



## Economic and Social Council

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### Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

#### Forty-ninth session

#### Summary record (partial)\* of the 29th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 12 November 2012, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Pillay

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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 10.10 a.m.*

**Opening of the session**

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the forty-ninth session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

**Statement by the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

2. **Ms. Kran** (Director, Research and Right to Development Division), giving an overview of OHCHR activities of particular relevance to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, said that the Research and Right to Development Division produced many of the substantive reports mandated by the Secretary-General, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and provided technical cooperation on human rights themes to various partners. It had also been active in promoting the legal protection of economic, social and cultural rights, and its efforts had contributed to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and El Salvador and the signature of the Optional Protocol by Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Costa Rica and Kazakhstan.

3. As the department responsible for knowledge management, in other words identifying lessons learned and ensuring their systematic application, her Division had organized regular consultations on emerging issues, such as economic, social and cultural rights in transitional justice processes, women and economic, social and cultural rights and the human rights of the elderly. It had drawn on the work of the Committee, notably on the important linkages between land and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, to frame the issues and design guidance materials. She was pleased to announce that, by the end of 2012, the High Commissioner's Office would be launching a website featuring a number of tools on land and human rights, which she hoped would be useful to the Committee. Recalling the Office's recent work on forced eviction and the right to adequate housing, she said that an expert group meeting on security of tenure had been held in October 2012, in which the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing and Ms. Shin had taken part. OHCHR and the Committee had also collaborated closely on a comprehensive methodology for the use of indicators and benchmarks to measure the implementation of human rights, which gave States parties practical guidance on implementing human rights and following up on concluding observations. A user guide for government agencies, national human rights institutions and other partners would be published in the near future.

4. Turning to the Committee's work at the current session, she said that, in addition to its usual activities, the Committee would be discussing the treaty body strengthening process. OHCHR welcomed the approval by the Economic and Social Council of temporary additional resources for the Committee, a decision which was awaiting approval by the General Assembly. Drawing attention to the High Commissioner's report on strengthening the human rights treaty body system (A/66/860), she said that Mr. Salama, Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division, would be informing the Committee of the most recent developments in the process and took it that the Committee would be discussing the report's recommendations in light of its own methods of work. The Chairperson of the Committee would doubtless brief members on the recent annual Meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, which had approved the Addis Ababa Guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of those treaty bodies. Lastly, she thanked the outgoing members, Ms. Barahona Riera, Mr. Riedel and Mr. Texier, for their long-standing and dedicated work and hoped that the High Commissioner's Office would be able to count on their continued cooperation.

5. **Mr. Schrijver**, referring to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), asked whether the Office had evaluated the extent to which human rights remained part and parcel of the sustainable development process. He also wished to know what the state of affairs was at United Nations Headquarters regarding the right to development.

6. **The Chairperson**, speaking in his capacity as member of the Committee, asked what the post-2015 development agenda would be, whether OHCHR was optimistic about the outlook for human rights in that context and whether development goals would continue to be linked with human rights.

7. **Mr. Sadi** asked whether OHCHR considered human rights as being compromised by global economic trends and whether human rights goals could continue to be pursued in isolation from the economic reality of fiscal cliffs and austerity programmes.

8. **Ms. Kran** (Director, Research and Right to Development Division) said that the High Commissioner's Office had followed closely the lead-up to Rio+20 and was quite positive regarding the wording of the conference outcomes, as it had expected a less favourable document. She would forward the Committee a brief outline of the areas the Office considered to be successes. OHCHR had taken advantage of the event marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development to strongly advocate awareness-raising. The current economic climate certainly posed challenges with regard to the implementation of the right to development. However, that was also true of other human rights and called for even greater creativity in finding ways to uphold them. A number of Member States which had not previously shown particular interest in the right to development had approached the High Commissioner's Office with new-found keenness. As to the post-2015 development agenda, two Office staff were working almost full-time on the issue, preparing for the discussions on the next set of objectives. Internal challenges notwithstanding, OHCHR was liaising with the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on post-2015 Development Planning, who had been very clear that human rights should be part of the discussion. Furthermore, the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda had laid out principles going forward, namely that sustainable development could not be achieved independently from human rights. Meanwhile, OHCHR, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme, was consulting with partners on issues such as governance and human rights monitoring. Challenges did lie ahead, but in some respects the process was off to a good start.

#### **Adoption of the agenda** (E/C.12/49/1 and Corr.1)

9. **The Chairperson** said that another corrigendum would be issued giving the accurate meeting numbers.

10. *The agenda was adopted on that understanding.*

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.40 a.m.*