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Committee on NGOs

7th & 8th Meetings (AM & PM)

**NGO COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS SIX ORGANIZATIONS FOR
CONSULTATIVE STATUS**

WITH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations today decided to recommend six non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and decided not to recommend People in Need, a Czech NGO providing humanitarian and development assistance.

A standing committee of the Council, the 19-member body uses various criteria to recommend general, special or roster status with the Economic and Social Council, including the applicant's mandate, governance and financial regime. Organizations that have general and special consultative status can attend meetings of the Council and circulate statements of a certain length. Those with general status can, in addition, speak at meetings and propose items for the Council's agenda, while NGOs with roster status can only attend meetings.

The decision not to recommend People in Need was taken by a recorded, roll-call vote of 9 in favour (China, Colombia, Cuba, India, Iran, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, Zimbabwe) to 4 against (France, Germany, Romania, United States), with 4 abstentions (Chile, Pakistan, Peru, Turkey).

The Committee took that action after a motion to defer consideration of the application, proposed by the United States, was rejected by a recorded, roll-call vote of 5 in favour (Chile, France, Germany, Romania, United States) to 8 against (China, Colombia, Cuba, Iran, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, Zimbabwe), with 4 abstentions (India, Pakistan, Peru, Turkey).

The proposal to reject the NGO's application was put forward by the representative of Cuba, who said that the organization had lied in the information provided to the Committee. The NGO was a front for the Czech Government, and used to destabilize and promote changes in regimes in different countries, including his own. It undertook many missions under the auspices of the Czech Foreign Ministry, and received financing from the United States, through the State Department and the USAID.

The representative of the Czech Republic, as an observer, informed the Committee that the NGO was doing effective and valuable humanitarian and development work. The organization had evolved from a small group of volunteers to a highly efficient organization, and had worked in over 30 countries, including in regions affected by conflict and natural disasters. Among its activities were promoting democracy, good governance and gender equality.

The Committee decided to recommend special status for BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, a Palestinian NGO providing professional analysis and information regarding the situation of Palestinian refugees, following a dialogue with its representative.

The representatives of Germany, United States and France dissociated themselves from that decision, saying that while the NGO was doing important work on the issue of Palestinian refugees, a number of serious concerns remained, including clarity on the organization's position on equating Zionism with racism. Germany's representative said he had serious concerns about organizations that had been involved in an attempt in 2001 to reinstate General Assembly resolution 3379 equating Zionism with racism. While BADIL's representative had distanced the NGO from the call for reinstatement of that resolution, he would have preferred an opportunity to obtain clarity on the issue.

Israel's representative, as an observer, informed the Committee of his concerns about the NGO, whose style he found "aggressive and intolerant", noting it had used anti-Semitic language and images, a matter which needed to be addressed by the Committee in its communication with the organization. BADIL had openly supported terrorism and glorified suicide bombers as martyrs. Also, it had given contradictory statements when asked about its views on the right of the Jewish people to self-determination.

Responding to questions put to her, BADIL's representative said that the issue of Zionism equalling racism was not something the NGO had done research on. Its position, in general, would be consistent with that of the United Nations. Most of BADIL's positions were analysed by its legal support network before being put out. It had not been possible to develop a clear position on terrorism, since there was no clear legal definition of terrorism. She emphasized that the mission of the NGO was not violence and terrorism. It was one of the most professional NGOs anywhere, and garnered support from a number of Jewish and Israeli organizations. Lending her strong support for the NGO's application was the observer of Palestine, who said that BADIL provided pertinent analysis and information on Palestinian refugees.

The Committee also recommended special status for:

-- Political and Ethical Knowledge on Economic Activities, an international organization based in France, aiming to develop political and ethical knowledge about economic activities;

-- Fundación Teletón México, a national organization based in Mexico, promoting the integration of disabled persons in society;

-- International Association for Integration, Dignity, and Economic Advancement, an international organization based in the United States, representing people affected by leprosy; and

-- World Children's Relief and Volunteer Organization, an international organization based in the United States, focused on improving the quality of primary education in rural areas in developing countries.

Responding to questions, the representative of World Children's Relief and Volunteer Organization said the NGO carried out activities in Senegal, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and Uganda. Its work included rehabilitating elementary schools; implementing latrines, wells, child-friendly soccer fields and play areas; providing fabric for uniforms for teachers and children; and conducting teacher training programmes. The NGO supported the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related protocols, and hoped to participate in future summits on children.

Roster status was recommended for World Council of Muslim Communities, Inc., an international organization based in the United States, working to build relationships among peoples and to help humanity progress.

In addition, the Committee decided to close the file on the application of WAMY International Inc. (World Assembly of Muslim Youth), an international organization based in the United States, a move that was supported by that country's representative, who reminded the Committee of the ongoing legal proceedings against the NGO with regard to possible terrorist links. Also, Germany's representative noted that the NGO had been given ample opportunity, both in writing and in person, to respond to the Committee's concerns.

While not opposed to closing the file, Cuba's representative noted that links to terrorist activities should be examined closely, and the Committee should have more information on the ongoing investigation against the NGO. He hoped the Committee would take consistent action when confronted with similar cases. In closing the file, Committee Chairperson Beatriz Londoño (Colombia) said the NGO would be given the opportunity to reorganize itself and clarify its situation, and re-apply at a later date.

Left pending was the application of World Sindhi Institute, an international organization based in the United States, as the representative of Pakistan had several

questions about its work and mission. He said the NGO's activities seemed to be much broader than had been stated in its objective, and believed it had a clear political agenda, rather than just promoting the rights of the people of Sindh, a province in Pakistan. He wanted to know what the NGO meant by "decentralization in Pakistan", and its desire for Pakistan to pursue demilitarization, which had nothing to do with promoting the rights of Sindhis. He also requested information on the NGO's views and efforts to eliminate traditional honour killings in Sindh province.

While awaiting responses and/or further clarifications, the Committee also left pending the applications of: Kashmiri American Council, a national organization based in the United States; Mountain Women Development Organization, a national organization based in Pakistan; International Centre for Peace Studies, an international organization based in India; Asian-Eurasian Human Rights Forum, an international organization based in India; Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses, a national organization based in India; Stree Atyachar Virodhi Parishad, a national organization based in India; Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, a national organization based in India; Social Alert, an international organization based in Belgium; Sahara for Life Trust, an international organization based in Pakistan; and Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar, a national organization based in India.

Also left pending were the applications of: LatCrit, an international organization based in the United States; China Association for International Science and Technology Cooperation, a national organization based in China; The American Conservative Union, a national organization based in the United States; Geneva Call, an international organization based in Switzerland; and Generation recherche action & formation pour l'environnement, an international organization based in Switzerland.

In other action, the Committee took note of the quadrennial reports of the following NGOs in consultative status with the Council on their activities during the period 2001-2004: American Jewish Committee; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; United for Intercultural Action; Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights; Global Rights (formerly known as International Human Rights Law Group); Greek Council for Refugees; Rotary International; Women's Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; American Association of Jurists; The Center for Migration Studies of New York; Coalition Against Trafficking in Women; League of Women Voters of the United States; and Susila Dharma International Association.

It also took note of the quadrennial reports of: The Association of the Bar of the City of New York; Equality Now; International Federation for Home Economics; Pathways to Peace; Peace Child International; Australian Catholic Social Justice Council; International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples; Unitarian Universalist Association; Association culturelle d'aide a la promotion educative et sociale; Elizabeth Seton Federation; The European Law Students' Association; and Family Care International.

It left pending the reports of Qatar Charitable Society; International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples; and World Trade Centers Association.

The Committee members are Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, France, Germany, India, Iran, Peru, Pakistan, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, Turkey, United States, and Zimbabwe.

The Committee will meet again tomorrow, 25 January, at 10 a.m. to consider special reports and working methods, as well as other pending matters.

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