

CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION - EU AND UN HIGHLIGHTS

EUROPEAN UNION

European Parliament

- 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. [Read the full text of the resolution.](#)
- 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. [Link to IDSN news story](#)
- EIDHR instruments 2005-2006 and 2007-2011 contain references to caste-based discrimination; Dalit organisations are eligible to some calls for proposals and funding is granted for projects in Nepal and India.

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 (Mr. Paul Divakar and Ms. Manjula

- Pradeep from India, and Mr. Bhakta Bishwakarma from Nepal) and IDSN Coordinator Rikke Nöhrind.
- 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.

UNITED NATIONS

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

- In the OHCHR Strategic Management Plan 2010-2011 caste-based discrimination is mentioned as a thematic priority in the global struggle against discrimination and impunity.
- In October 2009, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issues an opinion piece [“Tearing down the wall of caste”](#) calling for eradication of the “shameful concept” of caste and caste-based discrimination, and for the endorsement of the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent in the Human Rights Council.
- In September 2009, the OHCHR expresses its full support to the struggle against caste discrimination as a high priority for the office.

UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

- A [study on discrimination based on work and descent](#) is undertaken by the former UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights as the first study to comprehensively address the nature, magnitude and global scope of caste-based discrimination. After the preparation of preliminary reports from 2000 and onwards, the Commission on Human Rights appoints two Special Rapporteurs to undertake a comprehensive study in 2005.
- At its 10th session in March 2009, the Human Rights Council decides to publish the completed and submitted reports of the former UN Sub-Commission (decision A/HRC/10/117).
- The [final report on discrimination based on work and descent](#), including a set of draft UN Principles and Guidelines formulated to address this form of discrimination, is published by the Human Rights Council in May 2009 (A/HRC/11/CRP.3).

Draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent

- Based on existing international human rights principles and obligations, the draft UN Principles and Guidelines propose general and special measures to be taken by multiple stakeholders to prevent and address this massive and systematic human rights problem affecting the lives of an estimated 260 million people globally.
- When endorsed by the Human Rights Council, the instrument will constitute a strong tool to encourage specific anti-discrimination legislation and
- relevant policy measures for governments and their agencies, UN and other international agencies, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. [Download the full PDF version published by IDSN](#)

UN Special Procedures

- The issue of caste discrimination is increasingly addressed by the UN Special Procedures in annual reports, thematic studies, mission reports and communications by several mandates, including: Racism, Slavery, Minority Issues, Adequate Housing, Right to Food, Education, Human Rights Defenders, Torture, Violence against Women, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and Water and Sanitation. See a comprehensive list of [references to caste discrimination by UN Special Procedures \(2005-2010\)](#)
- Two UN experts have explicitly called for further consideration of the draft UN Principles and Guidelines in the UN. At the 64th session of the UN General Assembly (October 2009) the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Mr. Githu Muigai, recommended states to “engage in substantive discussions on this topic” and called on states to take action on the draft UN Principles and Guidelines. At the 13th session of the Human Rights Council (March 2010) the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Ms. Gay McDougall, welcomed and urged further discussions on the draft UN Principles and Guidelines in her annual report.

Universal Periodic Review

- Several references to caste-based discrimination have been raised by a number of states in reviews of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Download a comprehensive overview of [references to caste discrimination in UPR reviews of affected countries \(2008-2009\)](#)
- Based on NGO reports submitted by IDSN in association with national partners, the stakeholders' reports prepared by the OHCHR on these countries also contain extensive references to caste-based discrimination. See a list of [NGO submissions on caste discrimination \(India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh\)](#).

UN treaty bodies

- UN treaty bodies have extensively addressed the issue of caste discrimination in reviews of caste-affected countries and in some general recommendations, as shown in the references below. See a comprehensive list of UN treaty body recommendations and observations according to countries (1996-2010) [here](#), and find links to NGO reports on caste discrimination [here](#).

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

- CERD General Recommendation No. 29 on descent-based discrimination (2002) and CERD General Recommendation No. 32 on special measures (2009)
- India (2007, 1996), Pakistan (2009), Nepal (2004, 2001), Japan (2001, 2010), Yemen (2006), Nigeria (2005), Mauritania (2004), Madagascar (2004), United Kingdom (2003), Mali (2002), Senegal (2002), Bangladesh (2001), Chad (2009)

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)

- CESCR General Comment No. 20 on non-discrimination (2009)
- India (2008), Nepal (2008, 2001), Japan (2001)

UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

- India (2007, 2000), Nepal (2004), Japan (2009)

UN Committee Against Torture (CAT)

- Nepal (2005)

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Bangladesh (2009), Mauritania (2009), Nepal (2005), India (2004, 2000), Pakistan (2003), Japan (2004)

UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR)

- India (2000)