

Concept Note

Side Event on the Occasion of the Inter-sessional Panel on Local Government and Human Rights of the UN Human Rights Council
“Envisioning the UN Guiding Principles on Local Government and Human Rights; Learning from Human Rights Cities”
UNOG, Geneva, September 4, 2017

Background and Context

The concerted endeavors and collaborative efforts of the international human rights communities and the World Human Rights Cities Forum held annually in Gwangju, Republic of Korea since 2011 has led to the report of the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the “Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights” in September 2015 (A/HRC/30/49), which emphasized the responsibilities of local governments and states for the protection of human rights.

According to the report, Local authorities are closest to citizens and address their daily needs. They are therefore key actors at the forefront of the implementation of human rights of their inhabitants, particularly in the areas of education, housing, health, the environment and law enforcement. In addition, local authorities are key actors in preventing discrimination and acting when faced with discrimination against minorities, vulnerable groups and foreigners. (paras. 23, para. 26). Local authorities therefore have an interest in integrating a favourable approach to rights in local public action to strengthen the citizenship of inhabitants and to address human rights violations through measures to encourage citizen participation; for example by conducting audits on public action based on rights, tackling local issues from a rights perspective, and ensuring compatibility between public policies and treaties to protect human rights, shaping the administration’s approach to rights (para. 27).

The conclusion and recommendation of the reports include:

1. Civil society should be actively involved in human rights planning and implementation at the local level. Civil society organizations may also work directly with local government to strengthen its human rights expertise and awareness.
2. Local public officials should continue to engage in dialogues with citizens and civil society. Well-developed channels must be in place for such communication and collaboration.
3. Measures should be taken at the national and international level to build civil society’s capacity in monitoring and engaging with local government.
4. The central government is responsible for providing information on human rights and their impact at the local level to the local government. Developments in promoting human rights at the international level (e.g., new treaties and conventions, recommendations, guidelines and examples of best practice) must be brought to the local level.

5. To support local government in upholding human rights, “roadmaps” for human rights implementation for specific areas should be developed.
6. The Advisory Committee emphasizes on the negative impact of corruption on the realization of human rights. Taking measures against corruption should be regarded as a human rights issue. On the other hand, promoting human rights will not be successful and effective without taking measures to combat corruption.
7. In the context of monitoring the implementation of international human rights commitments, governmental departments at the central and local level should be involved.
8. The need to develop guiding principles for local government and human rights (*Guiding Principles on the Roles of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights*) by taking into account the various internationally recognized standards.
9. The report also states that Local Government must possess the competencies and necessary means, particularly financial means, to fulfil their obligations on human rights, notably economic, social and cultural rights (para. 19).

In implementing these recommendations by each member state, the report can be strengthened with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) framework that emphasizes peace, social justice, human rights and democratic governance at the central and local level (Goal 16), and the need for safe and sustainable cities that guarantee the people’s easy access to decent housing, transportation, green public spaces and other life necessities (Goal 11).

Furthermore, the recently adopted New Urban Agenda, encompasses inclusive and sustainable urban settlement into a human- rights – based approach. It is grounded in the vision that aims to achieve cities and human settlements where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as their fundamental freedoms, guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law.

At the same time, cities and citizens currently face strong political, economic and financial constraints challenges to fulfil human rights : lack of autonomy and difficulty of maintaining links with other levels of government, decline of public resources and impact of structural changes on local policies, difficulty in establishing local and independent mechanisms for the enforcement of citizens’ rights, local authorities’ lack of awareness about their obligations on human rights, lack of collaboration with civil society, etc.

Despite of this context, since the late 90’s, many local governments have been able to put in place mechanisms to protect human rights at local level, which can be established as references. The common work of Human Rights Cities, together with civil society and the academia in the framework of international networks such as UCLG allowed to develop a strong global community of Human Rights Cities in order to exchange practices to harness Human Rights at local level, and to strengthen the voices of Human Rights Cities internationally. These processes led to the adoption of important tools such as the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, the Global Charter Agenda for Human Rights in the City and Gwangju Guiding Principles for Human Rights in the City.

At the time when UN HRC has a High Level Panel to discuss the role of Local Governments in guaranteeing, promoting and protecting Human Rights, in an effort to make known various local initiatives worldwide, including for synergizing human rights cities and SDGs and the NUA, **the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID)**,

United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia in Geneva (PTRI), Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea in Geneva and the U, Asia Democracy Network (AND), and Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) will hold a side event with the theme “Envisioning the UN Guiding Principles on Local Government and Human Rights; Learning from Human Rights Cities”.

The side-event will be held as follows:

Theme : **Envisioning the UN Guiding Principles on Local Government and Human Rights; Learning from Human Rights Cities**
Venue : Room XXII, Palais des Nations, UN Office in Geneva.
Time : **Monday, September, 4, 2017 13h**

Opening Remarks:

1. **H.E. Hasan Kleib**, Ambassador of the of Republic Indonesia to the UN in Geneva
2. **H.E. CHOI, Kyong-lim**, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the UN in Geneva
3. **H.E. Victor Arturo Cabrera Hidalgo**, Ambassador of the Republic of Ecuador in Geneva (*To be confirmed*)

Speakers:

1. **Mrs Kate Gilmore** – Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (To be confirmed)
2. **Mrs. Katarina Pabel**, **UN HRC Advisory Committee**, Sharing the report of the UN HRC Advisory Committee report on local government and human rights and its recommendations.
3. **Mr. Mugiyo**, *Senior Program Officer for Human Rights and Democracy of INFID, Indonesia and Steering Committee Member of Asia Democracy Network (ADN)*. Sharing about the initiatives to promote human rights cities in Indonesia and the Asia region.
4. **Mr. Morten Kjaerum**, Executive Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute
5. **Mr. David Payot**, **City Councillor in Lausanne**
6. **Mr. Mauricio Valiente**, **Deputy mayor for Human Rights, Madrid**
7. **Mrs. Rosario Ortiz**, Executive Secretary of the [Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism for Mexico City’s Human Rights Program](#) (To be confirmed)

Moderator: Ms. Magali Fricaudet, Coordinator of Unites Cities and Local Government Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights