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HUMAN RIGHTS NGOs CALL FOR AN INCLUSIVE CONSULTATION PROCESS ON TREATY BODY STRENGTHENING

A draft resolution on “strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system” set to come before the United Nations General Assembly for adoption shortly fails, in its current form, to guarantee the direct participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), key actors in the system. National, regional and international NGOs play a critical role in the work of the treaty bodies through monitoring the implementation of the treaties at the national level, providing information to the treaty bodies, and encouraging states to give effect to the committees’ recommendations. They are well placed to bring in-depth knowledge, expertise and proposals on strengthening the system. Provision also needs to be made for the participation of the treaty body experts and national human rights institutions (NHRIs).

The draft resolution, presented by the Russian Federation, would launch an “open-ended intergovernmental process” to “conduct open, transparent and inclusive negotiations” on strengthening the system of committees that monitor how states implement the human rights treaties to which they are party.

The resolution as drafted requests the President of the General Assembly to work out separate informal arrangements, after consultation with Member States, that would allow the process to benefit from the inputs and expertise of the human rights treaty bodies, NHRIs and “relevant” NGOs. However, this falls far short of the usual practice for inter-governmental meetings set up to elaborate international human rights treaties, including those established by the General Assembly, for example in respect of treaties for persons with disabilities and older persons.

Amnesty International, the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), the International Service for Human Rights and the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) express their deep concern about the establishment of a process that fails to make clear provision for the inclusion of key stakeholders in the treaty body strengthening process.

The above-named NGOs call on all Member States to ensure that any process that is created to consider treaty body strengthening ensures that NGOs are able to provide their input directly.