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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

BINGHAM CENTRE FOR THE RULE OF LAW



ARTS & HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL



UK RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



UNIVERSAL RIGHTS GROUP GENEVA

CONCEPT NOTE

Side Event on Margins of General Assembly 74th session

“Increasing parliaments’ engagement with human rights”

Monday, 14 October 2019, 13.15 – 14.30

UN Headquarters in New York – Conference Room 11

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Enhancing the role of parliaments in the protection and realisation of human rights is emerging as a crucial way to bridge the “implementation gap” in human rights. Numerous parliaments around the world have started to prioritize human rights and engage with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In its latest resolution (35/29) on this topic, the Human Rights Council (HRC) acknowledged the crucial role that Parliaments play in translating international commitments into national policies and laws, especially the recommendations supported by the State in the framework of the UPR. The UN Secretary-General has encouraged a more proactive engagement of parliamentarians in the work of international human rights mechanisms, including through the development of principles that would assist and guide them. Parliaments are uniquely positioned to contribute to closing the implementation gap. Indeed, within the context of the UPR, 50-70% of recommendations require or involve parliamentary action.

OHCHR in consultation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conducted a survey on parliaments and their engagement with human rights, pursuant to HRC resolution 35/29. The survey provided a useful overview of current practices of parliamentary human rights committees around the world, describing their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms. OHCHR has published a report summarizing its findings, and setting out some draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights, which is available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/38/25.

OHCHR and IPU have also co-organized several workshops, most recently on June 24 to 26, 2019, for parliamentarians to share best practices on human rights protection, and to discuss the draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights. The outcomes of the latest workshop and more details on this topic are available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Parliaments.aspx>.

The HRC has also held an intersessional [Forum](#) on “Parliaments as Promoters of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law” on 22nd and 23rd November 2018, pursuant to HRC resolution 34/41. The report of the Forum is available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/40/65. The Commonwealth Secretariat and Universal Rights Group (URG) published a report in advance of the Forum, on *The Global Human Rights Implementation Agenda: The Role of National Parliaments*, available at <https://bit.ly/2mRhkMI>.

OBJECTIVES:

The overall purpose of the side event is to spotlight the importance of parliamentary engagement with human rights and, specifically to:

- Highlight the findings of the OHCHR report (A/HRC/38/25) on “Contributions of Parliament to the work of the HRC and its universal periodic review”, including the results of the survey, the role of parliamentary committees on human rights, and the draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights;
- Consider the concrete experience of senior MPs in terms of their parliaments’ human rights engagement, in particular at committee level;
- Share good practices on parliament’s engagement with human rights and possible next steps.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Sharing of existing good practices of parliamentary engagement with human rights from MPs
- Increasing awareness of on-going efforts to establish or strengthen national parliamentary human rights committees in line with the recommendations contained in A/HRC/38/25, including the Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights.

AGENDA

13:00 **Light lunch**

13:15 **Start of side event**

Welcome and introduction by the Chair

H.E. Mr. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the UN

Introductory remarks by Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour

Panel presentations

Ms. Sopio Kiladze MP, Chairperson of Georgian Parliament’s Committee on Human Rights and Civil Integration

- The Georgian parliament’s engagement on human rights, touching upon their work at the national level and interactions with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including through their oversight function of government policy and action

Mr. Gianni Magazzeni, Chief of the UPR Branch, OHCHR

- Outline of A/HRC/38/25 “Contributions of Parliament to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review” (OHCHR)

Mr. Murray Hunt, Director of the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law

- What action can be taken to ensure that Parliamentary human rights committees are established or strengthened, in line with good practices

Floor opened for interventions, discussion and Q&A, moderated by the Chair

- Interventions, discussion and questions and answers