

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Forum on Minority Issues
Second Session
Room XX Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Thursday, 12 November

**Morning Session
10:00 - 13:00**

I. 10: 00-10:35 Opening meeting

Opening statement by the President of the Human Rights Council
H.E. Ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen

Remarks by the Independent Expert on Minority Issues
Ms. Gay McDougall

Remarks by the Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues
Rep. Barbara Lee, Chair of the US Congressional Black Caucus

Remarks by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Ms. Kyung-wha Kang

Video Presentation: “Costa Rica: The Road to Equality”, UN Television

In the following sessions there will be brief presentations on the issues under discussion. Then all participants will have an opportunity to comment based on a sign-up sheet. The participants will have the Background Paper and the draft recommendations before them.

II. 10:35-11:00 International and regional human rights frameworks and core principles on the rights of minorities to political participation

This short session will provide participants with a brief overview of existing international and regional standards and principles with a view to set the framework for the ensuing discussions.

Presentation by Mr Ion Diaconu, Member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

III. 11:00-13:00 Obstacles to effective political participation faced by minorities

Issues for presentation and discussion could include the barriers that minority populations face in their aspirations for civic participation including: discriminatory biases within the larger society; the impact of racist and xenophobic political platforms; language requirements to register to vote or hold public offices; inaccessibility of polling places to minority communities; the particular constraints on the participation of women; limited availability of civic and voter education in minority languages.

Presentations by:

- **Ms. Epsy Campbell** (Costa Rica), **Former candidate for President**
- **Mr Anders Johnsson** (Sweden), **Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**
- **Ms. Jayshree Mangubhai** (India), on *“Obstacles to the Political Participation of Dalit Women”*
- **Mr Simon Woolley** (England), **Operation Black Vote**, on *“Obstacles to Effective Political Participation: the impact of racism and xenophobic political platforms”*
- **Ms. Alice Ratyis** (Romania), on NDI’s report on *“Assessment of Barriers to Roma Political Participation in Romania”*
- **Ms. George-Pau Langevin** (France), **MP**, on *“Obstacles faced by minorities in accessing political responsibilities”*
- **Ms. Anastasia Crickley** (Ireland), **Chairperson of EUFRA**, on *“Minority participation: challenges and opportunities in Ireland and Europe”*

Discussion

Afternoon Session

15:00 – 18:00

IV. 15:00- 16:30 Conditions required for effective political participation

Issues for presentation and discussion could focus on the human rights and freedoms that are critical enablers of broad political participation and democratic societies, in particular, the right to non-discrimination; freedom of expression; freedom of the press and minority access to the media; equality with respect to economic and social rights; freedom of assembly

and association; freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties or other organizations; freedom to debate public affairs and to hold peaceful public meetings; participatory and transparent law-making processes.

Presentations by:

- **Ambassador Knut Vollebaek (Norway), OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, on relevant projects implemented by his office, including two media projects in Georgia**
- **Ms. Eva Konecna, Secretary of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, on “*Examples of monitoring exercises that have led to the adoption of the Commentary on the Framework Convention on the effective participation of national minorities in public life*”**
- **Mr Francisco Campbell (Nicaragua), Member of the Central American Parliament on “*Minority Participation: challenges and opportunities in Central America*”**
- **Mr Azhagan Chenganna (Mauritius), Communication Studies Unit, University of Mauritius, on “*The Role and Responsibilities of the Media in enhancing the political participation of Minorities*”**

Discussion

V. 16:30-18:00 National practices and real experiences: existing mechanisms providing for the political participation of minorities

This session will focus on current national practices that have been developed to foster minority political participation and the impacts of those policies. Governments will be invited to describe their national policies and minority political actors will be invited to discuss the role that minority policy-makers should play in formulating and implementing laws and policies to support and promote equal rights and opportunities in the public sector.

Issues for presentation and discussion could include the definition of meaningful representation and empowerment as well as ways to ensure an effective role by minorities in policy and decision-making. The discussion could further look at how effective have minority consultative bodies been in giving meaningful representation to minorities, what has been the

experience with quotas, reserved seats or other such mechanisms to ensure representation of minorities and whether systems of cultural autonomy and minority self-governance developed to protect rights to language, education, religion, and cultural identity have indeed provided minorities with meaningful participation in governance.

Discussions under this item will continue on Friday 13 November.

Presentations by:

- National Level—Minority Representation in Bodies with Decision-Making Powers:
 - **The Permanent Representative of Nigeria, H.E. Mr Martin Ihoeghian Uhomobhi**
 - **Ms. Anne Begg (Scotland), UK Parliament, on the Interim Report of the Speaker’s Conference**
 - **Mr Márcio Augusto Freitas de Meira (Brazil), Head of “Fundação Nacional do Índio”**
- National Level—Minority Representation Through Consultative Bodies
 - **The Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, Mr. Yeraly Tugzhanov**
- Decentralized Local Governance; Cultural Autonomy at Local Levels; Minority Local Self-Governments:
 - **Mr. Norbert Tóth, Senior Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Minority Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on “*The institution and practice of the Hungarian minority self-governments*”**

Presentations by:

- **Ms. Bintu Jalia Ngonzi Abwooli (Uganda), MP, on “*Existing mechanisms providing for the political participation of minorities in Uganda*”**
- **Mr John Payton (United States of America), President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund**
- **Ms. Mary Anne Chambers (Canada) on “Meaningful Representation, Empowerment and the Impact of Racial Discrimination on political participation in Canada”**
- **Ms. Liberate Nicayenzi (Burundi), MP on “Good practices and Experiences of Ethnic Minorities in Politics”**

- **Ms. Yvette Jarvis, Special Advisor to the mayor of Athens (Greece), on the Greek experience**
- **Ms. Beatrice Achaleke (Austria), Director of AFRA, the International Centre for Black Women’s Perspectives on their MIMPOL project**

Discussion

Friday, 13 November

Morning Session

10:00 – 13:00

10:00-11:30 National practices and real experiences: existing mechanisms providing for the political participation of minorities

Discussions under this item will continue from Thursday 12 November.

VI. 11:30-13:00 Impact of electoral systems and role of political parties

Issues for presentation and discussion could focus on differing electoral systems and the policies and practices of political parties that either impede or promote the successful inclusion of minorities in mainstream electoral policies.

Presentations by:

- **Mr Edward Shalala (South Africa), Head of DDIP (Design of Democratic Institutions and Processes) at International—IDEA, on “*The impact of constitutional and electoral systems design*”**
- **Mr Denis Kadima (Democratic Republic of Congo), EISA, on the “*Impact of Electoral Systems and Role of Political Parties: the Experience in several African Countries*”**
- **Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi (South Africa), Practice Director, United Nations Development Programme, on “*The UNDP Work on Electoral Systems*”**

Discussion

Afternoon Session

15:00 – 18:00

VII. 15:00-17:30 Concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build capacity of minorities to participate effectively

Issues for presentation and discussion could focus on the draft recommendations that participants will have before them. The objective would be to formulate practical, concrete policies, actions or programs that would generate a higher level of minority political participation at national, regional and local levels.

Presentations by:

- **Mr Alcee Hastings** (United States of America), **U.S. Member of Congress/Head of the Helsinki Committee**
- **Mr Antti Korkeakivi**, **OHCHR, on the work of the United Nations on Minorities and Effective Political Participation**
- **Ms. Graciela J. Dixon** (Panamá), **attorney and former Chief Justice of the Corte Suprema de Justicia de Panamá, on “Basic requirements for effective political participation and suggestions of concrete steps to advance minority political participation”**
- **Mr. Joe Frans** (Sweden), **on the Report on the Black European Summit**
- **Mr Pheroze Nowrojee** (Kenya), **Lawyer**
- **Mr Yonadam Kanna** (Iraq), **Member of the Council of Representatives of Iraq**

VIII. 17:30-18:00 Concluding remarks

Remarks by the Chairperson of the Forum on Minority Issues

Remarks by the independent expert on minority issues

Session Closes