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## Fact Sheet No. 1 About the Open-Ended Working Group

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From **Monday 23 February to Friday 5 March 2004** governments and civil society representatives will be meeting in Geneva to discuss future work on the development of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The meeting of the “Open-Ended Working Group” will report to the Commission on Human Rights, with a recommendation for future actions on the development of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR.

The meeting is a vital point in the campaign for the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. **If the meeting fails to recommend future work on the development of a legal text, the momentum that has been developing over the past few years will be lost.**

The Open-Ended Working Group is open to all members of the UN. It is vital to ensure that governments who support the OP to the ICESCR attend the meeting, and speak up in favour of critical components for an effective OP to the ICESCR. If you know that your government is supportive, please lobby them to attend the meeting. For advocacy ideas, please refer to Fact Sheet No. 10, Lobbying Governments.

The Open-Ended Working Group is being chaired by Portugal. They will set the agenda for the meeting during informal consultations in January.

NGOs can attend the meeting as observers. It is crucial that governments see that there is support for an OP to the ICESCR, and that they feel the pressure to move forward in the negotiations. Moreover, NGOs can play a vital role as experts, supporting the negotiations through informal channels. Recognising that it is very expensive to spend time in Geneva, the Coalition is recommending that priority be given to attending the first week. For information on NGO participation, please refer to Fact Sheet No. 2, Activities during the Open-Ended Working Group.

For further information on the Open-Ended Working Group, please read Appendix No. 4, the UN Briefing Note on the meeting, and the accompanying registration form.