

## Traditional Values Resolution Hijacked at Human Rights Council in Geneva



GENEVA, August 17 (C-FAM) Likely the Russians are

furiously. Last year the Russian government initiated a process at the Human Rights Council in Geneva that was supposed to lead to a resolution touting traditional values. They rediscovered what they likely already knew, that such debates at the UN are fraught with danger, particularly for those who want to support traditional values. The constellation of forces hostile to traditional values is large and aggressive.

The Russians had hoped their resolution could find a positive link between traditional values and human rights generally. A drafting committee offered a preliminary study last February that was acceptable to pro-family delegates. But opposition quickly formed. Homosexual groups were particularly vocal in opposing the draft report. Opponents charged that the draft failed to address what they consider to be a conflict between traditional values and human rights.

The preliminary study emphasized universal traditional values shared by all people, in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It highlighted the connections between traditional values and human rights, maintaining that the normative force of human rights has its roots in the moral force of traditional values. It contained explicit references to the right to life, the role of the family in society, as well as major religions.

But the United States and some European countries objected that the rights of women and homosexual and transgender persons are frequently undermined by traditional values and religion, and that something should be said in the study about the conflict. The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) joined the criticisms.

Following this objection, the Chinese expert on the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Chung Chinsung, re-wrote the study, omitting positive references to the right to life, the family, and religion. The new draft study was discussed last week in Geneva, and countries, experts, and NGOs that had complained were overall satisfied with the changes.

The new draft drops the universalistic approach. In fact, the new draft does not even recognize the existence of universal traditional values, dismissing the quest for universality as a red herring. Instead, it points out that multiple traditional values exist, and they are constantly evolving. Some are consonant with human rights. But others are not.

This new approach puts human rights squarely above and against traditional values. In the draft study, the Advisory Committee declares which traditional values are in conflict with human rights, and which ones are not.

The new draft makes the case that traditional values undermine the rights of women and minorities. It

finds that certain traditions and religions spread “stereotypes about femininity, sexual orientation and the role and status of women in society.” It also lists some “best practices” to show how, in some circumstances, traditional values can reinforce human rights. None of these examples are from western countries. In fact, the new draft finds that “traditional and cultural values in Western countries propagate harmful practices, such as domestic violence.”

The new study was scheduled to appear during the September session of the HRC. But it clearly requires some further polishing, and the Committee has asked the HRC for more time.

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