



Economic and Social Council

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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Seventy-second session

Summary record (partial)* of the 31st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 26 September 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Abdel-Moneim

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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 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the seventy-second session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
2. **Mr. Howland** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the world was witnessing a concentration of wealth in the hands of some individuals, without a concurrent reinforcement of the social safety net for persons at the opposite end of the economic ladder. Inflationary pressures and rising energy costs would diminish the purchasing power of most ordinary people everywhere, yet the response was simply inadequate in many, if not most, parts of the world. It was deeply regrettable that, in the 60 years since the Covenant's entry into force, the exploitative conditions that underpinned the existence of the working poor had not been eradicated.
3. The General Assembly had recognized that the world was experiencing a critical moment in history due to complex and interconnected crises including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the war in Ukraine, unprecedented humanitarian challenges, climate change and threats to the global economy. For that reason, the theme "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges" had been selected for the general debate at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.
4. On 23 September 2022, an event entitled "Partnering for Action: Implementation of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions" had brought together world leaders, heads of international financial institutions and United Nations agencies and other partners to strengthen the collective response to the growing gig and informal economy and support the billions of people that continued to be excluded from social protection. The Global Accelerator had been established by the Secretary-General in response to the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. The increasing international focus on climate change had finally brought into the spotlight a subject that had long been divorced from human rights. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, which had been established by the Human Rights Council in October 2021, represented a turning point in that regard. The Special Rapporteur and the Committee likely had much to gain from mutual collaboration.
6. The right of everyone to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment had been recognized in Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, adopted in 2021, and General Assembly resolution 76/300, adopted in 2022. All United Nations entities should give expression to that right. Projects operated by OHCHR had revealed how existing violations of economic, social and cultural rights were significantly exacerbated by climate change and how a lack of fiscal support forced many people to migrate within and outside their own countries.
7. The report submitted to the fiftieth session of the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education ([A/HRC/50/32](#)) had focused on the risks and opportunities of the digitalization of education and their impact on the right to education. In the report, the Special Rapporteur had suggested that, in the light of the digital divide within and between countries, thought should be given to the place and content of digital education, its meaning and efficiency, and its impact on the health and education of children and other learners.
8. OHCHR had decided to strengthen its capacity to investigate economic crimes and improve respect for economic, social and cultural rights by launching a surge initiative. In the first six months of 2022, the surge team, which included macroeconomists with a background in human rights, had provided support for human rights-based budget analyses in nine countries, held strategic discussions with economists from 19 resident coordinator offices to enhance understanding of the relationship between human rights and economic policy, and delivered analytical content and operational advice for 34 common country analyses or United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

9. Turning to the treaty body strengthening process, he said that, at the thirty-fourth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, the Chairs had unanimously agreed to establish a predictable schedule of State reviews. That landmark agreement would hopefully provide a basis for a more sustainable allocation of resources, a goal that had been emphasized by the Secretary-General. For the Committee, the implementation of the predictable schedule would entail the addition of a third annual session to allow for sufficient meeting time. It was hoped that the necessary support and additional resources would be forthcoming for 2024.

10. **The Chair** said that increasing global inflation would erode the right to an adequate standard of living. The Committee had a duty to examine the situation in the context of the implementation of the Covenant and consider the effects of new developments and trends. For example, under article 17 (2), States parties could indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of their obligations under the Covenant. It was unclear whether that provision could be invoked in situations of armed conflict.

11. The incoming United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, would assume office on 17 October 2022. It was hoped that he would increase collaboration with the Committee and engage in constructive dialogue.

12. States parties to the Covenant had an obligation to engage in international cooperation to uphold economic, social and cultural rights. Meetings of States parties should include time for the study and analysis of the global economic situation and its effects on economic, social and cultural rights.

Adoption of the agenda ([E/C.12/72/1](#))

13. *The agenda was adopted.*

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