

Background note for European Parliament action on caste-based discrimination

An EP resolution calling upon the Council and the EEAS to adopt and implement an EU policy for the elimination of caste-based discrimination is a desirable and justified aim. This, however, may require some preliminary steps.

In the context of the EP hearing on caste discrimination in South Asia scheduled for 28th February 2011, the following proposals may be included in the concluding remarks:

- Include in the EP resolution for the 16th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) a reference to caste -based discrimination and a recommendation to move forward an international initiative to address this form of discrimination, also known as discrimination based on work and descent. In particular, the EP should support initiatives to ensure the adoption and promotion by the HRC of the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent ¹
- Request the delegation of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament for the 16th session of the HRC to discuss and consider the issue of caste discrimination in the context of the work of the Human Rights Council. This would include pushing for a systematic follow-up to UPR (Universal Periodic Review) conclusions of all caste-affected countries and to ensure that caste-related human rights issues which were not addressed in the first UPR cycle are included in the second cycle. ²
- A call for immediate action by the Subcommittee on Human Rights to examine and make suggestions to the EEAS Delegations' country strategy papers and action plans on caste-based discrimination for caste-affected countries.
- Request the Parliament to ensure follow-up on the progress made by the European Commission and the European Council on the issues specified in resolution B6-0021/2007[1] of the European Parliament on the human rights situation of Dalits in India, taking due note of recent UN treaty body recommendations, UPR reports and recommendations of UN Special Procedures
- **Call to the Committee on Development** for an own initiative report on caste discrimination taking into consideration existing development co-operation programmes; look into the need for policy instruments and procedures of the European Union to address caste based discrimination in development programming; consider means for inclusion of the topic of caste-based discrimination

¹ The draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent <http://idsn.org/international-advocacy/un/un-principles-guidelines/>

² A side-event on discrimination based on work and descent, chaired by the Gay McDougall, Independent Expert on Minority Issues, will take place on 16th March. In addition, representatives from the International IDSN will be pleased to meet with the delegation for further discussions.

into the overall EU efforts to fighting discrimination (including in the OHCHR-EU joint initiative on the same); address the role of the EU in supporting international initiatives to address caste-based discrimination, including the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Decent.

- Make sure that the main thrust of the resolution of the Parliament on human rights and environmental standards in trade agreements is also implemented in the EU-India Trade Agreement, in order to ensure that the effects of trade on the position on Dalits and other castes considered to be low, are positive and will certainly not violate their human rights.

Call to Committees and Delegations, in particular the Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET), the Committee on Development (DEVE), the Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI), the Delegation for relations with the countries of South Asia and the Delegation for relations with India:

- To ensure that all relevant activities and communications by the European Parliament address the issue of caste-based discrimination, including in the Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET), the Development Committee (DEVE), the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), the Delegation for relations with the countries of South Asia and the Delegation for relations with India, as well as all other activities and communications related to the promotion of democracy, human rights and development in caste-affected countries.
- To include the topic of caste discrimination and measures to eliminate this form of discrimination in exchange of views with parliamentary counterparts and government officials from caste affected countries
- To meet with representatives from caste-affected communities during every parliamentary visit to caste-affected countries.

Call on the EP

- To consider the option for Parliament to call for a declaration by the High Representative of the European External Action, Ms Ashton, (previously termed Declaration by Council) on the subject by a plenary decision calling for EU action to ensure the adoption by the HRC of the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent³

³ Draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent
<http://idsn.org/international-advocacy/un/un-principles-guidelines/>