a [joint call](#) by 230 NGOs, led by the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), expressing concern about the long-term practice of some States to block UN accreditation for NGOs. Now former IDSN Executive Director, Rikke Nöhrhnd, was cited in an ISHR [press statement](#) wherein she noted the importance of NGOs being granted access to participate in UN discussions.

The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, Maina Kiai, mentioned the IDSN case in a [commentary](#) on the closing civic space reflected in the work of the UN Committee on NGOs. The Rapporteur commented on the tendency by some governments to block civil society interaction with UN bodies and mechanisms and highlighted the IDSN case as being "especially troubling".

The Rapporteur proceeded to raise the IDSN case following his presentation to the Human Rights Council and interactive debate with states at the 32nd Council session, where he stated that the procedure of repeating questions was used to "thwart IDSN from getting consultative status". The Special Rapporteur also mentioned the IDSN case in his annual thematic [report](#) to the Human Rights Council. The report described caste-based systems in South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region as "illustrative of cultural fundamentalism that violates the rights of those considered to be of inferior status". The IDSN case was highlighted in relation to restrictions put on Dalit activists at the multilateral level, where India is blocking accreditation.

## European Union

In 2016, IDSN continued to make inputs for and participate in meetings with EU institutions including representatives from the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and Members of the European Parliament (EP). Throughout the year, caste discrimination was featured in important EU initiatives and resolutions.

IDSN recommendations on relevant Interactive Dialogues at UN Human Rights Council sessions and the report by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues were shared broadly following the 31st regular session of the UN Human Rights Council. IDSN also shared its Alternative Report for the review of Bangladesh by the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), met on several occasions with MEPs to lobby and discuss ways forward for the above initiatives and shared substantive updates and briefings with a number of MEPs including information on recent attacks on young Dalits in Gujarat, India, in an effort to streamline caste into EU policies.

In June, a cross party group of 22 members of the European Parliament submitted a [letter](#) to the High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, calling on the European Union to step up their efforts to address caste discrimination at the multilateral level and in their dialogue with caste-affected states. The letter contains a number of recommendations, including the development and implementation of EU guidance on caste discrimination. It also urges the High Representative to take note of the upcoming UN Guidance Tool on Discrimination Based on Work and Descent and calls on the EU to "use every opportunity to express its grave concern over caste discrimination and seek to support states' implementation of these UN recommendations."

---

**"At a time when the space for civil society is shrinking in many countries, it is crucial that the EU acts to promote human rights. There are so many areas where the EU can make a huge difference to millions of people affected by caste discrimination, including political and human rights dialogues, development assistance and humanitarian aid."**

Louis Michel, Member of the European Parliament

**"We are convinced that the EU could and should do a lot more to address caste discrimination in words as well as in action, and we urge the High Representative to be at the forefront of EU efforts to eradicate it."**

Heidi Hautala, Member of the European Parliament

---



Mogherini responded to the letter positively, though her [response](#) did not provide a clear reply as to how the EU is going to actively ensure visibility of caste discrimination in its human rights agenda.

---

**“The Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies now take into account discrimination based on caste. The EU pays particular attention to discrimination based on caste in the analysis of the human rights situations in individual partner countries. These analyses also take into account the complexities of multiple or intersectional discrimination and are essential to the human rights and policy dialogues conducted with our partner countries, as well as in identifying and implementing our cooperation activities.”**

Frederica Mogherini, High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission

---

On several occasions throughout the year, IDSN participated in EU human rights or civil society events, and set up meetings with MEPs and EU officials, and Dalit human rights activists.

Caste discrimination was raised in several discussion fora at the EU-Civil Society Conference in Brussels in March, attended by more than 800 participants. IDSN board member, Henri Tiphagne, Director of Peoples

Watch-India, addressed the audience at the closing session with a strongly worded statement on the rapidly shrinking democratic space in India and ingrained caste discrimination. He challenged the EU to support human rights defenders more effectively and advance its policy dialogue with India.

Caste was noted in connection with the challenges faced by the world leaders in relation to the implementation of the UN 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, in a [Declaration](#) by Federica Mogherini on behalf of the European Union on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

In September, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) issued a Global Call for Action 2016 with “Lot 4: support to the rights of persons belonging to minorities and persons affected by caste-based discrimination”. This specific lot comes following many year of IDSN engagement with EU institutions. The funding allocated for this lot is 3.58 million EURO. The grants from Lot 4 should enable a number of civil society organisations to address caste related human rights issues and development challenges in caste-affected countries, internationally and regionally. IDSN submitted a proposal with two co-applicants from Pakistan and India, respectively. The title of the application is “Framing the future for non-discrimination; tackling caste discrimination with universal tools and local support”.

**EP Human Rights Report**

## European Parliament report calls for EU policy on caste discrimination

In its 2016 “Report on the Annual Report on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union’s policy on the matter” the European Parliament (EP) raises deep concern over grave violations of Dalit human rights. The report calls for an EU policy development on caste discrimination.

**The report, released by the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs, states that the European Parliament is “deeply concerned by the alarming rate of caste-based violent attacks on Dalits and of institutionalised discrimination with impunity,” and condemns, “continuing human rights violations committed against people suffering from caste hierarchies and caste-based discrimination, including the denial of equality and of access to the legal system and to employment, and the continued segregation and caste-induced barriers to the achievement of basic human rights and development.”**

**The report furthermore calls on the EU institutions to address caste discrimination on par with other causes of discrimination and “reiterates its call for an EU policy development on caste discrimination.”**

On 16 September, Rikke Nöhrind participated in the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) regular meeting and a meeting between Stavros Lambrinidis from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and HRDN members.

Later in September, an IDSN delegation participated in a workshop organised by the European External Action Service in preparation for a new EU anti-discrimination handbook for which IDSN had also submitted written input. IDSN board members Renu Sijapati (FEDO) and Paul Divakar (NCDHR) participated alongside Director Rikke Nöhrind in a series of meetings with EEAS staff, EIDHR officials, and MEP assistants.

The ‘[Annual Report](#)’ on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union’s policy on the matter’, released by the European Parliament in December, contained twice as many references to caste discrimination as in previous years and called for an EU policy on the issue.

## Communication and networking

In 2016 the engagement with IDSN communication channels including the website, newsletter and social media continued to rise. IDSN issued several press statements, reports, analysis and news articles. IDSN also continued to engage with press and increasing coverage of the issue of caste in the media is witnessed throughout the network. Hundreds of new entries to the IDSN documentation database were also added and categorised.

### Newsletter, social media and the IDSN website

The IDSN newsletter continues to be the only newsletter capturing core developments on caste-based discrimination at a global level including UN and EU action on this issue. In 2016, the total number of subscribers to the IDSN newsletter grew by about 6% to nearly 1500 subscribers. Subscribers include UN and EU officials, politicians, and activists.

On average, three IDSN news articles were published per month and these articles, as well as reports and stories gathered from members, associates and media coverage, were published in the newsletters. IDSN members and associates also use the newsletter to stay updated on developments and draw inspiration from the struggle to end caste discrimination nationally, regionally and globally.

The IDSN website continues to be the leading global resource on caste-based discrimination with a particularly strong user base coming from Dalit rights organisations and activists, universities and other organisations. In 2016, the IDSN website had 43,000 unique visitors and 100,000 pageviews. This is a rise of 21% in unique visitors compared to 2015 and an 8% rise in pageviews. There were 56,000 visits to the IDSN website, rising 19% compared to last year.

The website reaches a wide global audience. In 2016, the top ten countries visiting the site were India, United States, United Kingdom, Denmark, Nepal, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Australia and Pakistan. The same global spread in users is seen on the IDSN Facebook page.

IDSN’s social media channels continue to form a base for both internal and external communications with IDSN members and international associates, interacting with IDSN regularly via social media and cross promoting news and documentation. IDSN’s Facebook fans rose by 25% to 8412 in 2016 and followers on Twitter increased by 48% to more than 1300 followers with UN officials including Special Rapporteurs, prominent journalists and opinion makers among the new followers.

On IDSN’s YouTube channel, views of IDSN’s online introductory video on Dalit women rose by 85% to 94,700 views and views of the IDSN intro video on caste discrimination (including translated version) rose by 61% to