



Member of the European Parliament

29 March 2019

Dear High Representative,

We write to express our concern that the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), an international NGO focusing on caste-based discrimination and other forms of discrimination based on work and descent, has now the longest pending application for UN Consultative Status accreditation. Specifically, we urge you to instruct the European External Action Service, in coordination with EU member states, to actively support IDSN's accreditation when it is considered once again in May 2019

As you are aware, the European Parliament has repeatedly voiced its concern with the serious human rights violations and persistent development challenges linked to caste discrimination. At least 260 million people around the globe face appalling and dehumanising discrimination based on caste and similar systems of inherited status. IDSN is a key actor in bringing the plight of Dalits, suffering from caste discrimination worldwide, to the attention of the UN as well as at the EU level. We therefore find it unacceptable that the organisation's application has now been unjustly deferred on spurious and repetitive grounds by the UN NGO Committee for over 10 years. Blocking accreditation is a clear attempt to silence the voices of the Dalit community on the international stage.

We understand that IDSN first submitted its application for general consultative status with ECOSOC to the Committee in May 2007. Since then, the application has been continuously deferred. From 2008 to date IDSN has received 90 written questions, most recently in January 2019, to which the organisation has always responded in full and in good faith.<sup>1</sup> All written questions have been raised by one member of the Committee, India. The UN's ex-Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly, Maina Kiai, has openly criticised the NGO Committee's blocking of IDSN's application on many occasions, calling it 'clearly unacceptable, wrong and unfair,' and using it as an example of a particularly troubling case of the silencing of human rights organisations that expose human rights abuses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, compilation of questions received since 2007: [<https://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Note-on-IDSN-ECOSOC-application-January2019-2.pdf>]

<sup>2</sup> See, letter of Mr. Maina Kiai to the Committee on NGOs, of 20 May 2016: [[https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/33rd/public\\_-\\_OL\\_OTH\\_20.05.16\\_\(16.2016\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/33rd/public_-_OL_OTH_20.05.16_(16.2016).pdf)].

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. Given the EU's stated support for civil society and commitment to address caste discrimination, it is imperative that the EU stands behind organisations such as IDSN and proactively supports their access to multilateral fora.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter and we look forward to hearing what action the EU will take in advance of the UN NGO Committee's next consideration of IDSN's UN Consultative Status accreditation.

Yours,

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