

International Expert Meeting

10 years Human Rights Council –

What difference has it made? What difference should it make in the future?

Berlin, 10-11 October 2016

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Hiroshimastr. 17, 10785 Berlin

Since 2008, the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, the German Institute for Human Rights, and the German Forum on Human Rights have organized an annual conference to assess the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) from both the legal perspective of rights holders, and the political perspective of civil society as active participant in the implementation of human rights commitments. Leading questions have evolved around the instrumentalisation of HRC procedures, the shrinking space for rights holders and civil society, the increasing threat of reprisals for human rights defenders, as well as suggestions as to the role of the HRC in overcoming such gaps while ensuring accountability.

The 10th anniversary of the Council provides another, rather prominent, opportunity to reflect on the work and effectiveness of the HRC. While the scope of our discussion will necessarily be limited, and will not manage to resolve the Council's inherent conflict between the interest of member states and the body's ambition to be an impartial and apolitical mechanism, this expert meetings takes the opportunity to call for more efficiency and relevance of the Council in the protection of human rights on the ground.

In exploring the question of how the Council can do better in its second decade than in its first, the conference analyzes central structures of the Council. The human rights record of some current Council member states can only be described as deficient. This calls into question the current eligibility criteria for Council membership as well as the code of conduct. Potential future relationship of the Council with other relevant human rights institutions and mechanisms – such as National Human Rights Institutions, parliamentarians as well as the Development Agenda 2030 and – will be explored. Enhancing cooperation and embedding human rights in the work of international mechanisms and debates is critical to ensure that the respective agendas are complementary rather than entering into competition with each other.

Establishing a complementary and coherent procedural system is equally essential to the substance within the UN human rights system. This conference will therefore further reflect a civil society perspective on more systematic follow-up of recommendations by HRC mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Special Procedure system. While the UPR is a unique procedure within the UN human rights system in which every member state of the United Nations participates, the extent to which the recommendations of the reviews are in fact implemented varies immensely. The question of how to ensure effective implementation and follow-up is mirrored in current debates on the role of Special Procedures, reflected in a proposal to dedicate a segment of HRC sessions to recommendations, communications with governments, and a status-update of country visits under way. At the end of the conference, we may have a clearer picture of the way forward to re-confirm the Council's central role in addressing human rights concerns worldwide while ensuring that it can and does fulfil its mandate.

Conference language is English.

Programme

Monday, 10 October 2016

Venue: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Haus 1, Hiroshimastr. 17, 10785 Berlin

10:00-10:30	Welcome by the organizers Jochen Steinhilber, <i>Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)</i> Wolfgang Heinz, <i>German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR)</i> Jochen Motte, <i>Forum Human Rights (FMR)</i>
	Topic 1: Taking stock and visions for the future – the role of the HRC
10:30-11:30	Setting the stage – The HRC: success and challenges over 10 years Key note and brief input on working group topics Eric Tistounet, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Chair: Theo Rathgeber, Forum Menschenrechte
11:30-11:45	Break
11:45-13:15	Working Groups I WG 1: What role for Council members? Input: Wolfgang Heinz, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Yvette Stevens, Ambassador of Sierra Leone to the UN Chair + Rapporteur: Theo Rathgeber, Forum Menschenrechte WG 2: Building bridges between the HRC and other international mechanisms Input: Marianne Beisheim, SWP; Birgitte Feiring, Danish Institut for Human Rights; Montserrat Solano Carboni NHRI Costa Rica Chair + Rapporteur: Jonas Schubert, Terre des hommes
13:15-14:45	Lunch
14:45-16:15	Working Groups II WG 3: Role of NHRIs Input: Katharina Rose, GANHRI; Angkhana Neelapaijit, NHRI Thailand Chair/Rapporteur: Beate Rudolf, German Institute for Human Rights WG 4: Role of the Council in the migration / trafficking debate Input: Michael Krennerich; Suzanne Hoff, International Coordinator La Strada International Chair/Rapporteur: Adrien-Claude Zoller, Geneva for Human Rights

16:15-16:30	Break
16:30-18:00	<p>Report back to the plenary</p> <p>Rapporteurs Working Groups 1 – 4</p> <p>Chair: Frederike Boll, FES Berlin</p>
	<p>Future challenges for the HRC</p> <p>Eric Tistounet, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</p>
18:00-19:00	Break – Buffet Dinner
19:00-21:00	<p>Public Debate</p> <p>Venue: Landesvertretung Bremen, Hiroshimastr. 24, 10785 Berlin</p> <p>“Wie relevant ist der Menschenrechtsrat bei polarisierenden Themen?“ / „How relevant is the Human Rights Council in polarizing debates?“</p> <p>Welcome remarks: Hubert René Schillinger, <i>FES Geneva</i></p> <p>Key Note:</p> <p>Patricia Flor, Head of the Federal Foreign Office’s Directorate-General for International Order, the United Nations and Arms Control</p> <p>Panel discussants:</p> <p>Josef Weidenholzer, Member of European Parliament</p> <p>Prof Gillian Triggs, President, Australian Human Rights Commission</p> <p>Beate Rudolf, Director GANHRI</p> <p>Moderator: Andreas Zumach, TAZ</p> <p><i>Simultaneous interpretation English – German will be provided</i></p>

Tuesday, 11 October 2016

Venue: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Haus 1, Hiroshimastr. 17, 10785 Berlin

	Topic 2: The UPR – a success story for the Human Rights Council?
10:00-12:00	<p>The UPR before the 3rd cycle</p> <p>Chair: Hubert René Schillinger, FES Geneva</p> <p><u>Introductory key note</u></p> <p>Edward McMahon, <i>University of Vermont</i> Analysis of the 2nd cycle of the UPR</p> <p><u>Assessment by civil society</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role of parliamentarians, <i>David Westenfelder, Geneva Graduate Institute</i>• The use of the UPR by civil society, <i>Yves Lador / José Parra, CIFEDHOP</i>• The use of the UPR by NHRIs, <i>Florence Simbiri-Jaoko, GANHRI Special Envoy</i>
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-14:00	<p>How have NHRIs, parliamentarians and civil society actors used the UPR process?</p> <p>Working Groups</p> <p><u>WG 1: Parliamentarians</u></p> <p>Input: former MdB Herta Däubler-Gmelin; Josef Weidenholzer, EP Rapporteur: Theo Rathgeber, Forum Menschenrechte</p> <p><u>WG 2: NHRIs</u></p> <p>Input: Angkhana Neelapajit, NHRI Thailand; Gillian Triggs NHRI Australia Rapporteur: Hannah Peters, FES Geneva</p> <p><u>WG 3 : Civil society actors</u></p> <p>Input: Richard Kakeeto, The Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Franciscans Africa; Jihad Fatchati, Prometheus Institute for Democracy and Human Rights; Jame David Kolok JOSHUA, Executive Director Foundation for Democracy and Accountability Rapporteur: Adrien-Claude Zoller, Geneva for Human Rights</p>
14:00 -14:30	<p>Report back to the plenary: Future challenges for the HRC</p> <p>Chair: Wolfgang Heinz, DIMR</p>
14:30 – 14:45	Coffee break
14:45 - 16:15	<p>The Human Rights Council - major political challenges</p> <p>Florian Rudolph, Federal Foreign Office Andreas Zumach, Journalist Chair: Theodor Rathgeber, Forum Menschenrechte</p>
16:15	End of conference/departure of participants