

Delegation of the
Republic of Iceland
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Position Paper for the Economic and Social Council

The Republic of Iceland, once a rather poor country, has over the last decades achieved rapid economic growth and counts today to one of the most developed countries of the world. Having successfully gone through this remarkable transition, Iceland is conscious about functioning as a role model for developing countries and is determined to share its experience and expertise to help less developed countries on their way to a higher standard of living. Iceland is proud to call itself a world leader in the field of gender equality, sustainable development and renewable energy sources and therefore looks forward to discussing the issues of International Cooperation for Migration Management, Global Management of Water and other Resources and the Review of the Role of Civil Society in the United Nations System before the ECOSOC.

I. International Cooperation for Migration Management

The Republic of Iceland remains firmly committed in support of the United Nations efforts to enhance international cooperation for migration management. Iceland strongly endorses the work of the Global Migration Group which was launched by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan in order to join different agencies active in the field of migration and to develop more cohesive migration policies.

The *High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2006* and the *Global Forum on Migration and Development in July 2007* put the issue of migration on the global agenda. The Republic of Iceland is determined to play an active role in migration management by cooperating with state actors from the national, regional and local level as well as with non-state actors.

Migration benefits the economy of both receiving and sending countries if a thorough regulation framework exists. Iceland acknowledges the positive effects of migration and its contribution to economic growth and development while simultaneously emphasizing the need of ensuring security and of reducing all negative effects of migration.

The Republic of Iceland is strongly concerned about protecting migrants' rights according to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and encourages all states to acknowledge the special need for gender sensitive policies in the field of migration since today, women make up about half of all migrants worldwide and count to the most vulnerable migrant groups. Furthermore, refugees are a group especially exposed to danger and need to be protected by the international community. Iceland secures refugees' rights according to the *Geneva Convention 1951* and the *Protocol 1967* and closely cooperates with the UNHCR by taking part in the resettlement programme and has since 1956 given new home to many refugees.

Occurring negative effects of migration need to be addressed in the future. Alarmed by a recurring linkage between human trafficking, smuggling and migration Iceland is determined to fight against organized crime in compliance with the *Convention against transnational organized crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* and remains firmly committed in its fight against irregular migration.

Migration management is possible only if sending and receiving countries work hand in hand and only if the root causes of migration are addressed can irregular migration be eradicated. The issue of migration has often been neglected and Iceland urges all states to take concerted actions now in order to enhance the situation of migrants worldwide.

II. Review of the Role of Civil Society in the United Nations System

The Republic of Iceland strongly supports the United Nations efforts for increased cooperation between states and civil society within the United Nations System. The ECOSOC is an important intermediary between non-governmental organizations and states and the list of non-governmental organizations having obtained consultative status before the ECOSOC has increased steadily over the last decades. Non-governmental organizations are active in all areas relevant to the United Nations and pursue UN goals as laid down in the *Millennium Declaration*. The former Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed the need of civil society's engagement in disarmament efforts in 2003. Iceland shares this view and believes that civil society's commitment is also especially crucial in the fight for gender equality and has welcomed that the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights has obtained consultative status in 2007.

Especially in the field of sustainable development information sharing and cooperation between state and non-state actors is of utmost importance and Iceland already supports increased cooperation between the government and civil society in this matter. The Republic of Iceland encourages all states to consult civil society more often on important matters and to actively involve non-governmental organizations in policy making. The *Rio Conference* in 1992 has demonstrated the increased role civil society is playing. The participation of non-governmental representatives from all sectors at world conferences can generate new ideas and increase the legitimacy of the decision-making process. However, it is also important to engage civil society on a smaller scale and to involve actors on the national, regional and local level.

The *ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31* defines the relationship between the ECOSOC and Civil Society Organizations. Iceland urges all states to ensure the full application of *Resolution 1996/31* in the decision to grant non-governmental organizations consultative status before the ECOSOC if all conditions are met and not to carry out discriminatory decisions against any non-governmental organization. However, the ECOSOC remains the responsible organ for the scrutiny of all nongovernmental organizations which have obtained consultative status and in case of misuse, the Council decides upon withdrawal or suspension of a non-governmental organization. The Republic of Iceland welcomes the United Nations initiatives to strengthen dialogue within the UN system between states and civil society and acknowledges the growing importance of civil society on the international stage.