



**Informal consultation by the Co-Facilitators of the process of the consideration of the state of the UN Human Rights treaty body system with representatives of civil society, National Human Rights Institutions and all other relevant stakeholders**

**28 August 2020**

**Oral Statement by the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on behalf of TB-Net**

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I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) and TB-Net. Thank you to the Co-Facilitators for organising this consultation with civil society.

***Civil Society Proposals***

Together with 86 civil society organisations from the national, regional and international level, TB-Net has put forward concrete suggestions to reform the State review process, to ensure regular, predictable and universal monitoring and accountability of States’ human rights obligations.

The [Civil Society Proposals](#) suggest a fixed and co-ordinated calendar, where every State is reviewed every 4 years, whether or not they submit their State report. However, we propose 2 levels of review – Comprehensive review and Focused review - which alternate.

- **Comprehensive review** – review of all articles of the treaty and a 6 hour Dialogue in Geneva, like the current process.
- Every 2<sup>nd</sup> review is a **‘Focused review’**:
  - Review of a limited number of issues with a shorter Dialogue.
  - Option for Focused reviews to be conducted in-country, by a working group of the Committee.

The Civil Society Proposals also emphasise the **important role of civil society** in the work of the treaty bodies. Other proposals have omitted this crucial element and we bring it back to the discussion and recommend the treaty bodies enhance and align as much as possible best practices for civil society engagement, such as: space for written and oral inputs;



webcasting; remote participation; accessibility, security and anti-reprisal measures; and special meetings for children at the CRC.

We were pleased to see that many submissions to the Co-Facilitators supported the notion of a predictable fixed calendar, and that both the Focused Review and the emphasis on civil society participation, were supported by some States and by the treaty body Chairs. We regret that little attention was paid to the importance of a coordinated approach. We strongly recommend that the treaty bodies move forward as one system.

#### ***COVID-19 & online work***

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forward the issue of online work and use of technology. We consider that there is scope for the treaty bodies to undertake more of their work online, to the extent that it does not undermine the quality of the work - particularly communications, general comments and preparing Lists of Issues – and the treaty bodies should be supported accordingly by States and the UN. However, we strongly believe that there is huge value in in-person meetings and, in particular, for the Dialogue with States Parties to be held in-person, in normal circumstances. The current situation has also demonstrated the potential of accessible technologies to facilitate the inclusion of rights holders, particularly those representing marginalized groups and facing physical or administrative barriers in engaging with the treaty bodies.

#### ***Petitions***

The petitions system needs increased resources to enable it to modernize and digitalise the case management system. We agree with the Chairs' suggestion of dedicating a project to implementing a digital portal for petitions.

#### ***Code of Conduct***

In relation to the call from a few States for a Code of Conduct for treaty body members, we do not support that proposal as we consider that it impinges on the independence of the treaty body members, which is fundamental to the value and effectiveness of the treaty bodies.

Thank you