



## Capacity-building for local governments to realize human rights for all

Side event in the margins of the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, organized by the Permanent Missions of the Republic of Korea, Chile, Egypt, Romania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Thursday, 4 July, 1300-1400, Room XXII, Building E, Palais des Nations

Local governments, at the regional, provincial, and municipal levels, hold a crucial role in the protection and promotion of human rights. As the closest level of governance to communities, they are well-positioned to understand and address the specific human rights needs and concerns of their residents. Local governments have the ability to create and enforce laws, policies, and practices that uphold human rights, ensuring non-discrimination, access to essential services, and protection of marginalized groups.

Not only are local governments well-placed to protect and fulfil human rights, but they also have an obligation to do so. A country's international human rights obligations extend to all levels of government and to all those who exercise governmental authority. The Human Rights Council Advisory Committee's 2015 final report confirmed that national and local governments have "shared and complementary duties,"<sup>1</sup> when it comes to implementing international human rights obligations.<sup>2</sup> The implementation of human rights at the local level is also integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is grounded in international human rights law.<sup>3</sup>

In light of these considerations, human rights mechanisms of the United Nations need to engage more with local governments for a more inclusive multilateralism. By actively engaging with international human rights mechanisms, local governments can obtain valuable advice and good practices to harmonize their laws with international human rights law, and those mechanisms can benefit from the field experience and knowledge from local governments.

However, various challenges remain on the promotion and protection of human rights at the local level, as well as their engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms. They include a lack of awareness amongst local government officials not only on human rights norms, standards and mechanisms, but also on the skills, knowledge and guidance to translate those standards into

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, *Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights – Final Report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee*, A/HRC/30/49 (2015) p. 5, available at: [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/30/49](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/30/49).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (2015)

practice. Better coordination with the central government, as well as financial resources, are also cited as some pathways toward helping local governments fulfill their human rights responsibilities.

The objective of the side event is to share the conclusions and discuss the implementation of recommendations made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in his summary report (A/HRC/56/32) of the expert meeting on enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work that was held in August 2023 in Geneva. The report underscores the ongoing need for enhanced capacity building to support local governments in implementing human rights and strengthening engagement with human rights mechanisms. The panel discussion provides an opportunity for an interactive debate among States, local authorities, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to discuss the existing challenges, promising practices and identify follow-up actions to strengthen the role and capacities of local governments to respect, protect and fulfil human rights at the local level.

Opening remarks:

H.E. Mr. Seong deok Yun, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva

Panellists:

Moderator: H.E. Ms. Camila Fuentes Julio, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva

Mr. Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty

Ms. Elisa Morgera, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change

Mr. Pradeep Wagle, Chief of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights(OHCHR)

Mr. Robert Lewis-Lettington, Chief of Section, Land, Housing and Shelter, UN-Habitat

Ms. Soo Hee Choi, Deputy-Director, International Human Rights Division, National Human rights Commission of Korea (Online)

Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments (Online)