EURASIA-Net Final Conference
on
Trans Regional Platform and Joint Research Agenda on Protection of Minority Rights
Organized by
Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG)
Dates: 18-20 March, 2010
Venue: Swabhumi, Kolkata (India)

**Note on the Discussion on Possibilities of Trans-Regional Platform for
Protection of Minority Rights**

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1. We should take into account the earlier attempts to build such platforms at both inter-governmental and societal levels. The inter-governmental efforts have been around UN bodies on human rights and UN Conventions, also regional inter-governmental organs, while human rights groups too have participated in many of these initiatives.
2. Human rights groups have independently tried also in creating such platforms.
3. We have to take lessons from these efforts and understand their strength and weakness.
4. One feature marking these efforts is the wide divide in perceptions and reality between the developed world and the post-colonial world. These differences are around issues, such as modalities of dialogues and reconciliation, individual rights and group rights, the notion and practices of legal pluralism, the effect of anti-terrorism drive by the states on minorities, the depletion of common property resources, the impact of globalization, emergence of new minority groups, immigrants as new minorities, the principle of autonomy, etc. These issues have not only reinforced the global reality of discrimination, they have rendered some of the earlier legal understandings (as encoded in municipal and international law) inadequate. Similarly the process of marginalization has worsened the conditions of minorities. The root question that this programme has brought to light is: will the language of rights be enough to work as the basis of a trans-regional platform, or do we need justice as the language of claim making, fairness, and dialogue?
5. One more issue remains cardinal to this discussion. The principle of autonomy is linked to issues of federalism, decentralization, and devolution of power. It is also linked to the issue of subsidiarity. In short we may call it the federal idea – federalization of social, cultural, and political life based on horizontal linkages and not vertical alignments. The present programme has brought to light these lessons – namely, the need to think of new ways to protect rights of minority groups in diverse socio-cultural and political fields, such as media, representative organs, special methods to protect vulnerable sections, etc.
6. One good way to build such a platform may be to put as its basis the lessons we have learnt from this programme, and accordingly identify the possible constituents of such a platform – media activists, jurists, human rights thinkers and campaigners, political activists and representatives, and relevant institutions.
7. How to sustain such a platform will be a big issue. Mere virtual links through web-based means may not be enough. Can we have an annual register on exchange of experiences on minority rights? Can we begin with modest goals and build on that? Can the office of the moderator of such an institutional network move after six months/one year from one region to another? Can we have an inventory of relevant resources? Can we have a web-based trans-regional journal of minority rights?

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8. Finally what are the already existing international networks with which this initiative can align? It is important to identify them when we begin this effort.
9. It will be pity if this work ends without creating such a network, which will be the core of the dividends of this work, and if it is not supported by the EU. Already existing institutional efforts of the network members can be the other resource.
10. Individuals involved in this programme should also be counted as resources of the network.
11. The network can decide to meet annually, run a web-based journal and a discussion portal, send information to relevant places, attend the relevant sessions in Geneva, give inputs to other relevant networks, run a media programme, and most important highlight the distinct experiences of different regions in this field.