

Minority Update

N°9 - November/December 2007

OHCHR- RRDB Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Unit

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newly assigned as a focal point for Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Research and Right to Development Branch.

His email remains: efriberg@ohchr.org

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Ms. Gallianne Palayret (Junior Professional Officer) is now based in Yaounde - Cameroun at the UN Center for Human Rights and Democracy and acts as a focal point on indigenous and minority issues in Central Africa.

Her E-mail is: gallianne.palayret@undp.org.

Pilot Arabic speaking Minority Fellowship Programme 2007

The following fellows were chosen to participate in the first OHCHR Pilot Arabic speaking Minority Fellowship Programme:

Mr. AL-DAGHESTANI Sarmad: The Chechen Minority in Jordan and Iraq, *Chechen and Ingush Association*, Iraq

Ms. AL-MUGAMES Lina: The Sabian - Mandaean Minority, *Women Future Development Organisation*, Iraq

Mr. FAKHER ELDEEN Salman: Syrian-Arab Minority, *Al-Marsad: The Arab Center For Human Rights* in the Golan-Heights

Ms. HAJI BASRI Wasan: The Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Minority, *Iraqi Minority Council*, Iraq

The fellowship is taking place in the OHCHR office in Geneva from 3-14 December 2007.

Staff at OHCHR

Mr. Erik Friberg who was previously assisting special procedures mandates including that of the Independent Expert on minority issues is

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Training on minority issues for public officials

On 26 November Ms. Ilona Alexander participated in a *Seminar on Concerted Efforts at the European Level to Protect Ethnic, Linguistic and National Minorities* organized by the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) in Trieste, Italy (26-29 November 2007). The audience was made up of 17 public officials from various ministries (Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Labour) as well as from Parliament's Secretariat and from the judiciary from East European countries (from the Balkans and the Caucasus but also from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus), who are all dealing with issues related to the protection of minorities in their professional activities.

Ms. Ilona Alexander delivered a lecture on the United Nations Standards and Mechanisms for the Protection of Minority Rights and facilitated a workshop debate on the need for a Forum on Minority Issues and its modalities.

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Independent Expert on minority issues and Special Rapporteur on Racism

The UN Independent Expert on minority issues, Ms Gay McDougall, and the Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mr Doudou Diene, concluded a week long visit to the Dominican Republic (23 - 29 October), during which they consulted with many senior government representatives, members of civil society and community members, academics and students, political parties, media and others.

The UN delegation visited Santo Domingo, Dajabon and the border region with Haiti, Santiago and San Pedro de Macoris. They

noted in their preliminary views that, while there is no official government policy of discrimination, there is nevertheless a profound and entrenched problem of racism and discrimination against such groups as Haitians, Dominicans of Haitian descent, and more generally against blacks within Dominican society. While there is no legislation that is explicitly discriminatory, some laws including those in regard to migration, civil status and the granting of Dominican citizenship to persons of Haitian heritage born in the Dominican Republic have discriminatory impact.

The UN delegation urged recognition of the reality of racism and discrimination and the expression of a strong political will at the highest level as well as the establishment of a programme of action to combat all forms of racism and discrimination in consultation with, and inclusive of, all groups within Dominican society.

Contact person for more information: Graham Fox gfox@ohchr.org.

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Consultation on issues related to minorities and the denial or deprivation of citizenship

On 6 and 7 December 2007, the Independent Expert on minority issues held an expert consultation, with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on *issues related to minorities and the denial or deprivation of citizenship*.

The expert consultation brought together minority representatives, academics and other experts in the field of minorities and citizenship from different regions in the world, representing inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies as well as United Nations offices, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme.

The objectives of the consultation included: helping to reveal the extent of the issues related to minorities; providing an opportunity for an important analysis and contribution in regard to the way that States address minority issues and citizenship, and the denial or deprivation of citizenship; and developing practical recommendations for States and international bodies and agencies.

The consultation revealed that significant examples from all regions demonstrate that the denial or deprivation of citizenship to certain groups has been used as a means to exclude minorities from entitlements or reasonable participation, with consequences experienced over generations.

Contact person for more information: Graham Fox 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 6th 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 Minorities Declaration
- * To provide the Independent Expert on minority issues with information

The Forum will be open to the participation of:

- * States
- * UN mechanisms, bodies and agencies
- * National human rights institutions
- * Academics
- * 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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Human Rights Day - 10 December: the start of a special campaign

On Human Rights Day the United Nations Secretary-General launched a special campaign entitled *Dignity and Justice for All of Us*.

Every 10 December the world remembers the extraordinary accomplishment on that day in 1948 when nations came together in Paris to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The campaign is designed to help people everywhere to learn more about their human rights throughout 2008 and to better understand the relevance of the Universal Declaration in their lives today.

The Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued special messages inviting people everywhere to create their own public information campaigns.

A campaign logo, fact sheets, posters and more have been developed to give communities and organisations the inspiration and tools to get their campaigns started.

For the text of the speeches as well as more information on the campaign and this year's celebrations see:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/60UDHRIntroduction.aspx>.

UN experts (Special Procedures mandate holders) have marked the Human Rights Day with call for States to intensify efforts to

combat discrimination and exclusion. See their statement at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm> (Latest Press Releases, bottom right hand corner).

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Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

General Assembly Resolution 60/251, decided that the Human Rights Council 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...". *NGOs, wishing to submit information for consideration and possible inclusion by OHCHR in a summary of stakeholders' information for this UPR review, are invited to send their contributions.*

The deadline for submissions by NGOs for the first UPR session passed in November 2007. The deadline for submissions by NGOs for the second UPR session (scheduled from 5 to 16 May 2008) is **14 January 2008**, concerning these countries: **Benin, France, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Japan, Mali, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tonga, Ukraine and Zambia.**

Submissions should be sent to the following email address: UPRsubmissions@ohchr.org.

NGOs are being strongly encouraged to limit their submission to a 5-page document, to which a more detailed and factual report may be attached for reference. This information will be available on line for others to access.

For more information see <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/upr/index.htm>.

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Indigenous Peoples and the HRC - meeting on 6-7 Dec 2007

With respect to indigenous issues, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 6/16 on 28 September 2007 requesting OHCHR to convene an informal meeting to discuss the most appropriate mechanisms to continue the work of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. The informal meeting was held on 6 December and the morning of 7 December 2007 in Room XVII at the Palais des Nations.

An approximate number of 100 persons, including representatives of States, indigenous peoples, indigenous organizations, NGOs, national human rights institutions' representatives and other stakeholders exchanged ideas on the possible mandate, composition, terms of the members, participation and placement in the United Nations system of a future mechanism. A draft resolution will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its resumed sixth session. (10-14 December 2007).

For further information please visit: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/groups/groups-01.htm>.

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OHCHR presence at the Romani Women's Rights Conference

Ilona Alexander acted as a moderator of a panel on Respecting Reproductive Rights and Romani Women's Perspective at a conference on Romani Women's Rights organized by the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency and the Swedish government in Stockholm from 3-4 December. The report and recommendations of this conference will be available in January.

Expert meeting on Integration with diversity in policing: Vienna 15-16 January 2008

OHCHR in cooperation with the International Labour Office (ILO) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as the Independent Expert on minority issues are scheduled to hold an expert meeting on integration with diversity in policing in Vienna, Austria from 15 to 16 January 2008.

Professionals in the police service from different regions and countries of the world have been invited to participate, including from: Cameroon, Canada, Hungary, India, Ireland, South Africa, Nigeria, Pakistan, Brazil, Samoa and Australia.

The main background paper of the meeting (Integration with Diversity in Security, Policing and Criminal Justice, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2006/WP.1 by Tom Hadden) is to be found at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/minorities/docs/12/2006-wp1.doc>.

For further information please contact: Ilona Alexander ialexander@ohchr.org

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Second session of the Preparatory Committee (Prep-Com) for Durban Review Conference: 21 April-2 May 2008

PrepCom dates in 2008

The Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Durban Review Conference decided on **21 April to 2 May 2008; and 6 to 17 October 2008** as the dates for the first and second substantive PrepCom sessions (provisionally) to be held in Geneva.

NGO

The first PrepCom decided on NGO participation in the preparatory process of the Durban Review Conference. These will be:

1. NGOs with ECOSOC status

2. NGOs that were accredited for the WCAR (Pending individual objections from Member States, the final decision shall be taken by the Preparatory Committee, the standard process established in Council resolution 1996/31 will be applied).

3. NGOs new to the process that have been approved after sending to the Secretariat application forms which are available at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/groups/prep_committee_durban/docs/NGOquestionnaire2.doc.

For a full text of the decision regarding the participation of NGOs and all other decisions, see the report of the first PrepCom at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/groups/prep_committee_durban/docs/prepc_omdraft.doc.

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Treaty Bodies and country reviews

15 October - 2 November 2007 - CCPR

The 91st session of the **Human Rights Committee** met from 15 October to 2 November 2007 in Geneva. The following State reports were examined: **Georgia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Austria, Costa Rica and Algeria**. Minority issues have been raised in the concluding observations regarding all countries except Libya.

Further information may be obtained from: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs91.htm>.

5 - 23 November 2007 - CESCR

The **Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights** held its 39th session from 5 to 23 November 2007. The following State reports were considered: **Costa Rica, Ukraine, San Marino, Belgium and Paraguay**. Minority issues have been raised in the concluding observations regarding **Costa Rica, Ukraine and Belgium**.

Further information may be obtained from:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/cescrs39.htm>.

26 to 30 November - Pre-Sessional WG of CESCR

The Pre-Sessional Working Group of the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights was held from 26 to 30 November 2007. The following State reports were considered: **Sweden, The Philippines, Kenya, Bolivia and Nicaragua.**

For further details see:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/cescrwg39.htm>.

5 to 23 November 2007 - CAT

The Committee Against Torture held its 39th session from 5 to 23 November 2007. The Committee considered the State reports of: **Benin, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Norway, Estonia and Portugal.** Consideration of the state report of **Australia** was postponed. Minority issues have been raised in the concluding observations regarding **Latvia and Portugal.**

Further information may be obtained from:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/cats39.htm>.

26 - 30 November 2007 - CMW

The **Committee on Migrant Workers** held its 7th session from 26 to 30 November 2007 and considered the report of **Ecuador.**

Further information is to be found at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmw/cmws07.htm>.

January to February 2008 - CRC

The **Committee on the Rights of the Child** will hold its 47th session January to February 2008. The following State reports are planned to be considered: **Dominican Republic, Georgia, and Timor-Leste.** Under the Optional Protocol to CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the following State reports are

expected to be considered: **Chile, Kuwait and Timor-Leste.** Under the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict the following State reports are expected to be considered: **Chile, Germany, Ireland, Kuwait and Timor-Leste.**

For further information please visit:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/> (Click on Human Rights Bodies - CRC).

14 January to 1 February 2008 - CEDAW

The **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** is scheduled to hold its 40th session from 14 January to 1 February 2008. The following is a list of States parties reports provisionally scheduled to be examined during the next session: **Saudi Arabia, Bolivia, Burundi, France, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco and Sweden.**

More information at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs47.htm>.

18 February to 7 March 2008- CERD

The next session of the **Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** is scheduled to take place from 18 February to 7 March 2008 in Geneva. The Committee will consider the following reports during the session: **Republic of Moldova, Italy, Republic of Fiji Islands, Belgium, Dominican Republic, United States of America (to be confirmed) and Nicaragua.** Under the Committee's review procedure, whereby it considers country situations in the absence of a State party report, the following are tentatively listed for review: **Gambia, Monaco, Bulgaria, United Arab Emirates and Panama.**

For more information please refer to:

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