

Human rights organisations called on the Hungarian government to regularly consult civil society in relation to the effective implementation of the recommendations formulated by the UN Human Rights Council during Hungary's Universal Periodic Review.

22 September 2011, Budapest - Yesterday afternoon representatives of several human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) met with delegates of the Hungarian Government at the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice to have a discussion about the future steps of implementing the recommendations accepted by the government in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The NGOs were critical of the government's demonstrated unwillingness to have effective and meaningful consultation with civil society prior to deciding which recommendations to accept and decline in the UPR process. The NGOs raised further concerns about some of the recommendations that were rejected by the state. Finally, the NGOs proposed that the government set up working groups consisting of NGO and government representatives, which would regularly convene to develop steps and measures required to implement the recommendations accepted by the government, and to monitor the implementation process. The representatives of the government indicated that they would respond to this proposal by the end of October.

The Universal Periodic Review was established by the General Assembly of the UN in 2006 with the aim of reviewing the human rights situation of all of the 193 UN member states every four years. In the UPR process the UN Human Rights Council examines whether and to what extent member states have fulfilled the human rights obligations they had agreed to. The UN member states formulated 148 recommendations to Hungary during its UPR session on 11 May 2011. Out of the 148 recommendations the Hungarian government accepted 113 and rejected 6 recommendations at the session, indicating that it would need further time to deliberate on the remaining 29 recommendations. The government resolution about the remaining recommendations, dated 2 September 2011, declared that 6 of them would be unconditionally accepted, 3 conditionally accepted, and 20 rejected.

A meeting between NGOs and the government was organised on short notice by Zoltán Balog, State Secretary for Social Inclusion, and Gergely Próhle, Deputy State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting took place a mere two days before Hungary's second UPR session in Geneva on 23 September 2011. NGOs present at the meeting raised objections about the government's lack of willingness to effectively and meaningfully involve civil society in its decision-making process about the UPR recommendations as only three working days were provided for NGOs to submit comments about the government's decision. This lack of willingness is particularly troublesome in light of some of the recommendations accepted by the government, which specifically require Hungary's government to consult and include civil society in the UPR process. The representatives of the NGOs also raised concerns about some of the recommendations, which had been rejected by the government. Inter alia, NGOs stressed that they cannot see any acceptable reasons for the government's refusal to include the prohibition of the death penalty either in the Hungarian Constitution or in a law requiring a two-thirds majority. They also criticised the government's failure to explicitly mention the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the new Constitution. Additionally, NGOs questioned the reason for the government's unwillingness to develop special legislation to combat domestic violence and to conduct a review of the regulations

about the administrative detention of asylum seekers, in relation to which the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled against Hungary on 20 September 2011.

NGOs present at the meeting requested that the government translate the recommendations made by the UN member states into Hungarian and publish the government's justifications for accepting or rejecting them. The NGOs also urged the government to name the bodies responsible for the implementation of each recommendation. In addition, they called for the formulation of thematic working groups (focusing on hate crime, fight against discrimination of women, LGBT people, Roma communities and other vulnerable groups, prison conditions, etc.), with the participation of both government and NGO representatives, to jointly develop concrete steps necessary to implement the accepted recommendations and to monitor the implementation process. In response, the State Secretary made a promise that the government would respond to the NGO's proposal by the end of October.

This press release is published by Amnesty International Hungary, Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, Chance for Children Foundation, European Roma Rights Centre, Háttér Support Society for LGBT People, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, MONA Hungarian Women's Foundation, Mental Disability Advocacy Center, Minority Rights Group, NANE Association, and PATENT Association.

For more information, please contact Orsolya Jeney, director, Amnesty International Hungary, on +36 70 3296417, email: jeney.orsolya@amnesty.hu.