



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Seventy-fourth session

### Summary record (partial)\* of the 31st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 25 September 2023, at 10 a.m.

*Temporary Chair:* Ms. Lee (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)  
*Chair:* Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu (Chair)

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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 10.05 a.m.*

### **Opening of the session**

1. **The Temporary Chair** declared open the seventy-fourth session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

### **Statement by the representative of the Secretary-General**

2. **The Temporary Chair** said that world leaders had agreed on a way forward for the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in New York on 18 and 19 September 2023. At the meeting, they had reiterated that the 2030 Agenda was grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international human rights treaties. Every opportunity should be taken to highlight that the 2030 Agenda was a human rights agenda and that the Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved unless economic, social and cultural rights were realized for all.

3. The statement issued by the Committee in 2019 on the pledge to leave no one behind had noted that prioritizing disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups was a common objective of the 2030 Agenda and the Covenant, that States would be able to strengthen their ability to realize the Goals by complying with the normative obligations of the Covenant, and that national action plans for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should take full account of the recommendations contained in the Committee's concluding observations. That advice was all the more pertinent now since the lingering socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and multiple and overlapping crises were pushing millions of people further behind.

4. With only seven years before the 2030 deadline, progress had stalled or reversed in many areas, and extreme poverty was increasing. Expressing regret at the retreat in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Secretary-General had highlighted at the Summit that Africa spent more on debt interest than on health care, that 1.2 billion people still lived in acute poverty and that hunger was at its highest level since 2005. He had stressed the need for urgent, significant and sustainable transitions in the critical areas of food, energy, digitalization, education, social protection, jobs and biodiversity, and had called for at least \$500 billion to be invested in sustainable development for developing countries and for the international financial infrastructure to be redesigned to serve as a global safety net for those countries. In order to be successful, accelerated sustainable development must be based on a human rights approach and grounded in efforts to implement the obligations set out in human rights treaties, including the Covenant. In that context, she welcomed the Committee's work on its draft general comment on sustainable development and the Covenant.

5. For September 2023, the monthly thematic spotlight of the Human Rights 75 initiative was on social protection, sustainable development and the right to development. The work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in that regard had drawn significantly from the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2008) on the right to social security, which offered a better understanding of the full scope of article 9 of the Covenant and its interlinkage with other rights. Social security systems contributed to eradicating poverty and inequality and promoted social inclusion, which were key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. At its fifty-fourth session, the Human Rights Council was considering various reports on topics that might be of interest to the Committee, including the rights of the child and inclusive social protection; inequality; promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; and combating the world drug problem. She encouraged the Committee to follow the Council's discussions and resolutions on those important reports.

7. OHCHR continued to actively promote efforts to strengthen the treaty body system and was confident that the conclusions adopted by the Chairs of the treaty bodies at their thirty-fifth annual meeting in June 2023 had the potential to greatly improve the work of the Committee and the treaty body system as a whole. At the meeting, the Chairs had agreed to

establish a coordination mechanism to align the treaty bodies' working methods and to cooperate on common intersectoral issues. The Chairs had also considered options for implementing an eight-year predictable review calendar and further digitalizing their work, which must be supported by the necessary human, technical and financial resources.

8. OHCHR was aware that the Committee would require additional meeting time and staff resources to handle an increased workload. While key decisions on such matters must be made by Member States, the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights had expressed their firm commitment to supporting the treaty body strengthening process. The High Commissioner would convene informal briefings on 1 November 2023 in Geneva and in early 2024 in New York to solicit the views of Member States on the process. Those discussions would be useful for drafting the biennial resolution of the General Assembly on the human rights treaty body system in December 2024.

9. Despite continued efforts through the treaty body strengthening process, an imbalance between existing resources and the needs of the treaty bodies' work persisted. The quantitative and substantive workload had been increasing and the staffing shortage, in particular, had a significant impact on the Committee's work and the work-life balance of every staff member. It was essential to make the limitations of the treaty body system more visible, particularly to Member States, since they themselves had created it to serve a specific purpose.

#### **Election of the Chair and other officers of the Committee**

10. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to elect a new Bureau from among its members.

11. **Mr. Abashidze**, on behalf of the members from Eastern European States, supported by **Mr. Abdel-Moneim**, on behalf of the members from African States, nominated Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu for the office of Chair.

12. *Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu was elected Chair by acclamation.*

13. **The Temporary Chair** invited nominations for the offices of Vice-Chair and Rapporteur.

14. **Mr. Nonthasoot**, on behalf of the members from Asia-Pacific States, nominated Ms. Saran for the office of Vice-Chair.

15. **Mr. Fiorio Vaesken**, on behalf of the members from Latin American and Caribbean States, nominated Ms. Lemus de Vásquez for the office of Vice-Chair.

16. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente**, on behalf of the members from Western European and other States, nominated Mr. Hennebel for the office of Vice-Chair.

17. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim**, on behalf of the members from African States, nominated Mr. Emuze for the offices of Vice-Chair and Rapporteur.

18. *Ms. Saran, Ms. Lemus de Vásquez, Mr. Hennebel and Mr. Emuze were elected Vice-Chairs by acclamation.*

19. *Mr. Emuze was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

20. *Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu took the Chair.*

21. **The Chair** said that she was pleased to assume the office of Chair on the eighth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/1 on 25 September 2015, which had showcased the continuous efforts of the United Nations to address challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate change, health, education and inclusive and sustainable growth. The 2030 Agenda, one of the most ambitious United Nations projects to date, set out an action plan for all international actors to achieve a better world. She was glad that the Committee was playing its part by drafting a general comment on sustainable development and the Covenant, according to which social security systems were required to develop resilience against economic, social and environmental shocks. States parties must ensure that their systems were prepared to address the impacts of extreme weather events and disasters

related to climate change and that long-term needs were taken into account to guarantee access to social security for future generations.

**Adoption of the agenda**

22. *The agenda was adopted.*

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.35 a.m.*