

“Tear Down the Barriers of Caste”

To make the decade 2011 to 2020 a decisive decade against discrimination based on work and descent, a two-day strategic conference was organized on June 24 and 25, 2011, in Geneva, by a group of organizations and movements including IMADR, the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR-India), the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), and other local, regional and international organizations. Participating in the conference were about 50 people from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Japan, and Europe. Several guests from the UN agencies, including the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, were also in attendance (see PDF of letter of Ms. Navi Pillay, as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights).

Over the past decade since the 2001 Durban Conference, affected communities of discrimination based on work and descent have made significant achievements in terms of their efforts for the elimination of discrimination. However, many challenges remain in order to comprehensively eliminate descent and work-based discrimination (DWD), which affects 260 million people worldwide.

The two-day conference mainly consisted of three sessions: reviewing interventions made into discrimination based on work and descent at different levels during the past decade; identifying opportunities and feasibilities for the next decade; and outlining effective future strategies. Each session invited panelists from among the participants to make a presentation from the perspective of their country and community. At the end of the conference, a draft declaration was presented by the draft committee for discussion and approval. The declaration concludes the following wordings:

With deep concern for our DWD communities, we came to the Conference in Geneva.

With single-minded purpose, we shared our achievements and limitations.

With admiration, we listened to each others’ struggles and successes.

With anguish, we became aware of the task to be completed.

With keen interest, we took stock of the opportunities and challenges that lay before us.

With creative imagination, we designed the path to be trod by us in the future.

With a big vision before us, we want the fire of enthusiasm to be always aflame in our hearts.

With determination, we proceed to our places with a sense of purpose to “tear down barriers of caste
“ for the enjoyment of all rights and freedoms of the communities of our concern and commitment.

(Megumi Komori, IMADR Under-Secretary-General)