



COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES
PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

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Dear members of the Consultative Group,

On behalf of the Coordination Committee of Special procedures, I have the pleasure of writing to you in connection to the selection of mandate holders. The high quality of mandate holders is crucial to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of the system of special procedures. A new Coordination Committee has been constituted at the Annual Meeting of Special Procedures that took place at the end of June. As I have just started my mandate as Chairperson of the Coordination Committee, I would like to assure you of the full support of the Committee in your task ahead.

Taking the opportunity laid down in Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, paragraph 51, which says that “the Consultative Group should take into account, as appropriate, the views of stakeholders, including the current or outgoing mandate-holders, in determining the necessary expertise, experience, skills, and other relevant requirements for each mandate”, I invited the outgoing mandate holders to provide information on the skills they consider essential for the new mandate holders to discharge the mandate.

I am therefore pleased to share with you the contribution received from Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice (annex I) and the Working Group of experts on people of African descent (annex II).

I trust that you will find these suggestions useful and I would be happy to discuss this matter further with you should you find it necessary. As a way to enhance transparency, special procedures mandate holders have decided that these contributions should be made publicly available. This letter will therefore be posted on the public website of special procedures. I wish you success in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Devandas'.

Catalina Devandas Aguilar
Chairperson of the Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures

Cc. H.E. Mr. Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli
President of the Human Rights Council



Annex I

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON THE ISSUE OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN LAW AND IN PRACTICE

“In the spirit of Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, we are honoured, as the current mandate-holders of the Working Group, to share with the Consultative Group what we consider as essential requirements for the Working Group’s membership. We base our views on our experience of working as a group since the inception of the mandate in 2011 and we go beyond the general requirements of human rights expertise and experience for serving as independent human rights experts.

A fundamental first requirement would be a track record of commitment to women’s right to equality and practical experience specifically on the issue of women’s human rights, particularly regarding the question of discrimination against women as existing in every part of the world.

Different from individual mandate holders, the effective functioning of the Working Group requires a combination of skills and backgrounds among its five members and a common language to enable it to work as a team, including when there is no official interpretation. Given its mandate on discrimination in law and in practice, the five members should include experts with legal backgrounds. The combination of skills should include strong writing capacity.

The inclusion in the membership of the Working Group of highly qualified men with proven record of working on women’s right to equality would be a welcome development. However, effort to bring diversity to the composition of the Group should not in any way compromise the fundamental requirement of commitment and expertise on the issue of discrimination against women.

Our experience in the past six years has shown that strong connections of the experts with networks of academia, civil society organizations, and other independent institutions are most valuable, in terms of the mandate’s outreach as well as its ability to obtain research assistance, which the limited resources available to the mandate does not provide. Our experience also indicates that a progressive and innovative mind-set and strong dedication for the cause of equality would be an added value in confronting the challenge of this broad mandate of combatting the persistent and pervasive discrimination against women.”



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Annex II

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

“Further to the invitation to submit views on the qualifications required by the mandate-holders, and recalling Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 which provides that “the consultative group should take into account, as appropriate, the views of stakeholders, including the current or outgoing mandate-holders, in determining the necessary expertise, experience, skills, and other relevant requirements for each mandate”, the purpose of this letter is to share with you views regarding the requirements we consider necessary for its membership.

It is important to note that at this moment, all members save for the outgoing member are men. In order to address the gender imbalance, therefore, it will be preferable that the new member be a woman.

We consider the following as necessary and relevant requirements for the new members of the Working Group of Experts:

1. Independence and impartiality.
2. Extensive knowledge and expertise in international human rights law and standards, including those related to racism, xenophobia, afrophobia and related intolerances.
3. Extensive practical experience in dealing with human rights - both at national and especially at international level.
4. Knowledge of the role and activities of civil society organizations, notably those working in the fight against racism, xenophobia, afrophobia and related intolerance.
5. Knowledge of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) as it relates to People of African Descent.
6. Willingness and availability to devote a substantial amount of time to fulfilling the mandate, including undertaking field visits, attending two sessions of the Working Group per year and participating in other activities of the mandate as required.
7. Willingness to make a contribution in the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent. Good knowledge of the situation of people of African descent in the region they represent. Diplomatic and negotiation skills as well as ability to reach consensus, are desirable
8. Language skills: English (fluent) and another UN official language.”