



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Forty-fifth session

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

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 1 November 2010, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Marchán Romero

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

\*\* No summary record was issued for the 28th meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Opening of the session**

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

**Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

2. **Ms. Pillay** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals held in September 2010 had been a milestone. The chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies had for the first time issued a joint statement urging Member States to recognize the importance of human rights in attaining the Goals, and that view was reflected in the draft resolution referred to the High-level Plenary Meeting by the General Assembly.

3. The theme of the Committee's day of general discussion during its present session — the right to sexual and reproductive health — related, in particular, to Goal 5 on improving maternal health. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had recently released a study on that issue, and the High Commissioner's participation in the High-level Plenary Meeting had focused on the same topic. In order to curb maternal mortality, women must have access to sexual and reproductive health care and high-quality health care in general, along with equal access to education and economic opportunities. The Committee's guidance in enhancing such access was crucial, and she looked forward to disseminating it at meetings of other bodies in which she participated.

4. The pursuit of economic, social and cultural rights was one of the Office's six thematic priority areas for 2010–2011, and it was engaging in numerous activities to promote awareness of those rights, including advocacy for the early ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. The Office cooperated with other United Nations partners on issues of interest to the Committee, particularly the rights of older persons, and she appreciated the support of Committee members in that regard. The General Assembly's discussion of a draft resolution on the rights of the elderly was being followed with interest.

5. As part of efforts to strengthen the treaty body system, a meeting of experts had been held in September 2010 in Poznań, Poland. All treaty body chairpersons had been invited, and Mr. Marchán Romero had represented the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The participants had discussed working methods, the independence of members and ways of enhancing the role of the chairpersons. She expressed particular appreciation to Mr. Kedzia for his contribution to organizing the meeting.

6. The Office was holding consultations involving all treaty bodies so that members could exchange views freely, identify options for the future, discuss working methods and examine in advance issues tabled by the inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies and the meeting of treaty body chairpersons. The consultation with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was provisionally scheduled for May 2011.

7. In July 2010, the meeting of chairpersons had been held outside Geneva for the first time, with the aim of bringing treaty bodies closer to the implementation level and to non-governmental organizations, raising awareness of their work and strengthening linkages and synergies between international and regional human rights mechanisms. The Office welcomed the chairpersons' request that the practice should be continued in line with its commitment to increase the visibility and relevance of the treaty bodies.

8. The Office worked hard to meet the needs of treaty bodies, but the tremendous increase in demand for conference services in recent years, particularly from the Human

Rights Council, and the successful expansion of the treaty body system presented challenges. Treaty bodies dealt with cases similar to those heard by the various international tribunals, but with fewer resources. In its efforts to streamline and harmonize the practices of the treaty bodies, the Office relied on the support of Committee members. The Economic and Social Council had yet to decide on the Committee's request for additional meeting time, but, in any event, a collective effort should be made to find ways of working more efficiently without jeopardizing the quality of output.

9. The theme of the 2010 Human Rights Day would be "Speak Up: Stop Discrimination", which dovetailed with the Committee's general comment No. 20 on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights. The activities of the Office and the Committee were mutually reinforcing, and the Office would continue to support the Committee to the best of its ability.

10. **The Chairperson** expressed appreciation for the High Commissioner's personal interest in the work of the Committee and the efforts that she and the Office had made to streamline the work of all treaty bodies, an objective to which the Committee was fully committed. During its session, the Committee would continue to focus on the six thematic areas of the High Commissioner's Strategic Management Plan 2010–2011 and on ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. One day of the session would be devoted to a general discussion on the right to sexual and reproductive health, and the Committee hoped to adopt two statements: one on sanitation and one on the corporate sector and human rights. Some time would also be devoted to a discussion of working methods and of ways to improve efficiency. In addition, a meeting would be held with States parties to consider various current issues, including the Committee's request for additional meeting time in order to deal with the backlog of reports submitted by States parties. A discussion of tobacco and human rights was also planned.

**Adoption of the agenda (E/C.12/45/1)**

*The agenda was adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.*