



# Parliamentary engagement on human rights: Identifying good practices and new opportunities for action

Seminar for members of parliamentary human rights committees organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**24 – 26 June 2019, Geneva**  
**UN Palais des Nations, Conference Room XXIII**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE SEMINAR

In the last 70 years, starting with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community has made great strides in developing new, and fine-tuning existing, international human rights standards. However, this progress has yet to be matched by a similar change on the ground which is why bridging this “implementation gap” has become a priority.

Parliaments, in particular their human rights committees, have a critical role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights by turning international human rights obligations into meaningful action at the national level. Increasingly, United Nations human rights mechanisms, most notably the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), have recognized the potential of parliaments to help ensure better implementation of human rights standards, and have therefore started to include the work of parliaments more systematically in their own deliberations. In turn, parliaments—in particular parliamentary human rights committees—have intensified their efforts to acquire a better understanding of the functioning of UN human rights mechanisms and to contribute directly to their work.

The seminar for members of parliamentary human rights committees aims to take stock of where these efforts have brought us to today and to identify good practices and new courses of action. The event will identify, showcase and build on interesting examples of parliamentary engagement on human rights and parliamentary involvement in the work of UN human rights mechanisms. The seminar will address the steps that parliaments can take to implement a holistic agenda that incorporates both the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights obligations. The seminar will also provide an opportunity to discuss and review the draft international principles in support of the work of parliamentary human rights committees as well as the building blocks of a human rights self-assessment toolkit for parliaments.

### 2. VENUE AND DATE

The seminar will be held from 24 to 26 June 2019 in Geneva at the United Nations Palais des Nations, Conference Room XXIII.

### 3. PARTICIPATION

This seminar is open to members of parliamentary human rights committees. Parliaments that have such committees in place are invited to send a delegation of a maximum of four members, including one parliamentary staff servicing the committee. The delegation must be gender-balanced and reflect the political representation of the parliament.

## 4. ORGANIZATION OF PROCEEDINGS

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In order to ensure that the discussions are as fruitful and constructive as possible, all participants will have equal speaking rights under the following rules:

- (a) No list of speakers will be established on any agenda item. Following the experts' introduction on the agenda item, the floor will be open to participants for questions and comments.
- (b) Experience has shown that this set up does not lend itself to the reading out of prepared statements. Subject to arrangements that the Chair may make to suit the circumstances, oral contributions may not exceed **two minutes**. Participants may speak several times on each item, particularly to respond to other statements.

The seminar proceedings will be conducted in English, French and Spanish. Interpretation equipment can be made available on a first-come-first-serve basis to delegations wishing to bring their own interpreters.

Most sessions will take place in plenary, with a series of presentations followed by discussions. Sessions II and IV will include working group exercises. At the end of 25 June, participants will attend part of that day's sitting of the UN Human Rights Council. That same day, participants will be invited to see the exhibition on the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IPU in the corridors of the Palais des Nations.

More information about the seminar, including its provisional agenda is available at the following link ([Seminar 24-26 June 2019](#)).

## 5. OUTCOME DOCUMENT

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The outcome document will consist of a summary of the debates and a series of recommendations for action. The outcome document should also lead to a separate document that sums up the preliminary building blocks for a parliamentary human rights self-assessment toolkit.

## 6. DOCUMENTS

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Copies will be made available of the IPU/OHCHR handbook on human rights for parliamentarians, the OHCHR report (HRC38/25) of May 2018 entitled "Contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review", the report of the second session of the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law "Parliaments as promoters of human rights, democracy and the rule of law", the recommendations and conclusions from previous IPU/OHCHR parliamentary capacity-building seminars, the IPU handbook on freedom of expression (2018) and the work of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

## 7. REGISTRATION

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Given that the meeting is being organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and that it will take place at the Palais des Nations—the UN premises in Geneva—participants are kindly invited to register themselves **twice**, once for the purpose of informing the organizers of their participation by completing the attached Registration Form and returning it to the following addresses **no later than 21 June 2019**:

**With copy to:**

**Inter-Parliamentary Union**  
Chemin du Pommier 5  
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex/Geneva  
(Switzerland)

**Mr. Akiyo Afouda**  
Human Rights Programme Officer  
Tel.: + 41 22 919 41 24  
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**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights (OHCHR)**  
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1201 Geneva - (Switzerland)

**Ms. Tigest Desta**  
Tel.: +41 22 928 91 76)  
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The second, separate and additional registration is to ensure access to the UN Palais des Nations, the venue of the seminar. For this purpose, participants are requested to register online (<https://reg.unog.ch/event/29266/>), **by 14 June at the latest**. This will enable OHCHR to ensure access to the UN premises for the duration of the seminar.

Participants are invited to consult this manual on how to register for access to the UN Palais des Nations in Geneva: [https://reg.unog.ch/ihelp/pdf/unog/UNOGIndico\\_Participants\\_UserGuide.pdf](https://reg.unog.ch/ihelp/pdf/unog/UNOGIndico_Participants_UserGuide.pdf).

Participants need to provide a photo in order to obtain such access. Information on photo standards can be found here: <https://reg.unog.ch/ihelp/pdf/unog/UNOG%20Indico%20picture%20standards.pdf>.

The UN registration page will be activated only on 3 June. All participants will need to collect on the day of the seminar their badges from the Pregny Gate security office at the UN Palais des Nations. Participants are advised to factor in that the collection of their badges may take up to 30 minutes. Delegations from countries with a Permanent Mission in Geneva may wish to call on their respective Mission for assistance. Your permanent mission can collect your badges on 20 and 21 June.

## 8. HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

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Delegations are requested to organize and pay for their own accommodation in Geneva. June is a particularly busy month for hotels in Geneva. Delegations are therefore advised to make their hotel reservations as soon as possible

Delegations from countries with a Permanent Mission in Geneva may wish to call on their respective Mission for assistance, as they are accustomed to receiving delegations to UN meetings and handling hotel reservations.

## 9. TRAVEL - VISA

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All matters related to travel and visas are the direct responsibility of participants wishing to attend. This also implies that they are responsible for their transport from Geneva airport to the hotel, and vice-versa, as well as between their hotel and the UN Palais des Nations.

## 10. MEALS

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The organizers will provide sandwiches outside the meeting room at the end of each day's final morning session. Participants who prefer to sit down for a full lunch are kindly requested to use, at their own cost, the cafeteria at the Palais des Nations.