



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# 148th IPU Assembly

Geneva, 23–27 March 2024

## Panel discussion

### ***Protecting minority rights: Towards comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation***

Tuesday, 26 March 2024, 11:30–13:00

Organized in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High-Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Equal Rights Trust (ERT)

#### **Programme and concept note**

On 10 December 2023, the world marked the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its proclamation that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. The Declaration provides that all rights must be afforded to everyone, without discrimination, and recognizes that all are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection against discrimination.

Yet still today, it is estimated that [more than half of the world's countries](#) do not have laws that provide effective and comprehensive protection against all forms of discrimination (for a definition of discrimination and its diverse manifestations, please click [here](#)).

In December 2022, the United Nations published, for the first time, clear, complete and authoritative guidance for States on the laws they must enact to meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights to equality and non-discrimination. [Protecting minority rights: A practical guide to developing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation](#) is the result of a partnership between the [Office of the United Nations High-Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) and the [Equal Rights Trust](#). The Guide recalls the obligation under international law for **States to enact and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination laws**, and provides **clear instructions on the necessary elements of these laws**. On Human Rights Day 2022, an unprecedented group of over 30 UN [independent human rights experts](#) called on States to use the Guide as a “catalyst to action”. On Human Rights Day 2023, 10 national equality organizations and coalitions from across the globe issued a [call for a “decade of action on equality and non-discrimination”](#).

In the last two decades, a growing global consensus has emerged on the need for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation – a consensus which is reflected in the new UN *Practical Guide*. Since 2000, an increasing number of States – the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Republic of Moldova, South Africa and the United Kingdom, to name a few – have adopted comprehensive equality laws. Today, equality activists in dozens of countries are working to develop and advocate for such laws. Comprehensive anti-discrimination bills are currently being developed by governments or are pending adoption in parliament in numerous countries.

Comprehensive and effective anti-discrimination laws are a necessary – though not sufficient alone – condition for equal participation in life and the enjoyment of human rights. They are a necessary foundation for effective, functioning democracies.

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This panel discussion will explore the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in developing, enacting and implementing context-specific comprehensive equality laws as a crucial step in ensuring equality in practice and addressing the root causes of violence, deprivation, inequality, internal strife and conflict. It will include voices from countries that have successfully undertaken equality law reform and those where work is underway to enact comprehensive laws. It will also include the perspectives of the authors of the UN *Practical Guide* on the work underway to support governments, parliaments and equality activists to use this guidance and bring their national legal frameworks into line with international law.

### **Objectives**

1. Raise parliamentary awareness of the need for, and essential components of, comprehensive anti-discrimination law, in line with the UN [Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation](#).
2. Share good practices on the parliamentary process for adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and the impacts of adopting such laws.
3. Discuss common challenges and problems in legislating in this area and enhance understanding of potential solutions.
4. Discuss the role of the IPU in possible follow-up activities to support progress in this area.

### **Guiding questions**

Parliamentarians and representatives from the United Nations Human Rights Office and the Equal Rights Trust will participate in an interactive panel. Discussions will be guided by the following questions:

- What does international law require of national anti-discrimination legislation, and what are the essential features of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws?
- What are the legal and societal benefits and impacts of adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination laws?
- What are the common challenges and problems encountered in developing and adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, and what strategies can be adopted to overcome them?

### **Time and venue**

26 March 2024, 11:30–13:00

International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG), Room 4 (level -1)

### **Panellists**

- Ms. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury – Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh
- Mr. Nqabayomzi Kwankwa – Member of the National Assembly of South Africa
- Mr. Claude Cahn – Human Rights Officer, OHCHR, Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section
- Mr. Jim Fitzgerald – Director, Equal Rights Trust

### **Moderator**

Ms. Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo – Member of the Municipal Parliament of Schlieren, Switzerland