

ECOSOC must defend NGOs' rights to freedom of expression and association

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(New York) - The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should reject the decision of its subsidiary body, the UN Committee on NGOs, to summarily reject an application by an NGO for access to the UN, without affording that NGO due process and in violation of the rights to freedom of expression and association.

ECOSOC will meet on Tuesday to consider the draft decisions of its subsidiary body, the NGO Committee. At that meeting, it will have the opportunity to reject the decision to close the application for consultative status of the NGO Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF). It must do so if the process of granting NGOs the rights to access and participate in UN meetings is to have any credibility at all.

During its January session, the NGO Committee took the [unprecedented step of denying the applicant NGO the right to speak](#) and respond to adverse assertions at the regular Q&A session held with Committee members, and then voted to close the NGO's application for ECOSOC accreditation. This accreditation is required for an NGO to be permitted to access and participate in many UN meetings.

These votes came after a joint statement where Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela requested that the application by KKF be summarily closed. They based their objection on concerns expressed by Viet Nam when KKF's application was first considered in 2012. At the time Viet Nam described KKF as 'unqualified for a consultative status with ECOSOC', alleging that it carried out 'politically motivated acts (...) undermining the national unity of the State of Viet Nam'.

'The NGO Committee allowed an NGO to be stigmatised, then silenced and then denied them the right to apply for access to the UN without any due process whatsoever,' ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw noted. 'This unacceptable act must be rejected by ECOSOC who should confirm the right of NGOs to freedom of expression and association in the process of applying for accreditation'.

'Beyond rejecting the NGO Committee's draft decision, ECOSOC must acknowledge that the NGO Committee operates in an unacceptably politicised and discriminatory fashion and take steps to institute procedural changes to ensure the NGO Committee acts impartially when considering the applications of NGOs,' added Ms Openshaw.

Contact: Eleanor Openshaw, Co-Director of New York Office, ISHR on e.openshaw@ishr.ch