



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Sixty-second session

### Summary record of the first part (public)\* of the 49th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 18 September 2017 at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Bras Gomes

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\* No summary record was prepared for the second part (closed) of the meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Opening of the session**

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-second session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
2. **Mr. Walker** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the Committee's sixty-second session was taking place against a backdrop of serious human rights concerns, notably in the Syrian Arab Republic and Myanmar. The denial of economic, social and cultural rights was often a cause and inevitably a result of such crises.
3. During the current session, the Committee would review five State party reports, further its discussions on its draft general comment on the right to science, and meet with the Working Group on business and human rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and States parties.
4. Following the granting of additional weeks of meeting time under the treaty-body strengthening process, most of the treaty bodies had cleared their backlog of State party reports for review; however, the same could not be said for individual communications. Other achievements under the process included an increase in the visibility of the Committee's work, thanks to the webcasting of its meetings, and enhanced harmonization of working methods across committees.
5. Preparations were under way for the review in 2020 of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on the strengthening of the human rights treaty body system and comprised three tracks. As part of the first of those tracks, the Secretary-General was required to present a technical report on implementation of the resolution to the General Assembly every two years, with a view to informing the allocation of human and financial resources to the treaty bodies. A proposal to significantly increase the resources allocated to those committees that examined individual communications had been submitted to the Fifth Committee, and a decision on it was expected in December 2017. If the proposal was accepted, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would sit for only eight weeks per year — six weeks of plenary meetings and two weeks of pre-session working group meetings — and would be expected to review 14 State party reports in 2018. Two scenarios had been drawn up for the Committee's meeting time for 2018, depending on whether the General Assembly chose to provide the treaty body system with additional resources.
6. As part of the second track of preparations, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights was coordinating a global academic reflection on the treaty body system and had held a series of regional workshops to identify proposals to strengthen the system further. Those proposals included the introduction of a single consolidated report per State party, covering all its treaty body obligations; streamlining of the simplified reporting procedure, so that it focused solely on priority issues for States parties under each treaty; a comprehensive reporting calendar, to coordinate each State party review and to encourage non- and under-reporting States to submit reports; and a joint inter-committee follow-up mechanism. Proposals for individual communications included a unified case-handling system and the creation of a separate chamber that would handle individual communications under all treaties. A final report on the proposals would be prepared in 2018.
7. As part of the third preparation track, the International Service for Human Rights, co-sponsored by the Governments of Costa Rica and Switzerland, had hosted a consultation event in May 2017 with a view to developing a political strategy to ensure that the 2020 review gave rise to a system that was more accessible, inclusive, efficient, effective and rights-oriented. Under discussion at the event had been the challenges faced by the treaty bodies, including insufficient harmonization of working methods and poor State compliance with reporting and implementing obligations.
8. **Mr. Kedzia** said that it would be advisable for the Committee to allocate some time to discussing the proposed reforms, in order to be well prepared to offer formal input into what would be a crucial debate on the future of the human rights treaty body system. It

would be helpful to receive additional details regarding the two potential scenarios for the Committee for 2018.

9. **Mr. Walker** (OHCHR) said that if the General Assembly decided to adopt the proposed package of additional resources for the treaty bodies, the Committee's sixty-third session would be held from 12 to 29 March 2018 and the pre-sessional working group would sit from 3 to 6 April 2018; its sixty-fourth session would be held from 24 September to 12 October 2018 and the pre-sessional working group would sit from 15 to 29 October 2018. If the General Assembly decided not to grant the additional resources, the dates of the Committee's sixty-third session would remain unchanged; however, the sixty-fourth session would run from 17 September to 5 October 2018, with the pre-sessional working group sitting from 8 to 12 October 2018.

#### **Adoption of the agenda**

10. *The agenda was adopted.*

*The public part of the meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.*