



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

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Intervention by H.E. Mr. Karl LAGATIE, Deputy Permanent Representative during the ECOSOC Management Segment

Report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2023 resumed session - Draft Decision "Applications of non-governmental organizations for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council"

New York, 25/07/2023

Madame Chair,

Belgium subscribes to the EU statement.

We are convinced that civic space at the UN and meaningful participation by NGOs in its proceedings are necessary for an effective and legitimate multilateralism, now more than ever. They provide us with invaluable expertise and enrich debates by bringing voices directly from the field.

The UN Charter in its article 71 bestows unto the Economic and Social Council the responsibility to make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations. And that is why we are gathered here today.

One such arrangement is granting consultative status to NGOs. To fulfill this mandate the Economic and Social Council created the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations as one of its subsidiary body: a standing committee to, inter alia, screen applications and make recommendations thereon.

Unfortunately, the Committee has not been living up to this aspiration. We regret the many obstacles eligible NGOs face, such as irrelevant and repetitive questions, which ultimately lead to deferral of the decision on their applications.

Initiatives to reform the NGO Committee, with a view to increase its transparency, efficiency and accountability, have been proposed, but to no avail. Reform is overdue and we remain committed to work with all members of this Commission and the Committee itself in this regard.

That said, and until this situation might be resolved, we welcome initiatives like the decision presented today by the United States to grant consultative status to 7 eligible and credible NGOs.

They have been selected in a balanced and equitable manner. All of them have been deferred by the NGO Committee for more than four years, responding diligently to each and every question in a timely manner. They work across different regions, and their contributions would enhance the work of the United Nations across its three pillars, including work on international law, drug policy and the fight against transnational organized crime, and human rights. And all of them volunteered in order for their application to be brought forward by a vote.

The Economic and Social Council is the final decision-making authority as the parent body of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, its subsidiary. It must discharge itself of its important responsibility as stipulated in the UN Charter. We must act now to finally grant these NGOs consultative status and enable them to contribute to our work here at the UN. Belgium will vote in favor. We call on all members of this council to do the same.