



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

July 2005

Dear NGO friends,

RE: NGO WORKSHOP ON OP-ICESCR, FRANCE, SEPTEMBER 2005

The International Commission of Jurists has much pleasure in advising you of an NGO Advocacy Coordination and Development Workshop for the campaign for an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to be held on Thursday 8 September and Friday 9 September 2005, in Nantes, France. This NGO Workshop is a satellite event to the High Level Experts Seminar on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights hosted by the French Government (by the Ambassador for Human Rights and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which is to be held in the French town of Nantes from Monday 5 September until Wednesday 7 September 2005. A preparatory NGO meeting will also be held on Sunday 4 September.

Due to the nature of the event, participation at the NGO Workshop will be limited to those who are actively working on the campaign for an Optional Protocol to the ICESCR and who are committed to continuing to contribute to advocacy coordination and development both at the Workshop and in the time that follows. Unfortunately, due to the limited funding available for this event, it is necessary that participants are able to fund their own participation, including all travel and accommodation expenses. Further details regarding the programme of the NGO Workshop, the NGO preparatory meeting, the High Level Experts Seminar and the practical arrangements for each of these events will be forwarded separately to those who are selected to attend. Although the official seminar will be simultaneously translated into both French and English, these facilities will not be available at the NGO Workshop, which will be conducted in English.

The High Level Experts Seminar on ESC rights organised by the French Government provides a very important opportunity for all of us who are involved in the campaign for an Optional Protocol to the ICESCR to further our work on this issue, as it is hoped that this event will substantially contribute to the ongoing debate on this topic and further develop the discussions prior to the next UN Working Group to be held in February 2006. A large number of experts have been invited to the High Level Experts Seminar, and along with a significant NGO presence, this will allow for informed debate on the various aspects of an Optional Protocol and the benefits and modalities of protecting ESC rights through such a mechanism. The target audience for the official seminar are diplomats, with the aim of the event being to further the political discussions on this important issue. This event is not open to the public, and is by invitation only. It is hoped that those NGO representatives invited by the ICJ to attend the NGO Workshop will also be invited by the French Government to attend the official seminar, however this decision will be dependent upon a number of factors outside of our control.

The satellite NGO Workshop is an opportunity to capitalise on the presence of many NGO representatives in the same place at the same time, to meet face-to-face to discuss the broad NGO campaign for an OP, and to strategise regarding methods for coordinating advocacy and developing policy positions on substantive areas of concern within the OP debate. These two aims (to develop advocacy strategies and refine positions on substantive elements of the OP) will be achieved through one and a half days of interactive workshop meetings, held on Thursday 8 September and the morning of Friday 9 September 2005. In preparation for coordinating NGO input throughout the official conference, we will also be holding a half day NGO preparatory meeting on the Sunday immediately prior to the official conference.

For those NGO representatives wishing to attend the NGO Workshop, please write to mahon@icj.org with a brief explanation about your organisation, the work you are doing, and your involvement in the campaign for an Optional Protocol. It will also be necessary to provide confirmation of your ability to fund your own participation. In order to ensure that the practical arrangements for your participation in this event can be organised in time, it is vital that we receive your expression of interest in participating no later than 1 August 2005.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the NGO Workshop, preparatory meeting, or the High Level Expert Seminar, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at mahon@icj.org or telephone on +41 22 733 1126 or +41 79 564 96 17.

Kind regards

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