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Engaging parliaments on human rights: Spotlight on economic, social and cultural rights

Online briefing for parliamentarians organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Thursday, 25 May 2023

10:00 - 13:00 CEST (Geneva time)

BACKGROUND

This online briefing will aim to provide parliamentarians with a deeper understanding of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs) and the related international human rights norms and standards; and to explore the implication of ESCRs for legislation and policy making; as well as to discuss the role of parliament in promoting and protecting ESCRs. It will also aim to provide information on the work of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) to support States, including their legislative, executive and judiciary branches, in promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights, through their respective mandates.

The briefing, which is intended to be interactive, will be held online in English, with interpretation in French and Spanish.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Thursday, 25 May 2023

10:00	Welcoming remarks
10:10 - 11:45	Session I: Briefing on economic, social and cultural rights and OHCHR This session will provide a global overview of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs), including key issues and main challenges, and explore the value that the international legal framework on ESCRs can bring in addressing such issues and challenges. It will also cover States' obligations to promote and protect ESCRs under international human rights law, including the critical role parliaments can play, as well as the support provided by OHCHR to the States in this regard.
10:10	Briefing – Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section, Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch (OHCHR) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A global overview of ESCR-related issues and challenges and the added value of the international human rights legal framework to address them• States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights under international HR law and the critical role of parliaments in this regard• Technical cooperation provided by the OHCHR to enhance the protection and promotion of ESCRs at the country level. Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Pradeep Wagle (Chief, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section)• Ms. Harumi Fuentes Furuya (Human Rights Officer, ESCR-Section)• Ms. Jung Rin Kim (Human Rights Officer, ESCR-Section)

10:30 **Interactive discussion** – Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section, OHCHR

Following the panel discussion, participants will have a chance to ask questions relating to the issues discussed and to share their experiences, including of:

- Previous engagement on ESCR, such as: incorporating international human rights treaties (e.g. the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – ICESCR) into domestic law, adopting legislative, policy, institutional and budgetary measures to protect and promote ESCRs in general or specific ESCRs (such as education, health, social security, etc.), parliamentary oversight, national monitoring bodies, etc.
- The challenges and opportunities of such engagement

11:45 - 12:50 **Session II: Briefing on the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the IPU’s support to enhance parliaments’ contribution to its work**

This session will provide a brief overview of the ICESCR and its Optional Protocol, and the work of the CESCR, including the review of the national report on the respect of the provisions of the Covenant. It will provide an overview of the main points of engagement by States and opportunities for parliaments to engage in that regard. Participants will also be informed of the efforts of the IPU to promote stronger involvement from parliaments and their members in the different stages of the review process.

11:45 **Briefing – How does the IPU support parliaments’ contribution to the work of UN human rights mechanisms** – Mr. Rogier Huizenga, Manager, IPU Human Rights Programme

11:55 **Briefing – Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights: Objectives and functioning** – Representative of CESCR

- ICESCR and OP-ICESCR (ratification and acceptance of procedures, including the lifting of reservations)
- State Reporting under the ICESCR
- Follow-up and implementation / follow-up procedure
- Activities under the OP-ICESCR
- National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF) – advantages and context of all HR mechanisms

12:10 **Interactive discussion**

During this interactive discussion, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and to share their experiences, including on the above-mentioned processes. They will be informed of parliamentary good practices related to these processes and will also share challenges and opportunities related to their contribution to the work of the CESCR, and, taking into account the implementation of ESCR-related issues, they will have an opportunity to make concrete suggestions on:

- How parliament can become more engaged
- How the IPU and OHCHR could further support such engagement

12:50 **Closing remarks**

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**Annex:
Reading material**

Resolution on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, adopted by the Human Rights Council on 1 April 2022 ([A/HRC/RES/49/19](#))

[Workshop on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on “Promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic” ([A/HRC/51/20](#))