



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

WINTER SESSION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

DRAFT SYNOPSIS of the meeting held on 26 January 2017

1. Opening of the meeting

Michel Aguilar, Committee Chair, opened the sitting and mentioned the difficult context, which was placing a strain on democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE:

2. **adopted** the meeting agenda

3. **unanimously adopted** the synopsis of the meeting held on 21 June 2016

4. **Activities of the Committee Chair and Vice-Chairs since June 2016**

The Chair reported on his activities since the June 2016 session, i.e. representations at the following events:

- the World Forum for Democracy;
- the exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue organised by the Committee of Ministers;
- an exchange of views in December 2016 with 18 heads of associations and federations of Turkish civil society, in particular on the situation of women and human rights.

Iamvi Totsi, Vice-Chair of the Committee, described her participation in:

- “Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” Day on 17 October 2016, held by the “Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” Working Group in Strasbourg in the presence of some one hundred participants, in particular Polish, Greek and Spanish NGOs. Poverty was increasing and the European Social Charter had to become the pillar of European rights so as to ensure social cohesion in Europe;
- The World Forum for Democracy in November 2016 where she had attended most of the workshops. Two workshops on Brazil and Japan had been very successful in terms of the quality of the work and their thematic approach;
- The World Human Rights Day organised on 10 December 2016 by the European Youth Centre in connection with the No Hate Speech youth campaign. The campaign aims to address and combat hate speech by mobilising young people as participants and multipliers working towards a culture of human rights and democratic citizenship.

Simon Matthijssen, Vice-Chair of the Committee, described his participation, in October 2016, in the exploratory mission organised by Anna Rurka. This item was discussed in detail at the plenary meeting.

5. Progress report on the work of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)

Jean-Bernard Marie, representative of the Conference of INGOs on the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), underlined the following points:

- the status of participant in the CDDH, a body comprising governmental experts representing the 47 member states, gave the Conference a responsibility not only of participation but also of effectiveness;
- the preparatory work was carried out by drafting groups whose results were validated by the CDDH. The representative of the Conference of INGOS also took part in these drafting groups, which also comprised governmental experts;
- the Recommendation "Human rights and business" adopted on 2 March 2016 by the Committee of Ministers would be followed up at an intergovernmental conference to be held in Strasbourg on 6 June 2017;
- the "Human rights in culturally diverse societies" guidelines had been adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 March 2016;
- the feasibility study on "The impact of the economic crisis and austerity measures on human rights in Europe" had been approved on 3 February 2016 by the Committee of Ministers, which had invited the CDDH "*to take it into account, as appropriate, in its work in the field of social rights*".
- the participation of the Conference of INGOs in the work of the new drafting groups of the CDDH for the present biennium:
 - ✓ *Drafting Group on Social Rights (CDDH-SOC: the Conference had made a written contribution to the study prepared by the Group Rapporteur*
 - ✓ *Drafting Group on female genital mutilations and forced marriage (CDDH-MF)*
 - ✓ *Drafting Group on Civil Society and National Human Rights Institutions (CDDH-INST)*
 - ✓ *Drafting Group on Migration and Human Rights (CDDH-MIG)*
 - ✓ *Drafting Group on freedom of expression and links to other human rights (CDDH-EXP)*

With regard to the participation of the INGO Conference in the work of these different drafting groups, several delegates had joined the CDDH representative in accordance with their area of expertise. The INGO members of the Conference were invited, on the basis of their experience and expertise, to make their contribution to the work of these different groups. [Link to the page of the Steering Committee for Human Rights](#)

Anne Nègre, Gender Equality Expert, spoke about her collaboration in the Drafting Group on female genital mutilations and forced marriage (CDDH-MF), underlined her participation in the 2nd meeting, which was held in September 2016 and where the discussions had concerned the drafting of a good practices tool for member states. She asked the INGOs to send her relevant elements by the end of March as a contribution to the Group's discussions and the structure and possibilities of the tool.

[Link to the meeting report](#)

She also represented the Conference of INGOs on an ad hoc working group on the drafting of a recommendation on gender equality and asked for information on women's place in the audio-visual world, including video games.

Heard Marie-José Schmitt recall the Recommendation concerning the follow-up to the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan which was adopted by the Conference of INGOs and

transmitted to the Committee of Ministers at the June 2015 session. The Committee of Ministers instructed the Disability Unit to develop a strategy for the years to come. This Strategy, entitled "Human Rights: A Reality for All", was approved by the Committee of Ministers on 30 November 2016 and covers the years 2017-2023. Its objective is to assist States to implement the United Nations Convention which they have signed and ratified.

It covers five priority areas: 1) Equality and non-discrimination, 2) Awareness raising, 3) Accessibility, 4) Equal recognition before the law, 5) Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse.

A high-level conference to launch this strategy would be held in Cyprus in March 2017; The Conference of INGOs was entrusted with the moderation of the round table "Equal recognition before the law" which implies a change of legal protection laws in Europe to replace substituted decision-making with systems of supported decision-making.

6. Michel Aguilar took stock of the work being done by the Bioethics Committee (DH-BIO) and said that he had taken part in the seminar on "International Case-Law and Bioethics: Insight and Foresight", held by the Cypriot chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg on 5 December 2016 .

[Link to the Bioethics site](#)

7. Mikaël Poutiers, legal expert in the Council of Europe Children's Rights Division, presented two initiatives:

- The Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which had been opened for signature in Lanzarote in 2017, had been signed by all Council of Europe member states and ratified by 42 countries. Mr Poutiers invite the Conference of INGOs to exert pressure on the five member states which had not ratified the Convention, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom. As a result of the fact that the Convention was also open to non-member states of the Council of Europe, Morocco and Tunisia were also in the process of adhering to the Convention. The main aims were prevention, protection and prosecution. [Web page of the Lanzarote Committee](#)

- European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse took place every year on 18 November ([link](#)). Its main aim was to raise public awareness and prevent such acts. In this context, a world forum organised by [ECPAT international](#) entitled 'Global forum for adult survivors of childhood sexual exploitation' and a photo exhibition had been held.

Hélène Garrigues and Geert Priem, heads of the Working Group on Children's Rights reported on the first meeting, which had taken place during the session. Although the aim of this working group was to take stock of practices on the ground that are in line with the Council of Europe's new strategy on children's rights, the group members reserved the possibility of re-evaluating and adjusting this objective at its next meeting, in accordance with the progress made in their work. For the summer session of the Conference, the working group encouraged the INGOs to send it examples of good practices, which would allow it to take stock of both existing initiatives and documentary resources.

8. Anne Kraus took stock of the links between the Conference of INGOs, the Advisory Council on Youth and the European Steering Committee for Youth (CCJ/CDEJ) and mentioned that the latter were working on a document concerning young people's mental health.

9. The Chair referred to the statement by Loredana Tassone (Federation of European Bars) in January 2016 on a draft text on IT data storage in the context of judicial procedures. The Federation of European Bars had submitted a draft recommendation in June 2016 for adoption.

Subject to the changes made in light of the discussions, **the Committee unanimously adopted** the draft recommendation on "Surveillance of lawyers: the need for standards safeguarding client confidentiality". The draft would be submitted to the Plenary Conference for adoption on 27 January 2017.

10. The heads of the committee's working groups described the work currently being undertaken:

"Fight against hate speech" working group (Gilles Bloch):

- Launching of the French campaign at the European Youth Centre that very same day. The working group had been invited to draw up a roadmap and proposals;
- Response to the expectations of society with regard to the fight against hate speech online and in public spaces.

"Extreme poverty and human rights" working group (Maritchu Rall and Jean-Gabriel Prieur):

- Preparing the "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights" Day to be held on 17 October 2017. In October 2016 some one hundred participants from Greek, Polish and Spanish INGOs had come together to discuss youth poverty and the responses of civil society;
- Taking stock of what had been done over the previous four years by the Council of Europe bodies which had signed the Joint Declaration 2012 "Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe" to meet the challenges arising from the growth in poverty.

"Migration, human rights and co-development" working group (Hugo Castelli and Simon Robert):

- Organisation of the side event "Human rights and business" on the regulation of the activities of multinationals for a better respect of human rights and local development on 25 January 2017. The side-event illustrated the consequences of the absence of regulation with regard to the activities of multi-nationals in countries such as Bangladesh. The Recommendation ["Human rights and business", which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 March 2016](#), had been presented on this occasion.
- As the Recommendation prepared by this working group required a number of legal adjustments, it was agreed that it would be presented to the Human Rights Committee for adoption at the June 2017 session. It would then be presented to the Conference of INGOs for adoption.

Anne Nègre, Gender Equality Expert, referred to the organisation of the *side event* "Are religions a place of emancipation for women? Progress and setbacks", which took place on 21 June 2016. [The summary of this encounter](#) appeared on her blog. In reply to a request to set up a working group on this theme, the Committee Chair said that the matter would be given consideration.

The "Digital technology and human rights" working group (Iamvi Totsi)

- This group was set up as the outcome of a discussion by the Council of Europe's Bioethics Committee on emerging technologies and their impact on human life and the sectors which will concern us;
- Lines of enquiry: digital accessibility (*big data, open data*), governance (not only monitoring and transparency but also the right to be forgotten, the right to peace of mind, the right to disconnect etc.), the right to security (protection to a private life in opposition to one's public life, platforms), and new forms of exclusion;

- Take stock of what already exists in the legal field with regard to protection, case-law, etc.

The Chair underlined the importance of the Conference's work on the intergovernmental committees.

Anje Wiersinga spoke of the draft declaration of support for the letter from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe concerning the draft legislation on the decriminalisation of certain types of domestic violence in the Russian Federation. The draft text would be submitted for adoption at the Conference of INGOs on 27 January 2017.

Maritchu Rall
Committee Rapporteur