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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-sixth session
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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE
PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION:

- (c) CO-ORDINATING ROLE OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS BODIES AND MACHINERY
DEALING WITH THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

Resolution 1989/54 adopted by the Commission on Human Rights on 7 March 1989 in paragraph 4 invited the Secretary-General "to request Governments, United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to express their views on the strengthening of the activities of the Centre for Human Rights, with special emphasis on new directions and forms, including increasing the representation of under-represented groups of States, notably the developing countries, in senior and policy-formulating posts in the Centre for Human Rights, while safeguarding the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and to submit a report setting out those views and opinions to the Commission at its forty-sixth session". The present report is submitted in pursuance of that request, and contains a summary of the replies received.

I. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

A. Governments

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

In response to the Commission's request, the Government of Burundi supports the proposal on the strengthening of the activities of the Centre for Human Rights, with special emphasis on new directions and forms, including increasing the representation of under-represented groups of States, notably the developing countries, in senior and policy-formulating posts in the Centre for Human Rights, while safeguarding the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

CANADA

The Government of Canada favours measures to enhance the effectiveness of the Centre for Human Rights. In this regard, we particularly welcome the reference in resolution 1989/54 to the importance of ensuring that, within the United Nations, sufficient resources should be allocated to human rights in general and to the Centre for Human Rights in particular. The resolution noted that these resources should be commensurate with the high priority attributed to the human rights programme in the United Nations system.

The Government of Canada notes that the General Assembly of the United Nations reaffirmed, in its resolution 35/210 (A/35/777), the principle set out in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations to the effect that "the paramount consideration in the employment of staff at every level is the need for the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity". The General Assembly further reaffirms in this resolution that the paramountcy of this consideration is compatible with equitable geographical distribution. The principle set out in Article 101 was also recently reaffirmed in paragraph 30 of the report of the Commission on Human Rights to the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.4/1988/85 and Corr.1) and in resolution 1989/54 of the Commission.

In regard to staffing, we also note two other relevant pronouncements by the Commission. In its resolution 1989/54, the Commission reaffirmed that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State or group of States. This should be read in conjunction with the statement in the same resolution where the Commission noted that "organizational changes, including staffing reviews and adjustments of the programme activities or resource allocation, should not adversely affect the functioning of the Centre but should rather strengthen its status and enhance its role.

FRANCE

The Government of France is fully aware of the need to strengthen the activities and means of the Centre for Human Rights, which has to face an ever-growing workload with resources that are practically unchanged. This is why the Prime Minister decided to offer the Centre for Human Rights micro-computers and software so as to help it to perform its task in optimum conditions.

With regard to staffing, the Government of France considers that it would certainly be desirable to increase the Centre's staff. Such an increase should be based, firstly, on the need to recruit persons of the highest competence and, secondly, on the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and the third preambular paragraph of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1989/54.

MOROCCO

Considering the steady increase in the activities and tasks entrusted to the Centre for Human Rights, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco takes the view that the Centre's activities in regard to the protection and promotion of human rights should be reinforced.

Morocco wishes to emphasize the importance of the Centre and its co-ordinating role and welcomes the efforts made to strengthen them. In this connection, it encourages and supports the endeavours of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Strengthening the activities of the Centre for Human Rights presupposes and requires an increase in the staff working in the cause of human rights, who must represent different schools of thought and social and legal systems. Morocco favours an increase in the Centre's staff provided that the opportunity is taken to recruit high-ranking staff from under-represented or unrepresented countries.

NIGERIA

The United Nations was informed on 15 January 1990 that the views of the Government of Nigeria will be furnished as soon as possible.

II. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

The Food and Agriculture Organization stated that it had no particular comments or information to offer on this matter.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

Any action aimed at strengthening the activities of the Centre for Human Rights would be welcome by the ILO which maintains close co-operation with the Centre in all fields of mutual interest.

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Good note is taken of the preamble of the resolution which underlines that sufficient resources should be allocated to Human Rights in order to enable the Centre to work out projects and programmes involving other organizations and thereby to play effectively its co-ordinating functions.

As the question of the co-ordinating role of the Centre is to be discussed during the forth-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, we take this opportunity to suggest that other organizations and institutions of the United Nations system dealing with Human Rights be invited to this meeting and take part in the debate.

III. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

MALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (AMDH)

With regard, firstly, to representation among high-ranking staff, we think that there is inequality between central, east and west Africa.

In the case of west Africa, representation is virtually non-existent.

There are States or groups of States which consider certain posts to be their exclusive preserve, and various posts where decisions are often taken are occupied by a succession of their nationals. It is time to remedy this situation, for at a moment when a great wind of democratization is sweeping through all Europe, it is essential to introduce an element of democratic transparency as regards the recruitment of high-ranking African staff to international human rights organs.

It is necessary for Africa, and particularly west Africa, to be equitably represented within the Centre for Human Rights as far as high-ranking staff are concerned.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

ICRC welcomes the co-operation established between itself and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, whether at Geneva, New York or regional training courses in human rights teaching, and wishes the Centre every success in its activities.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HIGHER STUDIES IN CRIMINAL SCIENCES

The Institute places its facilities and resources at the disposal of the Centre for holding regional meetings, particularly those involving the Arab world and Africa in view of the geographic physical proximity of the Institute to these regions.

The Institute is willing to conduct human rights training programmes, particularly in the field of criminal justice in co-operation with the Centre, whether conducted at the Institute or conducted in the Arab world or in Africa.

The Institute is willing to undertake a similar programme for Africa in co-operation with the Centre.

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RÄDDA BARNEN

Suggests a strengthening of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights on all children's issues. A focal point for all children's matters would be appreciated. Concerning posts in the Centre for Human Rights, staff with a knowledge of children is of primary concern to us and for the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

When the Committee on the Rights of the Child is established, after the ratification of 20 States, there is a unique possibility for the Centre to have informal discussions on special rights of children with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. For 1990 we would suggest a focussing on the child soldier issue in co-operation with United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and concerned non-governmental organizations.
