



**OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**



**Strengthening of popular participation, equity, social justice and non-discrimination as
essential foundations of democracy**

Commission on Human Rights Resolution: 2004/31

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling its previous resolutions on this issue,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 55/96 of 4 December 2000 and recalling its own resolution 2000/47 of 25 April 2000 on promoting and consolidating democracy,

Reaffirming its commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming also the commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, other instruments relating to human rights, and international law,

Stressing that all peoples have the right to self-determination, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,

Recognizing that democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing,

Recalling that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that the international community must treat all human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis,

Reaffirming the commitment made by Member States to strive for the full protection and promotion in all our States of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all,

Considering the major changes taking place on the international scene and the aspirations of all peoples for a democratic, participatory and fair international order based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all and respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, peace, democracy, justice, equality, rule of law, pluralism, development, better standards of living and solidarity,

Welcoming the commitment of all Member States, expressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, to work collectively for more inclusive political processes allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all countries,

Welcoming also the pledge of the international community at the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna in June 1993, to support the strengthening and promotion of

democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world,

Taking note of the commitment of States, expressed in the Declaration of Principles adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003, to ensure that everyone can benefit from the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies, so that all citizens in every country can participate actively in, and benefit fully from, the information society,

Recognizing that the equal participation of all individuals and peoples in the formation of just, equitable, democratic and inclusive societies can contribute to a world free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,

Emphasizing the importance of the equitable participation of all, without any discrimination, in domestic as well as global decision-making,

Considering that in the current context of globalization, whereby decisions affecting people's lives are often taken outside the national context, the application of the principles of democracy to the international and regional levels has taken on added importance,

Recognizing that development can only be sustainable on a long-term basis if development policies are responsive to people's needs and ensure people's participation both in their design and implementation, while stressing the fact that meeting the basic human needs essential for survival is a sine qua non condition for an effective democracy,

Emphasizing that the persistence of extreme poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and the participation of all citizens in the democratic processes in every society, and that the full participation of everyone in democratic societies fosters and enhances the struggle against poverty,

Reaffirming the need to create an environment - at the national and global levels alike - which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty,

Recalling that accountable and transparent governance at the national and international levels is critical for the creation of an environment that facilitates the development of democratic, prosperous and peaceful societies,

Reaffirming that democracy goes hand in hand with an effective, honest and transparent government, freely chosen and accountable for its management of public affairs,

Recognizing and respecting the rich and diverse nature of the community of the world's democracies, which arise out of all of the world's social, cultural and religious beliefs and traditions,

Bearing in mind that each society and every context has its own indigenous and relevant democratic institutional traditions, and that while no single institution can claim democratic perfection, the combination of domestic democratic structures with universal democratic norms is a formidable tool in strengthening both the roots and the reach of democracy and in advancing a universal understanding of democracy,

Recognizing that while all democracies share common features, differences between democratic societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity,

Aware of the importance of fostering a diversity of social contributions in strengthening people's participation, equity, social justice and non-discrimination, including the enhancement of non-governmental organizations, people's organizations, voluntary social organizations, trade unions, the private sector and other actors of civil society,

Aware also of the importance of ensuring the implementation of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression as well as to freedom of assembly and association, in accordance with articles 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Recalling the commitment undertaken by all States within the framework of the United Nations and other international organizations to work for the promotion of democracy and the rule of law,

1. *Declares* that popular participation, equity, social justice and non-discrimination are essential foundations of democracy;

2. *Reaffirms* that democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives and that in that context the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels should be universal and conducted without conditions attached;

3. *Also reaffirms* that while all democracies share common features, there is no one model of democracy; therefore we must not seek to export any particular model of democracy;

4. *Affirms* that the consolidation of democracy requires the promotion and protection of all human rights for everyone, both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, as established in the Declaration on the Right to Development;

5. *Also affirms* that the right to development is a crucial area of public affairs in every country and requires free, active and meaningful popular participation;

6. *Reaffirms* that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing;

7. *Stresses* that the consolidation of democracy requires that sustained economic growth and sustainable development of countries and communities foster the promotion and consolidation of democracies;

8. *Declares* that full popular participation is only feasible if societies have democratic political and electoral systems which guarantee to all their citizens the possibility both to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives, and to have equal access to public service, without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;

9. *Reaffirms* that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government and that this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures;

10. *Also reaffirms* that free and fair elections, popular participation and control, collective deliberation and political equality are essential to democracy and must be realized through a framework of accessible, representative and accountable institutions subject to periodic change or renewal;

11. *Recognizes* that improving access of every person to, and education in, the use of information and communication technologies could enhance popular participation in public affairs and the accountability of Governments;

12. *Also recognizes* that inequitable political, economic, cultural and social conditions can breed and foster racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which in turn exacerbate inequity;

13. *Reaffirms* that genuine equality of opportunity for all, in all spheres, including that of development, is fundamental to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

14. *Urges* all States to foster a democracy that, inspired by the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, promotes people's welfare, rejecting all forms of discrimination and exclusion, facilitates development with equity and justice, and encourages the most comprehensive and full participation of their citizens in the decision-making process and in the debate over diverse issues affecting society;

15. *Requests* all States and the international community further to endeavour to promote effective measures to eradicate poverty and promote just, equitable and inclusive societies;

16. *Invites* all mechanisms of the Commission and the human rights treaty bodies to continue taking into account, in the discharge of their respective mandates, the question of strengthening popular participation, equity, social justice and non-discrimination as the foundations of democracy;

17. *Decides* to continue its consideration of this issue at its sixty-first session, under the same agenda item.

*55th meeting
19 April 2004*

[Adopted by a recorded vote of 28 votes to 14,
with 11 abstentions. See chap. XI- E/2004/23 – E/CN.4/2004/127]