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Permanent Mission of Spain

**Human Rights Council 38th session – Side event:
“Increasing parliaments’ engagement with human rights”
Palais des Nations – Room XXVI Geneva, Switzerland
Thursday, 28 June 2018, (13.00 – 14.30)**



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Enhancing the role of parliaments in the protection and realisation of human rights is an emerging issue, and several parliaments around the world have started to prioritize human rights and engage with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the UPR. Various resolutions have been passed by the Human Rights Council in relation to Parliaments and human rights. In its latest resolution (35/29), the Council 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 universal periodic review and hence their contribution to the fulfilment of its human rights obligations and commitments. 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 universal periodic review, over 50% of recommendations require or involve parliamentary action.

OHCHR in consultation with the IPU conducted a survey on parliaments and their engagement with human rights, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 35/29. A questionnaire was sent out to parliaments and other stakeholders and sixty-five responses were received. The replies received provided a useful overview of current practices of parliamentary human rights committees around the world, describing their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms.

OBJECTIVES:

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

- Highlight the findings of OHCHR report prepared, in close cooperation with the IPU, on “Contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council 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 three/four 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 from different regions of the world;
- Increasing awareness of on-going efforts to establish or strengthen national parliamentary human rights committees in line with the recommendations contained in A/HRC38/25.

FORMAT/PROGRAM

The side event will involve a substantive panel discussion on different topics, drawing from good practices of various worldwide parliamentary systems and reflecting on the draft Principles. The following topics will be discussed:

Chair: H.E. Ambassador Luis Gallegos, Permanent Mission of Ecuador, Geneva

- ✓ *Outline of A/HRC38/25 “Contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review” (OHCHR)*
- ✓ *Concrete experience from members of parliament in terms of their engagement on human rights, touching upon their role at the national level, including through their oversight function of government policy and action (3-4 MPs)*
- ✓ *Good practices from parliamentary human rights committees around the world (IPU)*
- ✓ *What action can be taken to ensure that Parliamentary human rights committees are established or strengthened, in line with good practices (Murray Hunt, Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and University of Oxford)*

REPORTS AVAILABLE:

- A/HRC/38/25 Contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review
- An update to the research survey Global Developments in the role of parliaments in the protection and promotion of human rights
- IPU/OHCHR Handbook for parliamentarians on human rights

PARTICIPANTS

Member and Observer States, Members of Parliaments, Representatives of RHRMs, UN system, NHRIs and non-governmental organizations.

ORGANIZERS

OHCHR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with the support of the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council and Oxford University's *Parliaments, Rule of Law and Human Rights* research project <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-and-subject-groups/parliaments-rule-law-and-human-rights-project> and of the Universal Rights Group.