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Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: The contribution of parliaments to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Seminar for African parliaments organized jointly by the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in partnership with the Inter-ministerial delegation for human rights of Morocco, the National Council of Human Rights of Morocco, and in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

29-30 September 2014, Parliament of Morocco (Rabat)

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Monday **29 September 2014**

8 a.m. **Registration**

9 a.m. **Opening address**
Welcome address

10 a.m. **Session I: Common challenges regarding the human rights situation in Africa**

Although the Council adopts specific recommendations for each country, some human rights issues appear to be more frequently mentioned than others in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations for African countries.

This session will examine how States in the region, with the help of parliaments, have been able to address some of these issues, notably:

- Human rights protection in the context of peaceful assembly
- Human rights of refugees and internally displaced persons; a plea for humanitarian management
- Protection of human rights of migrant workers

- **Moderator**

- **Panellists**

Debate

11.15 a.m. *Coffee break*

11.30 a.m. **Session I: continued**
Debate

12.30 p.m. *Lunch*

2 p.m.

Session II: The protection of human rights at the national level: strategies for an enhanced parliamentary contribution

Parliaments prerogatives to adopt legislation, oversee government action and adopt the national budget are critical in promoting human rights. Several parliaments have set up specific committees devoted to human rights in order to do this effectively. However, this requires a strategy that includes the necessary partnership between the Parliament and other stakeholders, including national human rights institutions and civil society.

This session will address the following main questions:

- Do parliaments effectively exercise their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions to promote human rights?
- What are the experiences/best practices of parliamentary human rights committees?
- What are the experiences/best practices in terms of aligning national legislation with international human rights standards: analysis of recommendations/observations of international and regional human rights mechanisms?

and

- Cooperation between the Parliament and other stakeholders, including national human rights institutions
- **Moderator**
- **Panellists**

Debate

4.30 p.m.

Coffee break

4.45 p.m.

Session III: Introduction to the Universal Periodic Review and a parliamentary contribution to its work

This session aims to present the work and objectives of the Council and its UPR and how it relates to other United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particular the UN treaty bodies and special procedures. The session will also look at some lessons to be learned from the first and second UPR cycles.

Without parliamentary action - be it passing laws or overseeing government action - very few UPR recommendations would actually be implemented. Parliaments can play a critical role in the implementation phase and beyond. They can also discuss the draft national report of the UPR process before it is presented to the Council, and take part in its official presentation to the Council.

This session will look at parliaments contribution to the different stages of the UPR process.

- **Moderator**
- **Panellists**

Debate

6 p.m.

Wrap-up session

7 p.m.

Dinner

Tuesday

30 September 2014

9.30 a.m.

Session IV: Promotion of women's rights

- A shining example of strong parliamentary involvement in the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
- Violence against women, a flagrant violation of their rights

The UN Committee supervising implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has a very similar reporting procedure to that of the Council's UPR. For several years now, parliaments and the CEDAW Committee, with the assistance of the IPU, have been cooperating to help ensure that CEDAW is effectively implemented at the national level.

This session will be divided into two segments. The first will look at the lessons to be learned from the CEDAW experience of enhancing parliaments contribution to the UPR. This will be followed by a presentation on violence against women, a flagrant violation of women's rights

- **Moderator**
- **Panellists**

Debate

10.45 a.m.

Coffee break

11 a.m.

Session V: National case studies on involvement in the UPR

The executive - often together with national human rights institutions - is in the driver's seat in preparing the UPR reporting cycle and ensuring implementation of its recommendations. Parliaments are often largely unaware of this process, although this is slowly changing.

This session will look at three interesting national case studies of how the UPR report was prepared and how UPR recommendations have been implemented. It will examine in particular the involvement of parliament in the process and its interaction with other human rights stakeholders.

- **Moderator**
- **Panellists**

Debate

1.15 p.m.

Lunch

3 p.m.

Session VI: What place for human rights in the post-2015 development agenda?

States are negotiating a new set of goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals when these expire in 2015. A new generation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will need to be agreed for all countries so as to mobilize action on the economic, social and environmental priorities of our time. Several voices in the international human rights community are pressing for human rights principles to be at the heart of the SDGs. By embedding the goals in existing international human rights conventions, the idea is to make their implementation mandatory rather than voluntary, and to facilitate the participation of all sectors of society in formulating and implementing them.

This session will address the ongoing discussions about the SDGs, the benefits and implications of grounding them in existing human rights treaties, and the steps that parliaments can take to help achieve this.

- **Moderator**
- **Panellists**

Debate

4.15 p.m.

Coffee break

4.30 p.m.

Closing ceremony [C](#)