

Background document:

## **Katimavik-Opcan's Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC**

Katimavik-Opcan is extremely pleased to announce the recent decision of the United Nations Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC (of the Division for Social Policy and Development), to grant Special Consultative Status to our organization.

The mission of this particular body of the United Nations is to strengthen international cooperation for social development, with a special focus on issues of poverty, employment and social integration. It is particularly interested in how these issues relate to older persons, persons with disabilities, families, persons in situations of conflict, indigenous and other marginalized or vulnerable groups, and youth – this last group representing our own primary area of interest and experience.

ECOSOC was established under the UN Charter as the principal organ, under the authority of the General Assembly, to coordinate economic, social and related work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and five regional commissions. ECOSOC also receives reports from 11 UN funds and programmes. The Council consists of 54 member governments, elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly. It holds one four-week substantive session each July, while year-round work is carried out by its subsidiary bodies - commissions and committees - which meet at regular intervals and report back to the Council.

The UN Charter authorizes ECOSOC to consult with NGOs concerned with matters within its competence. The Council has recognized, under [ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31](#), that these organizations should have the opportunity to express their views, and that they possess special experience or technical knowledge of value to its work.

Thus, ECOSOC's designation of Special Consultative Status signifies an acknowledgement of Katimavik's contributions and our civic engagement in issues affecting youth, particularly in the area of service learning. Over the past 30 years, Katimavik has enabled thousands of Canadian youth to discover their country, while learning about the value of community, leadership and the appreciation of their own capabilities. Each year, we have partnered with over 700 non-profit community organizations across Canada, which benefit from the services the young participants of our program provide them.

As an NGO with Special Consultative Status, we are entitled to send representatives to attend the annual meeting of ECOSOC's Commission for Social Development (and of its various subsidiary bodies) and provide written statements to the assembly relating to the theme being discussed. These statements may have an influence on new policies to be adopted by the Commission during its policy session. In addition to our contributions to such meetings, we may also be asked to participate in, and be privy to findings of the most recent international studies and research relating to youth issues. It is our desire to serve as a representative for our partners and other like-minded organizations in Canada, and in so doing, fulfill our leadership role in the area of mentoring and promoting the values associated with volunteer service youth.

The next formal meeting of the Commission for Social Development (the forty-sixth session of the Commission), to which we intend to send a representative, will take place in New York City from the 6th to the 15th of February, 2008. This year's priority theme will be "***Full employment and decent work for all***". The session will also include a review of relevant United Nations plans and programs of action pertaining to previously enumerated groups of interest, including youth.

For more information about ECOSOC, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, or its upcoming regular session in New York City, please visit their website: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/>.