

## **Overview for NGOs of the Second session of the Human Rights Council 18 September – 6 October 2006**

### **Opening**

✓ The second session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) was formally opened on 18 September 2006 by a message from the UN Secretary-General (SG) delivered by the High Commissioner (HC).

### **Update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

✓ On the first day, and as a new feature developed by the HRC at its 1<sup>st</sup> session (Decision 1/105), the HC presented an update on her activities and on issues of current concern. The ensuing interactive dialogue, which included the participation of NGOs (as per precedent created during the HRC's first session) was constructive and welcomed by a number of delegations.

✓ Later in the session, the HC introduced a certain number of reports which led to a general debate similar to those held in the Commission on Human Rights addressing a broad range of issues, including the geographic distribution of OHCHR staff, and OHCHR's country engagements in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala, OPT and Uganda. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the HC's report on incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance following the HRC decision 1/107.

### **Interactive dialogues (ID) with mandate-holders**

✓ The HRC "inherited" all the reports submitted to CHR62 for consideration at its 2<sup>nd</sup> session, including those by special procedures. The HRC thus held an interactive dialogue with almost all thematic and country procedures<sup>1</sup>. The speaking time limit for comments and questions was 2 minutes without distinction between members and observers, including NGOs & NHRIs. This was a significant new element in the Council's working methods as NGOs and NHRIs had never been permitted to participate directly in interactive dialogues in the former Commission.

✓ The IDs with mandate-holders were generally constructive and addressed substantive issues on various aspects, such as, internally displaced persons; minorities, freedom of expression; enforced disappearances; racism; violence against women; terrorism; right to food, health; sale of children and the joint report on Guantanamo Bay. Country-specific situations were also addressed and attention was given to the situation in Sri Lanka, the Sudan, the OPT, and the joint report on Lebanon/Israel.

### **Participation of NGOs**

✓ A total of 154 NGOs participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> HRC session (exactly the same number as at the 1<sup>st</sup> HRC session), for a total of 703 representatives (an increase of almost 25% compared to the previous session).

✓ NGOs delivered a total of 152 oral statements (compared to a total of 58 oral statements at HRC1), and spoke for approximately 8.5% of the session's total speaking time (compared to the President, 11.7%; special procedure mandate-holders, 25.4%; Member States 29.6%; Observer States 17.4%). Out of the 152 statements, 100 were individual and 52 joint. Half of the NGOs present took the floor at least once during the session.

✓ NGOs organised 55 parallel events, of which 34 thematic and 21 country-specific.

✓ The participation of NGOs in IDs with mandate-holders, as well with the HC, was a welcome innovation compared to the practices observed by the former CHR. Nonetheless, the distinctions made between country-specific and thematic reports, and the application of different modalities to each, proved problematic. It was also noted that during several of the general debates held, NGOs statements referring to specific country situations were subjected to interruptions and points of order by concerned countries.

### **Omnibus resolution => generic text**

✓ Prior to the second session, a number of preparatory meetings were convened by the President whereby the proposal to adopt an omnibus resolution was made. This initiative ultimately failed, and a generic text (decision

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<sup>1</sup> / Only the SR on the DRC and the SR on toxic wastes could not attend the session.

2/102) was adopted instead, and which requests “*The Secretary-General and the High-Commissioner for Human Rights to continue with the fulfilment of their activities, in accordance with all previous decisions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and to update the relevant reports and studies*”.

✓ The adoption of this generic text, read in conjunction with decisions 102 and 105 adopted by the Council back in June, implies that all reports from all mandate-holders, as well as reports from the HC/SG/OHCHR are expected to be considered at the 4th session of the Council which will take place from 12 March to 6 April 2007.

### **Outcome of the session**

✓ Due to the collapse of the proposed omnibus resolution, delegations submitted 44 draft decisions – all available on the HRC extranet.

✓ Given the limited time available at the end of the session, the President pressed for the Council to defer all draft decisions to the third HRC session, to be held from 27 November to 8 December 2006, and to consequently adjourn the second session. The Council adopted the motion without a vote. Furthermore, the Council adopted a decision to make public the situation of Kyrgyzstan under the 1503 (2/101); the generic text (2/102), and the decision to include in the programme of work (decision 1/105) an item entitled “Follow-up to HRC decisions” (2/103) – all attached.

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**Note:** \* Copies of oral statements made during HRC2 may be found on the HRC extranet (<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/form.htm>).

\* Copies of reports and documentation submitted to HRC2 may be found under the HRC2 webpage under “Documentation”: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/2session/documentation.htm>.

\* A webcast archive of the session may also be found under: <http://www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/>;

\* Final HRC2 statistical data will be made available on the HRC website in due course.