

## **DCP's Consultative Status Denied by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations**

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, the Resumed 2009 Session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations reviewed the Democracy Coalition Project's application for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. After a three-year struggle, DCP lost a vote in the NGO Committee by 6-8-5.

Interested NGOs are granted general, special or roster consultative status with ECOSOC upon recommendation by the 19-member Committee. Groups enjoying general and special consultative status can attend meetings of the Council and subsidiary bodies and circulate statements. Those that have general status can, in addition, speak at meetings and propose items for the Council's agenda.

According to ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, which governs the consultative relationship of the UN with NGOs, status may be granted provided that the NGO can demonstrate that their program of work is of direct relevance to the aims and purposes of the United Nations. Specifically the resolution states:

“Major organizations one of whose primary purpose is to promote the aims, objectives and purposes of the United Nations and a furtherance of the understanding of its work may be accorded consultative status.”

For almost eight years DCP has supported and sought to strengthen the work of the United Nations on the protection and promotion of human rights and respect for democratic principles as enshrined in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through advancing civil society participation, international coalition-building and improving transparency and accountability of the UN's work, DCP has earned international recognition for its work.

“We are deeply disappointed in the decision of the Committee and fear political considerations rather than implementation of Resolution 1996/31 has informed the judgment of some Committee members,” says Dokhi Fassihian, executive director of the Democracy Coalition Project. “We are even more concerned about the general direction of the Committee, which has demonstrated increasing intolerance toward criticism or even differences of opinion with member states. Such intolerance and disrespect for the work of independent NGOs undercuts the very purpose of the consultative relationship which governments and NGOs should to enjoy at the United Nations.”

The eight governments that voted against DCP's application were Cuba, China, Sudan, Russia, Qatar, Egypt, Angola, and Burundi. The United Kingdom, Colombia, Peru, the United States, and Israel voted in favor. Pakistan, India, Turkey, Guinea, and Dominica abstained.

No official reason has yet been given for the Committee's decision. Decisions of the NGO Committee can be overturned by ECOSOC and decisions have been overturned

many times in the past. DCP will seek to ensure that the guidelines of Resolution 1996/31 will be upheld by ECOSOC at the upcoming session in July.