

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Head of Division

ASIAPAC Asia and the Pacific

ASIAPAC.1 *Regional Affairs and South Asia*

Brussels, 3 June 2020

[eeas.asiapac.1\(2020\)](mailto:eeas.asiapac.1(2020))

Meena Varma
Executive Director
International Dalit Solidarity
Network
euadviser@idsn.org

Subject: Response to your email of 28 April 2020

Dear Ms. Meena Varma,

Thank you very much for your letter of 28 April on behalf of International Dalit Solidarity Network calling attention to the plight of Dalits and others affected by caste-discrimination and your urgings for the EU to take a number of actions to combat discrimination based on caste. High Representative Josep Borrell has asked me to reply on his behalf.


Let me assure you of the EU's firm and unwavering commitment to the combatting of discrimination on any grounds. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, which we expect to be adopted before the end of May, foresees the stepping up on actions to combat all forms of discrimination on any grounds. Such action will focus on inequalities by promoting non-discriminatory access to social services, including quality and affordable healthcare and education as well to political and public participation. In our implementation of the Action plan, we will be guided by the all the relevant EU Human Rights Guidelines, including the Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action adopted in 2019. These Guidelines have clear references to caste discrimination. The Action Plan also foresees the promotion of human rights due diligence in the supply chain and in that way enhancing our actions in the context of the UN guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Let me also comment on the IDSN's application to an ECOSOC consultative status. The EU is fully aware of the repeated and unjustified deferrals of IDSN by the UN NGO Committee, due to the opposition of one member state in the Committee. The EU has publicly expressed its concern regarding both the ill-functioning NGO Committee in general and the new deferral of IDSN during the last session of the Committee in January 2020.

The EU itself is not a member of the UN NGO Committee, although two EU Member States (Greece and Estonia) are.

Both in our bilateral and multilateral relations we value highly the close contacts with, and the information coming from, civil society organisations such as yours. In our work ahead, we will pay close attention to the highly pertinent urgings of your letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Caroline VINOT