



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
2 July 2019

Original: English

Human Rights Committee 126th session

Summary record (partial)* of the 3608th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 1 July 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Fathalla

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session by the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

1. **Ms. Prophette-Pallasco** (Petitions Unit, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that she wished to convey to the Committee the warm greetings of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who was addressing the OHCHR annual meeting of heads of field presences at that very moment. That meeting offered a unique opportunity to consider the way forward with colleagues from the field and to exchange ideas as to how OHCHR might improve the quality of its engagement with stakeholders at all levels. She hoped that Committee members would have the chance to interact with some of those colleagues during the session.

2. The treaty body system was facing unprecedented challenges that were deeply worrying for all concerned. The Chairs of all treaty bodies had been warned of constraints on funding for the 2019/20 biennium that could lead to the cancellation of treaty body sessions scheduled for the latter part of 2019. The Chairs had urged the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to engage with Member States to seek solutions to that critical situation. Civil society partners had also expressed concern and, in an open letter to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations, had stressed that the funding gap was likely to affect the delivery of the OHCHR mandate and human rights mechanisms in 2019 and beyond.

3. The Secretary-General and the High Commissioner were doing their utmost to minimize the impact of the cuts and to ensure that the third sessions of treaty bodies scheduled for the end of 2019 could proceed as planned. At present, OHCHR was working to secure the necessary funds and operating on the assumption that the sessions would indeed go ahead. However, it was important to bear in mind that the funding shortfall was also affecting the staffing situation. The Committee would be updated on the situation as soon as more information became available.

4. In a context of increasing pressure on human rights mechanisms, the work of the Human Rights Committee was more important than ever. Its authority and legitimacy were powerful assets that fostered accountability in respect of human rights violations. The Committee could make a real difference to people on the ground, and individuals often turned to it in a last-resort attempt to have their rights recognized. The OHCHR Petitions Unit had historically received an average of 235 submissions per month. Behind each submission was one or more individuals seeking a remedy to their situation who, regrettably, in some cases had to wait several years for a decision. That situation was considered unacceptable by all involved, not least the States parties and the victims. In partnership with the Committee, the Petitions Unit was constantly striving to improve the accessibility, transparency and efficiency of the complaints procedure, and those efforts were reflected in the new rules of procedures adopted during the Committee's previous session. However, there was room for considerable future improvement. The suggestions and criticisms received from State parties and victims, coupled with continued cooperation between States, the Committee and the secretariat, were key if proposed improvements were to become a reality.

5. The thirty-first meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, which had taken place in New York in the last week of June 2019, had focused on the alignment of treaty bodies' working methods with General Assembly resolution 68/268 and the 2020 review of the treaty body system. The Chairs had met with the Secretary-General, who had affirmed the importance of the treaty bodies' work, emphasizing that it was crucial for the treaty bodies to be allocated sufficient resources to fulfil their mandates. The Chair would no doubt provide Committee members with more details about the issues discussed.

6. During the current session, the Committee would review the implementation of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in six State parties and would adopt four lists of issues prior to reporting under the simplified reporting procedure and two regular lists of

issues. It would also review 39 complaints under the Optional Protocol and would consider the first draft of a general comment on the right of peaceful assembly.

7. **The Chair** said that the meeting in New York had been very fruitful. The treaty body Chairs had produced a common position paper, which the Committee would have the opportunity to discuss during the session. Committee members would also have the opportunity to consider a paper on preparations for the 2020 treaty body review that had been presented in New York by Costa Rica on behalf of the paper's 44 co-sponsors.

Adoption of the agenda (CCPR/C/126/1)

8. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organizational and other matters, including the adoption of the report of the Working Group on Individual Communications

9. **Ms. Pazartzis** said that the Working Group on Individual Communications, composed of six members, had met from 24 to 28 June and had considered 32 communications. It recommended that the Committee should find a violation of the Covenant in 15 cases and a non-violation in 4 cases. In 3 cases, it was proposing two alternative options for the Committee's consideration. The remaining 10 cases should be declared inadmissible. She wished to express her gratitude for the support provided by the Petitions Unit in spite of personnel and resource constraints.

10. *The report of the Working Group on Individual Communications was adopted.*

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.15 a.m.