

UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: GENUINE NGOs SHOULD NOT BE BLOCKED BY
POLITICAL SELF-INTEREST

GENEVA --- Nineteen non-governmental organizations -- most of them concerned with women's issues in China-Tibet and Iran -- may be barred from September's Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing because of political considerations by governments meeting today in Geneva, in spite of their having been recommended by the Secretariat of the World Conference on Women.

"Final approval of accreditation for genuine NGOs that have a legitimate contribution to make should not be blocked by the political self-interest of a few," Amnesty International said.

Representatives of 54 governments to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) began meeting in Geneva yesterday to review the applications of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which have requested, but have not yet been granted, accreditation to attend the intergovernmental conference in Beijing.

The Secretariat of the World Conference on Women has submitted to ECOSOC a list of NGOs it has recommended should be accredited. Yesterday, ECOSOC endorsed this list, with the exception of the 19 mentioned above. Informal consultations between government delegations start today to decide the fate of these 19 NGOs. This process is neither transparent nor public. In addition to the 19 organizations that might be blocked from attending by governments, there is also a lengthy list of other NGOs which have not been recommended for admission by the Secretariat to the conference.

Amnesty International also questions information being distributed by the NGO Forum organizers to all participants that states that "Chinese customs will deny entry of materials (in any form) they deem anti-China."

"Such a restriction on information is entirely at odds with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," the human rights organization said. "How can a government hosting a UN World Conference be allowed to stop NGOs from bringing materials ordinarily used at such conferences, in open disregard of the UN's very own Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

"Amnesty International deplores the attitude of those governments meeting today in Geneva willing to put political considerations before the respect of that principle," the human rights organization said. ENDS\