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African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights

Commission Africaine des Droits de l'Homme & des Peuples

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**Cooperation between the African Commission on Human
and Peoples' Rights and NGOs**

**RESOLUTION ON THE CRITERIA FOR GRANTING AND ENJOYING
OBSERVER STATUS TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
WORKING IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITH THE AFRICAN
COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**RESOLUTION ON THE CRITERIA FOR GRANTING AND ENJOYING OBSERVER
STATUS TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN THE FIELD
OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITH THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON
HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, meeting in its 25th Ordinary Session, held in Bujumbura, Burundi, from 26 April - 5 May 1999.

Considering the provisions of article 45 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which establishes the competence and determines the mandate of the Commission;

Considering the Grand Bay (Mauritius) declaration and plan of action, adopted at the 1st African Ministerial Conference on Human Rights (12-16 April 1999), which «recognises the contribution made by African NGOs to the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa ...»;

Considering the provisions of Chapter XIII (Articles 75 and 76) of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission regarding representation of, and consultation with NGOs by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Considering that since its establishment in October 1987, 231 African and international non-governmental organisations have been granted observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Considering the Decision AHG/dec.126 (XXXIV) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government which requests the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to «undertake a review of the criteria for observer status with the Commission, with a view to enhanced efficiency and co-operation, and to suspend the granting of the said status until the adoption of the new criteria ...»;

Convinced of the need to strengthen its co-operation and partnership with NGOs working the field of human rights;

ADOPTS the new criteria for granting and enjoying observer status, the text of which is annexed to the present resolution;

DECIDES that the new criteria shall immediately enter into force;

REQUESTS the Secretary to the Commission to report at every Ordinary Session on the implementation of the present resolution.

ANNEX - CRITERIA FOR THE GRANTING OF AND FOR MAINTAINING OBSERVER STATUS WITH THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Chapter I

1. All Non-Governmental Organisations applying for observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights shall be expected to submit a documented application to the Secretariat of the Commission, with a view to showing their willingness and capability work for the realisation of the objectives of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
2. All organisations applying for observer status with the African Commission shall consequently:
 - (a) Have objectives and activities in consonance with the fundamental principles and objectives enunciated in the OAU Charter and in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
 - (b) Be organisations working in the field of human rights;
 - (c) Declare their financial resources.
3. To this effect, such an Organisation shall be requested to provide:
 - (a) A written application addressed to the Secretariat stating its intentions, at least three months prior to the Ordinary Session of the Commission which shall decide on the application, in order to give the Secretariat sufficient time in which to process the said application;
 - (b) Its statutes, proof of its legal existence, a list of its members, its constituent organs, its sources of funding, its last financial statement, as well as a statement on its activities.
4. The statement of activities shall cover the past and present activities of the Organisation, its plan of action and any other information that may help to determine the identity of the organisation, its purpose and objectives, as well as its field of activities.
5. The Commission shall put no application for Observer Status forward for examination without having been previously processed by the Secretariat.
6. The Commission's Bureau shall designate a rapporteur to examine the dossiers. The Commission's decision shall be notified without delay to the applicant NGO.

Chapter II: PARTICIPATION OF OBSERVERS IN PROCEEDINGS OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION

1. a) All observers shall be invited to be present at the opening and closing sessions of all Sessions of the African Commission.

b) An observer accredited by the Commission shall not participate in its proceedings in any manner other than as provided for in the Rules of Procedure governing the conduct of sessions of the African Commission.
2. All observers shall have access to the documents of the Commission subject to the condition that such documents:
 - a) shall not be of a confidential nature;

- b) deal with issues that are of relevance to their interests.

The distribution of general information documents of the African Commission shall be free of charge; the distribution of specialised documents shall be on a paid-for basis, except where reciprocal arrangements are in place.

3. Observers may be invited specially to be present at closed sessions dealing with issues of particular interest to them.
4. Observers may be authorised by the Chairman of the African Commission to make a statement on an issue that concerns them, subject to the text of the statement having been provided, with sufficient lead-time, to the Chairman of the Commission through the Secretary to the Commission.
5. The Chairman of the Commission may give the floor to observers to respond to questions directed at them by participants.
6. Observers may request to have issues of a particular interest to them included in the provisional agenda of the African Commission, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure.

Chapter III: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE AFRICAN COMMISSION AND OBSERVERS

1. Organisations enjoying observer status shall undertake to establish close relations of co-operation with the African Commission and to engage in regular consultations with it on all matters of common interest.
2. NGOs enjoying observer status shall present their activity reports to the Commission every two years.
3. Administrative arrangements shall be made, whenever necessary, to determine the modalities of this co-operation.

Chapter IV: FINAL PROVISIONS

1. The provisions of the General Convention on the privileges and immunities of the OAU and those of the Headquarters Agreement of the African Commission shall not apply to observers except as regards the granting of visas.
2. The Commission reserves the right to take the following measures against NGOs that are in default of their obligations:
 - non-participation in sessions;
 - denial of documents and information;
 - denial of the opportunity to propose items to be included in the Commission's agenda and of participating in its proceedings.
3. Observer status may be suspended or withdrawn from any organisation that does not fulfil the present criteria, after deliberation by the Commission.

Bujumbura, 5 May 1999.

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