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For more information see:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/minorities/fellowprog.htm>.

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## Independent Expert on Minority Issues

In March 2008 the Independent Expert on minority issues, Ms Gay McDougall, held her annual "interactive dialogue" with the Human Rights Council during which she presented her annual report, her reports on country visits conducted in 2007 to France and the Dominican Republic, and a report on communications sent to States. The Independent Expert's annual report focuses on minorities and the discriminatory denial and deprivation of citizenship as a global concern. It highlights that, once denied or deprived of citizenship, minorities are inevitably denied protection of their basic rights and freedoms, including minority rights as established in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The report demonstrates that many minorities live in a precarious legal situation due to denial or deprivation of citizenship.

The mandate of the Independent Expert, created in July 2005, was also reviewed at the March session of the Human Rights Council as part of the review of all Special Procedures mandates. Numerous States noted their appreciation and support for the work and approach of the Independent Expert to

## Minority Fellowship Programmes 2008

The *English-speaking* fellowship is taking place at the OHCHR office in Geneva from 1 April-30 June 2008.

The following fellows are participating:

Mr Fedor Kondur (Rom from Ukraine)  
Ms Nilofar d/o Abdul Hussain (Hazara Shiat from Afghanistan)  
Ms Anna Dreyzina (Russian from Azerbaijan)  
Mr Khalid Hussain (Bihari from Bangladesh)  
Mr Manpreet Singh (Sikh from India)

The 2008 *Arabic-speaking* fellowship will take place in November 2008 for three weeks. The application deadline will be announced this summer and application materials will be posted on our website.

date, including in regard to her choice of thematic work in the areas of poverty and the Millennium Development Goals, and on issues of citizenship, and her constructive recommendations on these issues. The Human Rights Council decided by consensus to extend the mandate of the Independent Expert for a period of three years, with Gay McDougall continuing her tenure as mandate holder.

In April the Independent Expert visited Australia at the invitation of the Human Rights Law Resource Centre, where she undertook a series of activities including participating in NGO Workshops and Seminars in Melbourne and Sydney, and delivered speeches on the fight against racism and for the rights of minorities in the 21st Century.

On 10 April, the Independent Expert joined the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur for the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders, and the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture, in issuing a joint statement of concern regarding the ongoing protests and reports of high numbers of arrests in the Tibet Autonomous Region and surrounding areas in China. The mandate holders urged restraint and non-violence by all parties, greater and unfettered access to the regions concerned for journalists and independent observers, guarantees for the free flow of information, and full implementation of international standards in regard to the treatment of protestors and those detained, both in the People's Republic of China and in other countries in which protests are taking place.

In terms of upcoming country visits, from 28 July to 2 August 2008, the Independent Expert will undertake a mission to **Guyana** and

a mission to **Greece** is tentatively planned for September 2008.

Contact person for more information: Graham Fox [gfox@ohchr.org](mailto:gfox@ohchr.org).

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### Forum on Minority Issues

Replacing the former Working Group on Minorities, the Forum on Minority Issues was established on 28 September 2007 at the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) as a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on minority issues and for contributing to the work of the Independent Expert on minority issues.

Its tasks will be:

- \* To identify issues and best practices
- \* To make recommendations on the implementation of the 1992 United Nations Minorities Declaration
- \* To provide the Independent Expert on minority issues with information
- \* To contribute to the High Commissioner's efforts of improving the co-operation among United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, Funds and Programmes on activities related to the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities

The Forum will be open to the participation of:

- \* States
- \* UN mechanisms, bodies and agencies
- \* National human rights institutions
- \* Academics and experts
- \* NGOs

The Forum will meet for 2 days every year. The Forum Chair will be appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council in consultation with regional groups and in accordance with regional rotation.

The Independent Expert on minority issues will guide the work of the Forum by recommending focus topics. She will also transmit the Forum's thematic recommendations to the HRC.

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The inaugural session of the Forum is scheduled for 4-5 September 2008 at the United Nations (Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland), immediately prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council which is planned for 8 - 25 September 2008. The thematic issue for consideration by the inaugural session will be minorities and access to education. The Independent Expert invites interested parties to compile and submit information on minorities and access to education prior to the session of the Forum. Further information regarding the Forum, including guidelines for submission of information, accreditation procedures, and Secretariat contact details, will be distributed shortly and will also be available on the website of the Forum at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/forum.htm>.

Contact person for more information: Graham Fox [gfox@ohchr.org](mailto:gfox@ohchr.org).

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#### Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

General Assembly Resolution 60/251, decided that the Human Rights Council (HRC) shall "undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfillment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments...".

**The first session of the UPR Working Group (UPR WG) of the HRC took place from 7-18 April 2008 and considered the human rights record of the following countries: Bahrain, Ecuador, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, Finland, United Kingdom, India, Brazil, Philippines, Algeria, Poland, Netherlands, South Africa, Czech Republic, and Argentina.**

**The second session of the UPR WG is taking place from 5-19 May 2008 and considers the human rights record of the following countries: Gabon, Ghana, Peru, Guatemala, Benin, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Pakistan, Zambia, Japan, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, France, Tonga, Romania, and Mali.**

The reports, as adopted by the UPR WG, as well as statements by States, are accessible at the UPR section of the Extranet at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/form.htm>. The meetings of the sessions can be viewed through the UN webcast, either live or archived (<http://www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/index.asp>).

OHCHR posts daily highlights of the sessions of the UPR WG, providing an overview of the interactive dialogues by listing the issues raised, and which are prepared for use by the media, i.e. they are not an official record. The daily highlights can be accessed at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/MeetingsHighlightsSession2.aspx>.

**In June 2008, at the eighth session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), the HRC plenary will adopt outcome documents on each country reviewed at the 1st and 2nd sessions of UPR WG. At the HRC plenary, one hour has been allotted for each country, during which NGOs have the possibility to make interventions (differently from the 3-hour country sessions at the WG on the UPR, where interventions are limited to States).**

**The third session of the UPR WG is scheduled from 1 to 12 December 2008 and will consider the following countries: Botswana, Bahamas, Burundi, Luxembourg, Barbados, Montenegro, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Liechtenstein, Serbia, Turkmenistan, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Colombia, Uzbekistan, and Tuvalu.**

NGOs, wishing to submit information for consideration and possible inclusion by OHCHR in a summary of stakeholders' input for this UPR review, are invited to send their contributions. The **deadline** for submission of contributions by NGOs to the third session of the WG on the UPR has been set at **14 July 2008**. Please note that the page limit for submissions is 5 pages when submitted by individual stakeholders, and 10 pages when submitted by large coalitions of stakeholders. More detailed reports may be attached for reference only. This information will be available on line for others to access.

Submissions should be sent to the following email address: [UPRsubmissions@ohchr.org](mailto:UPRsubmissions@ohchr.org).

For more information see <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx>.

Contact person: Erik Friberg  
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**First substantive session of the Preparatory Committee (Prep-Com) for Durban Review Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: 21 April-2 May 2008**

As decided during its first organizational session in August 2007, the Preparatory Committee held its first substantive session from 21 April to 2 May 2008 in Geneva. The PrepCom agreed on some fundamental issues, such as the structure of the draft outcome of the Durban Review Conference and the process involved in the drafting of this outcome document. An intergovernmental working group was created to negotiate on the content of the outcome document and will hold its first session from 26 to 30 May 2008 in Conference Room XXVI, Palais des Nations in Geneva.

The Working Group is expected to collect information to be included in the draft outcome document to be considered at the 2009 Review Conference. In order to achieve its task, the OHCHR Secretariat has prepared a questionnaire for all stakeholders, including NGOs, that is available on line in English, (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/docs/questionnaire1st.pdf>), French ([http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/docs/questionnaire1st\\_fr.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/docs/questionnaire1st_fr.pdf)) and Spanish ([http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/docs/questionnaire1st\\_sp.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/docs/questionnaire1st_sp.pdf)).

The PrepCom also took decisions regarding the accreditation of NGOs for the Review Conference. Those NGOs who have already consultative status with ECOSOC are automatically entitled to take part in the Conference. Those NGOs which participated in the 2001 Durban Conference are also accredited to participate in the Review Conference, providing no government objects or the objection is not upheld by the PrepCom. NGOs which do not have ECOSOC status and did not participate in the 2001 conference are required to apply for accreditation and their cases are examined individually by the PrepCom. During the 1<sup>st</sup> substantive PrepCom, the credentials of 47 NGOs, based in 8 different countries, were discussed. Seven were successfully accredited, one was excluded, one withdrew, 37 were provisionally accepted or else not finally rejected, and in one case a decision is still pending.

There was a consensus that the Review Conference would probably take place in June 2009 but decisions regarding the venue and the duration of the Review Conference were not reached. However, the venue is likely to be in one of the four UN centres of Geneva, Nairobi, New York or Vienna. With regard to the precise duration, some states were in favour of a duration of three days, while others wanted the Review Conference to last for five days. The PrepCom decided to hold a special extension of this first substantive session on 26 May (at the beginning of the first intergovernmental working group session) in order to decide on these outstanding issues.

For documentation relating to sessions of the PrepCom see <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/sessions.htm>.

The *Latin American and Caribbean regional preparatory meeting* for the Durban Review Conference will be held in **Brasilia, Brazil, from 17 to 19 June, 2008**. Other regional preparatory meetings have not yet been announced. For further information please consult



<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/regional.htm>.

The second substantive PrepCom will take place from **6 to 17 October 2008** in Geneva. NGOs wishing to apply for accreditation can still do so by filling in a questionnaire. For more information see

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/ngo.htm>.

Contact person for more information: Sandra Aragon [saragon@ohchr.org](mailto:saragon@ohchr.org).

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## **21 March - the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

Every year, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organizes a special event to commemorate 21 March - the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year's commemoration took place on 18 March 2008 in Palais des Nations in the form of a high level panel discussion. The theme was *Dignity and Justice - the Cornerstones of Combating Racial Discrimination*.

Contact person for more information: Tania Naydenova [tnaydenova@ohchr.org](mailto:tnaydenova@ohchr.org) (see also OHCHR Minority Update N°11).

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## **Treaty Bodies and country reviews**

### **18 February to 7 March 2008 - CERD**

The 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the **Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** took place from 18 February to 7 March 2008. The Committee considered the following State reports during the session: **Republic of Moldova, Italy, Republic of Fiji Islands, Belgium, Dominican Republic, United States of America and Nicaragua**. In its *Concluding Observation to the report of the Republic of Moldova*, the Committee, while commending the inclusion of

a chapter on the rights of national minorities in their National Human Rights Plan of Action for 2004-2008, highlighted several shortcomings, including the lack of disaggregated statistical information, the need to represent more effectively national minorities' interests and to guarantee equitable access to all ethnic and religious minorities. The Committee requested updated data on education, poverty and unemployment for ethnic groups and minorities from the *Belgian and Fijian Government*. Additionally, the Committee discussed the situation of *Roma in Italy and Latinos & African Americans in the USA* in relation to police brutality, violence, abuse, Medicare and issues related to sexual and reproductive health.

Concluding observations are available at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/cerds72.htm>.

Under the Committee's review procedure, whereby it considers country situations in the absence of a State party report, the Committee initiated a review of the **Gambia**. The State report of **Bulgaria** was received before the session and the consideration has been tentatively scheduled for 2009. **Monaco** has also submitted a report, but its consideration has yet to be scheduled. The consideration of the **United Arab Emirates** and **Panama** in the absence of a State party report has been postponed following assurances that a report is currently being prepared and will soon be submitted to the Committee.

### **17 March to 7 April 2008 - CCPR**

The **Human Rights Committee (CCPR)** held its 92<sup>nd</sup> session from 17 March to 7 April 2008 in New York. The following State party reports were examined during this session: **Tunisia, Botswana, Republic of Macedonia, and Panama**. The Committee expressed concern at the persisting problems faced by minorities in the *Republic of Macedonia*, such as police violence, lack of language support in judicial proceedings, inadequacy of educational opportunities and lack of a

protective and non-discriminatory learning environment. The Country Report Task Forces considered and adopted a list of issues on reports submitted by **Japan, France, Nicaragua and Ireland**. Concluding observations and more information are available at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs92.htm>.

#### ***14 April to 25 April 2008 - CMW***

The 8<sup>th</sup> session of the **Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)** took place from 14 April to 25 April 2008. The Committee considered the following State reports: **Bolivia and Syrian Arab Republic**. Concluding observations are available at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmw/cmws08.htm>.

#### ***28 April to 16 May 2008 - CESCR***

The 40<sup>th</sup> session of the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)** is taking place from 28 April to 16 May 2008 in Geneva. The Committee is considering the following State reports during the session: **Benin, France, India, and Bolivia**. For more information please refer to:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/cescrs40.htm>.

#### ***28 April to 16 May 2008 - CAT***

The next session of the **Committee against Torture (CAT)** is taking place from 28 April to 16 May 2008 in Geneva. The Committee is considering the following State reports during the session: **Australia, Sweden, Iceland, Algeria, Indonesia, Zambia, Republic of Macedonia and Costa Rica**. For more information see:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/cats40.htm>.

#### ***19 May to 6 June 2008 - CRC***

The **Committee on the Rights of the Child** will hold its 48<sup>th</sup> session from 19 May to 6 June 2008. The Committee will consider the following State reports during the session: **Bulgaria, Eritrea, Georgia, Serbia, and**

**Sierra Leone**. Under the Optional Protocol to CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the following State reports are scheduled for consideration: **Republic of Korea and United States of America**. Under the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict the following State reports are scheduled for consideration: **Philippines, Republic of Korea and United States of America**.

For more information see:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs48.htm>.

#### ***30 June to 18 July 2008 - CEDAW***

The **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** will be holding its 41<sup>st</sup> session from 30 June to 18 July 2008 in Geneva. The following State party reports will be examined during this session: **Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Nigeria, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Tanzania, and Yemen**. More information can be found at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws41.htm>.

#### ***7 July to 25 July 2008 - CCPR***

The **Human Rights Committee (CCPR)** will be holding its 93<sup>rd</sup> session from 7 to 25 July 2008 in Geneva. The following State party reports will be examined during this session: **France, San Marino, Ireland, and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**. The Country Report Task Forces will consider and adopt list of issues on reports submitted by **Denmark, Monaco, Spain, Rwanda and Sweden**. For more information please refer to:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs93.htm>.

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