

10 April 2017

Member States of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Re: CSW's application for UN ECOSOC Consultative Status

Excellencies,

We are writing to you requesting that you vote in favour of Christian Solidarity Worldwide's (CSW's) appeal for UN ECOSOC consultative status in April 2017.

CSW is a human rights advocacy organisation with almost 40 years' experience of promoting the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in over 20 countries worldwide. Its advocacy work is firmly rooted in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

CSW engages regularly with United Nations mechanisms providing evidence-based analysis. It applied in 2009 for consultative status in order to broaden the scope of its work with key human rights advocacy platforms, including the Human Rights Council and General Assembly.

On 3 February 2017, the UN Committee on NGOs voted to reject CSW's application after repeated deferrals. Since 2009, CSW has provided timely and comprehensive answers to over 80 questions from the Committee, to no avail.

We, the undersigned, are disappointed at the Committee's decision and deeply concerned about the wider message that the rejection of CSW's application sends regarding the Committee's commitment to facilitating NGO access to UN mechanisms.

CSW's situation is not unique. In May 2016, over 230 NGOs raised concerns about the Committee's repeated deferral and denial of NGO applications for consultative status, which effectively blocks a number of NGOs from participating fully in UN processes.

This deferral and denial of applications threatens democracy within the UN system by undermining accountability, transparency and inclusiveness. It is also inconsistent with the Committee's stated aims contained in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 regarding the consultative relationship between the UN and NGOs.

According to the resolution, not only should the NGO Committee "ensure, to the extent possible, participation of non-governmental organisations from all regions, and particularly from developing countries, in order to help to achieve a just, balanced, effective and genuine involvement of non-governmental organisations from all regions and areas of the world [sic]"; it is also required to "pay particular attention to non-governmental organizations that have special expertise or experience upon which the Council may wish to draw."

As one of the few NGOs advocating for FoRB for people of all faiths and none at the UN, the hampering of CSW's ability to participate fully in UN processes also undermines the promotion of this right within the UN system at a time when religious narratives are increasingly impacting the political and social order.

Excellencies, we urge you to vote in favour of CSW's appeal for consultative status, thereby upholding the principle of facilitating NGO access to UN mechanisms in a fair and non-discriminatory manner, while also ensuring that FoRB is protected and promoted efficiently within the UN system.

Yours Sincerely,

The Undersigned

1. **Lord David ALTON of Liverpool**, House of Lords, United Kingdom.
2. **Deputy Dr Gerardo AMARILLA**, former President of Uruguayan Parliament.
3. **David ANDERSON MP** (Canada)- Official Opposition Critic for International Human Rights and Religious Freedom and member of Steering Group of The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB).
4. **Dr Andrew BENNETT**, former Canadian Ambassador for International Religious Freedom.
5. **Baroness Elizabeth BERRIDGE**, House of Lords, United Kingdom, Co-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and Chair of Steering Group of The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB).
6. **Professor Heiner BIELEFELDT**, former UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief and member of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) panel of experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief.
7. **Sonja BISERKO**, founder and President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, member of the UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the UN Group of Independent Experts on Accountability for human rights in the DPRK.
8. **His Eminence Cardinal Charles Maung BO**, Cardinal Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar.
9. **Kjell Magne BONDEVIK**, former prime minister of Norway.
10. **Marzuki DARUSMAN**, former Attorney-General of Indonesia and former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).
11. **Ján FIGEL'**, the European Union (EU) Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the European Union.
12. **Rev Dr Jeremiah M. GADO**, International President, Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) & International President, New Life For All (NLFA).
13. **Daniel Toft JAKOBSEN**, Danish Parliament Chair of Danish Network of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief.
14. **Theresa, KACHINDAMOTO**, Paramount Chief and Head of the Kachindamoto Foundation.
15. **Andrew KHOO**, Malaysian Bar.

16. **Justice Michael KIRBY**, retired Justice of the High Court of Australia and former Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).
17. **The Most Reverend Dr. Benjamin A. KWASHI**, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Jos and Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Jos in the Church of Nigeria.
18. **Jung-Hoon LEE**, Ambassador for North Korean Human Rights, Republic of Korea.
19. **Deputy Roberto DE LUCENA** (Brazil).
20. **John McCARTHY**, former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See.
21. **Senator José MEDEIROS** (Brazil).
22. **Deputy Leonardo QUINTÃO**, member of Brazilian House of Deputies.
23. **Jose RAMOS-HORTA** Nobel Laureate and former President of Timor Leste.
24. **Engineer Samuel L.S. SALIFU**, 2012 Winner of the Stefanus Prize for Freedom of Religion or Belief.
25. **Charles SANTIAGO MP** (Malaysia), member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Parliamentarians for Human Rights.
26. **Dr Ahmed SHAHEED**, the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief.
27. **Jim SHANNON MP** (United Kingdom), Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief.
28. **The Most Reverend Archbishop Desmond TUTU**, Nobel Laureate and Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town.
29. **Alissa WAHID**, Founder of Gusdurian Network.
30. **Professor Yozo YOKOTA**, former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar and member of the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Cc:

His Excellency Mr Peter Thomson, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

His Excellency Mr Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli, President of the United Nations Human Rights Council,
Member States of the UN General Assembly,

His Excellency Mr António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General.