



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

SUMMER SESSION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONF/HR(2014)SYN2

Strasbourg, 31 July 2014

<p>DRAFT SYNOPSIS OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2014</p>
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1. Annelise Oeschger, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, **opened** the meeting and urged the INGOs to consult the [report by the Secretary General on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe](#) issued in May. The report set out proposals for the years ahead. She welcomed the release of the human rights defender, Ales Bialiatski in Belarus, Vice-President of FIDH (an INGO holding participatory status with the Council of Europe), but pointed out that many human rights defenders in Belarus were still in prison. In addition, she said that under item 4 of the agenda, updates would be provided by the three working groups, namely Human Rights Defenders, Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and Co-development, Migration and Human Rights.

The Human Rights Committee:

2. **Adopted** the draft agenda [[CONF/HR\(2014\)OJ1](#)]
3. **Adopted** the draft synopsis of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 [[CONF/HR\(2014\)SYN1](#)]
4. **Follow-up to recommendations of the Conference of INGOs and activities of the working groups**
 - **Working Group for the Abolition of Torture in Europe**

Heard a statement by Nicolas Huet, representative of the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT) and head of the Working Group for the Abolition of Torture in Europe, on plans for a seminar in 2015 on preventing torture in central and eastern Europe. The purpose of the event would be to bring together civil society, the authorities and national prevention mechanisms with a view to:

- helping to abolish torture in the countries concerned;
- building the capacity of civil society in the target countries;
- raising awareness among the public and the authorities and developing synergy and a regional strategy.

- **Follow-up group on the three texts on human rights and religions adopted in June 2013 and January 2014 by the Conference of INGOs ([link to texts adopted](#))**

Heard a statement by François Becker, head of the follow-up group, on the work plan:

Short-term activities: the preparation of a document on human rights and religions setting out a brief presentation and the three texts adopted. It would be distributed to all the INGOs and the heads of the other pillars of the Council of Europe. Every year, the Committee of Ministers held a meeting with religious leaders in Europe; this year's meeting would be held in Baku on 1 and 2 September. Action addressed at all member states and the various philosophies was planned.

Medium-term activities: a colloquy on human rights and religions would be held in Brussels with various round tables on the topics covered in the report with a view to mobilising the EU.

The Committee Chair said that the follow-up plan had been co-ordinated with the President of the Conference of INGOs and asked those INGOs interested to contact the follow-up group (frbecker@orange.fr).

- **[Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on “The protection of minors against excesses of sects”](#)**

Heard a statement by Danièle Muller-Tulli from the European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Cults and Sects (FECRIS), co-ordinator of follow-up to the **recommendation on [Sectarian Excesses and Violations of Human Rights](#)**, indicating that:

- the proposed PACE recommendation based on the report by the French MP, Rudy Salles, on “The protection of minors against excesses of sects”, had been rejected by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 10 April 2014;
- the resolution accompanying Rudy Salles's draft report had, unfortunately, been radically changed with 54 amendments. A campaign of denigration had been organised by opponents;
- the French plan to set up a European monitoring centre on sects to forge a “European consensus” on the matter had failed.

- **Human Rights Defenders:**

Heard a statement by Dimitri Makarov from the International Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM), joint head of the working group, in which he:

- said that the group's work would mainly be conducted online and would be ongoing;
- underlined that many human rights defenders were being held in prison in several countries;
- gave a brief presentation of the situation in Belarus and in Azerbaijan, where, as in other countries, people co-operating with the Council of Europe were being prosecuted.

The Committee Chair said that in this context the Conference of INGOs could reiterate its positions ([cf. declaration adopted by the Conference on 26 June 2014](#)).

- **Working Group on Co-development, Migration and Human Rights**

Heard a statement by Marie-Christine Davy from AIC International, joint head of the working group, indicating that:

- the Committee of Ministers had adopted a [Declaration on the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights](#) on 16 April 2014;
- in this connection, a side event would be held on 27 January 2015 with the participation of migrants from Africa. She asked the INGOs to provide objective data on migration flows. A draft resolution would be presented describing the situation in Europe regarding migration flows in relation to [International Labour Organisation Convention 169](#) and accounting transparency for extractive companies in Africa and Latin America so as to avoid fraud and foster economic development in the countries where they operated.

5. Article 30 of the European Social Charter on the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion: a positive obligation on states to address the crisis

- The negative impact of austerity measures on the lives of people living in poverty and efforts to address the problem

Martine Schmelck presented the human rights situation as seen through the work of *Médecins du Monde* in Greece, with a special focus on access to care by children and pregnant women. She underlined the following:

The austerity measures had led to massive cuts in public health spending, with reductions in health care, closures of public services, cuts in prevention programmes and a sharp increase in the share of consultation fees and charges for medicines borne by patients themselves. At present, almost 3 million citizens, or roughly 30% of the population, had no health insurance. There were many direct impacts on health and the “collateral damage” was often devastating: major difficulties in accessing perinatal care for pregnant women and vaccinations for children; violence towards and stigmatisation of drug users and sex workers; hate speech and brutal attacks on migrants.

Civil society and national, European and international institutions all needed to be mobilised so as to attempt to improve the situation. Information could be obtained by writing to martine.schmelck@medecinsdumonde.net and reading the report, [Access to healthcare for the most vulnerable in a Europe in social crisis](#).

The Chair referred to the massive human rights violations in the country and others following the austerity measures imposed by the EU Troika and to the courage of the “nameless” human rights defenders – this would be a key point of the message for 17 October 2014.

- Preparations for 17 October 2014 – International Day for the Eradication of Poverty in Turin, co-ordinated by the Working Group on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

Heard a statement by Annelise Oeschger, indicating that the day would focus on [Article 30 of the European Social Charter](#) and its implementation. A High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter was to be held in Turin on 17 and 18 October 2014 by the Council of Europe, the Italian Government and the Turin city authorities in the context of the Italian Presidency of the EU. The aim was to bring together policy makers from the Council of Europe’s member states and institutions and from the EU to discuss the relaunching of the system of standards based on the Charter and its implementation throughout Europe in a period of crisis and a phase of recovery. The INGOs’ message for the day would be conveyed to the high-level conference by the President of the Conference of INGOs.

6. **The contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the [ONE IN FIVE Campaign](#) and the [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#)**

Heard a statement by Anna Rurka from the European Committee for Home-based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF), Conference representative for childhood and family and joint head of the Working Group on Intersectoral Co-operation for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, indicating that:

- The group's activities tied in with Article 10 of the Convention, which dealt with co-operation between government agencies and civil society in supporting child victims or perpetrators of sexual violence and exploitation of children. The NGOs were invited to reply to the questionnaire which would be distributed on 26 June during the plenary Conference so as to provide input for the replies to be analysed at the next meeting of the Committee of the Parties of the Lanzarote Convention. The working group had set up three national groups, in Portugal, Italy and France, which brought together public and private stakeholders to compensate for the fact that, in spite of the favourable legislative environment, there was a problem of co-ordination between players, which resulted in the dual victimisation of the children.

Future activities:

- In Lisbon, the national group would be turned into the Children Free of Violence national monitoring centre, which would be inaugurated on 3 October 2014;
- In Italy, a seminar would be held at the end of October to bring together the national groups/monitoring centre from the three countries and set up an international network. NGOs present in Italy, Portugal and France which were interested in the campaign were urged to co-operate with the working group.

The ONE IN FIVE Campaign: the local and regional impetus given to the campaign by the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#)

Heard a statement by Joanne Hunting, Congress Secretariat, Co-Secretary of the Current Affairs Committee, on recent developments in the ONE IN FIVE campaign launched in 2010. The Congress was the closest and most suitable level for raising local authorities' awareness so that they introduced policies to combat the sexual abuse of children. In 2012, it had launched a [Pact of Towns and Regions](#), which set out a list of initiatives in four strands: prevention, protection, prosecution and participation. The pact was open for signature by associations. She urged NGOs to sign up to it and raise the awareness of their members and target groups. There were many tools in the campaign.

7. **[Draft recommendation on Gender-based violence as a political weapon](#)** prepared by the Working Group on Gender Perspectives in Political and Democratic Processes, in Particular during and after Conflicts, headed by Anje Wiersinga from the International Alliance of Women (AIF) – item presented by the Committee Chair

The Committee:

Was given the reasons for the draft recommendation and highlighted the substantial work done by the working group within the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee in terms of arranging on the Conference of INGOs' behalf the roundtable being held the same day on [Gender perspectives – Peace and Security](#).

Discussed and amended the draft recommendation on gender-based violence as a political weapon, which it **approved** unanimously less one abstention. The text was to be presented to the plenary Conference on 26 June 2014 for adoption.

8. **Contribution by the Conference of INGOs to the [Council of Europe No Hate Speech campaign](#)**

Heard Philippe Grolleau, Pax Romana, project co-ordinator, present a rapid survey to determine NGOs' perceptions of hate speech.

Heard a statement by Bridget O'Loughlin, Campaign Co-ordinator, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Youth Department, on the campaign, which had kicked off in March 2013 and would run until March 2015. She presented a video on the subject produced by young people from Portugal. The campaign employed many communication tools (website, Facebook, Twitter, etc) and involved specific days devoted to vulnerable groups and minorities. One day a month was given over to activities to support refugees and asylum seekers. There was an activity to promote the idea of declaring 22 July the Day against Hate Crimes. [A manual to support the No Hate Speech Movement](#) had been drawn up.

Heard a statement by Gilbert Meyer, member of the *Regards d'Enfants* association chaired by Brigitte Kahn – the main purpose of which was to inform, train and educate children in Europe about human rights – describing a pilot operation to be carried out in Alsace (France) for a year. It was part of the efforts to combat racism and anti-Semitism. An educational committee comprising representatives of the French education authorities, parents, the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA), the *Mémorial du Déporté Résistant* and religious associations and supported by the French Ministry of the Interior, was intended to respond to the main need expressed by young people, namely opposing the rise in physical and verbal violence in schools.

9. **[Draft recommendation on Combating anti-Semitism in Europe](#)**

Heard a statement by Gérard Fellous, expert from the Task Force on Taking Action against Anti-Semitism in Europe set up by the committee as part of its contribution to the Combating Hate Speech 2014-2016 project. The main points concerned the following:

- anti-Semitism had been worsening in almost all Council of Europe member states since the 2000s;
- an increase in instances of anti-Semitism in Europe had been noted, in particular, by the Fundamental Rights Agency, ECRI and private bodies;
- in 2007, the Parliamentary Assembly, in Resolution 1563, had regretted that the Middle East conflict had had an impact on the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe (...) This was especially the case among many immigrants in European cities. Over the last seven years, the situation had deteriorated and there had been a number of deaths;
- the social media enabled those people most susceptible to anti-Semitism to be mobilised. It was there that propagandists were now becoming active;
- NGOs had a key part to play in bringing about a vigorous and public response to them.

Unanimously **approved** the draft recommendation on combating anti-Semitism in Europe following amendment. The text would be presented to the plenary Conference on 26 June 2014 for adoption.

10. **[Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the promotion of human rights of older persons](#)** of 19 February 2014

Heard a statement by Alain Koskas, FIAPA, co-ordinator of the Working Group on Violence against the Elderly, who had taken part in the drafting of the recommendation at the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) from 2012 to 2014. Following the adoption of the recommendation, a conference had been held in Warsaw to promote the text. A further conference had been held in Paris on 17 June concerning both the Social Charter and the recommendation. From 18 to 20 June, French and Italian Parliamentary delegations had discussed the situation of elderly migrants on the basis of the Social Charter and the recommendation. In 2014, the UN had appointed a special rapporteur on older people's rights.

11. Reform of the European Court of Human Rights: for information, Jean-Bernard Marie, representative of the Conference of INGOs on the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)

As far as the long-term reform of the European Court of Human Rights was concerned, the real issue was the human rights protection system itself, which was being revisited. In connection with the High-Level Conference on the future of the Court held in Brighton from 18 to 20 April 2012, Drafting Group F had met in March and May 2014. A conference on the reform of the Court in Oslo on 7 and 8 April 2014 had produced proposals for maintaining and improving the system with its fundamentals: the independence of the judiciary and access by individuals to the international court. The Conference of INGOs had to be particularly watchful regarding the proposed reforms. At the same time, the co-operation of the Co-development, Migration and Human Rights Working Group on the subject of business and human rights was important. In conclusion, he drew attention to the [Report by the CDDH of 6 June 2014 on The impact of the economic crisis and austerity measures on human rights in Europe](#).

12. Other business

The Chair invited members to take part in the round table on [Gender perspectives – Peace and Security](#) in the Palais de l'Europe at 1 pm.

At the close of the meeting, Maritchu Rall, Rapporteur, extended a few words of friendship and thanks to Annelise Oeschger, whose term as Chair was ending: "Now that you have reached the end of your term, I would like to underline the energy and passion with which you have defended and promoted human rights, especially those of the poorest groups. You have taken a woman's approach to poverty and demonstrated this fully through all your actions and activities. Please accept my heartfelt thanks and those of all the INGOs in the committee who have witnessed your commitment and work."

Maritchu Rall
Committee Rapporteur