

**NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE
PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ICC)**

**ROOM XVIII, PALAIS DES NATIONS
GENEVA, 21-23 MARCH 2007**

Agenda item 9(b)
*Participation of regional coordinating committees
in the Human Rights Council*

Discussion Paper

1. Issues

- a. Do regional coordinating committees have the right to full participation (including independent speaking rights) before the Human Rights Council?**
- b. If yes, what should be the terms and parameters of this participation?**

2. Background

2.1 The Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, created on 15 March 2006 by United Nations Member States to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. The Council replaces the UN Commission on Human Rights and meets throughout the year.

The Council carried over all the Commission's mandates and responsibilities to ensure that there is not a protection gap in the transition. A review of existing mandates and resolutions is to be completed within one year from the Council's first session.

2.2 Resolutions on the participation of regional coordinating committees

The participation of regional coordinating committees in the former Human Rights Commission is specifically mentioned in Commission resolution 2005/74, which states:

The Commission on Human Rights,

[...]

“10. Further welcomes the practice of national institutions and coordinating committees of such institutions that conform with the Paris Principles of participating in an appropriate manner in their own right in meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;

11. Welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/2005/107) on enhancing the participation of national human rights institutions in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies and, in accordance with its recommendations, decides to request the Chairperson of the sixty-first session, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, to finalize, by the sixty-second session, the modalities for:

- (a) Permitting national institutions that are accredited by the Accreditation Subcommittee of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner, and coordinating

- committees of such institutions, to speak, as outlined in the report, within their mandates, under all items of the Commission's agenda, while stressing the need to maintain present good practices of management of the agenda and speaking times in the Commission, to allocate dedicated seating to national institutions for this purpose, and supporting their engagement with all the subsidiary bodies of the Commission;
- (b) Continuing the practice of issuing documents from national institutions under their own symbol numbers."

CHR resolution 2005/74 has not yet been reviewed by the HRC.

The current practice in the Human Rights Council is that only NIs with A-level accreditation as well as the ICC are issued full accreditation (with an NHRI badge), which gives the right to take the floor on any agenda item of the Human Rights Council, as well as submit written statements. Regional coordinating committees of NHRI are issued with a distinct accreditation ("courtesy badge") which does not carry the right of oral or written interventions during the sessions of the Human Rights Council.

It is proposed that the ICC agree on a set of principles around the application of the mandate resulting from CHR Resolution 2005/74. A number of proposed principles are set out below for the consideration of the ICC.

3. Principles for the interpretation and application of CHR Resolution 2005/74

3.1 Definition of regional coordinating committees

The Resolution refers to 'regional coordinating committees' but does not provide a definition of what they are. Variables to take into account when shaping a definition include; (1) whether a committee in the sense of the definition should be a standing body or an ad-hoc/informal grouping; (2) the purpose of the coordinating committee; (3) whether, by definition, a committee can be headed by a peer or a professional secretariat; and (4) whether regional refers to any region (including sub-regional), or whether regional is to be interpreted as covering only the 4 geographic regions of the ICC.

It is proposed that only one regional coordinating committee from each region should have the right to be accredited to a particular session of the HRC. The status of regional coordinating committee should be determined by the ICC members. In addition, the regions should be based on the current regional groupings of the ICC although the ICC may decide to expand the number of regions at a later time.

The following definition is proposed:

Regional coordinating committees of national human rights institutions are those networks and associations that formally group together NHRIs in one of the existing geographic regions of the ICC, for the purpose of information sharing and coordinating/undertaking activities. These committees can either be chaired by a peer or be headed by a professional stand-alone secretariat.

3.2 Assurance that the regional coordinating committees are speaking only on behalf of NHRIs that are fully Paris Principle compliant

Where a regional coordinating committee has NHRI members that are not accredited by the ICC as A status members, it must be ensured that the committee only speaks on behalf of A status members. This is a requirement specified in CHR Resolution 2005/74.

Therefore, if regional coordinating committees make an oral statement, they must ensure that the NHRIs on whose behalf they speak are all in full conformity with the Paris Principles, evidenced by an A status accreditation with the ICC. At the beginning of the statement the regional coordinating committee should state the names of the NHRIs on whose behalf they speak. All of these NHRIs should previously have expressed their agreement with the content of the statement.

With regard to written statements, the ICC may wish to continue the practice that only A-level institutions can submit written statements to the HRC. Regional coordinating committees may also submit written statements, provided that the NHRIs which have contributed to the statement are all A-status accredited.

3.3 The relationship between the regional coordinating committees and the ICC

The ICC is the coordinating committee of all accredited NHRIs globally. This implies that the ICC is also properly placed to coordinate regional coordinating committees, ensuring consistency in the application of the Paris Principles and in the approach to the HRC.

It is proposed that all communication (written and oral statements, concept papers, letters, etc) from a regional coordinating committee to be presented to the HRC should be provided through the ICC at an adequate time prior to the HRC meeting. This will allow the ICC to coordinate all papers, determine if there are overlapping issues or notify other regions of matters that may of interest to them. This will also help to encourage common ICC positions in areas where it a common ICC position exists.

3.4 Periodic review of these principles

The ICC will periodically review the practical application of this interpretation of CHR Resolution 2005/74.
