



2020 Annual Conference of the Geneva Human Rights Platform

CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Thursday 15th October 2020,

9:00 – 13:00 Maison de la Paix (Pétale 5), Geneva

14:00 – 18:00 Online Event (Zoom)

Agenda

9:00 – 9:25

Welcome and Introduction

- Marie-Laure Salles, Director of the Graduate Institute
- Jürg Lauber, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva
- Gloria Gaggioli, Director of the Geneva Academy
- Felix Kirchmeier, Executive Director of the Geneva Human Rights Platform

9:25 – 9:45

Keynote Address – Where are we today in terms of connectivity between regional and global human rights mechanisms?

- Michael O’Flaherty, Director, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

9:45 – 11:15

Plenary Panel 1: COVID-19 responses by the global and regional human rights systems

Speakers:

- Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Sandra Liebenberg, H.F. Oppenheimer Chair in Human Rights Law and Distinguished Professor, University of Stellenbosch and Member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Ana María Suárez Franco, Permanent Representative in Geneva, FIAN International
- Mikiko Otani, Member of the Committee of the Rights of the Child and Member of the Inter-Committee Working Group on COVID-19

Moderator: Christophe Golay, Senior Research Fellow and Strategic Adviser on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Geneva Academy

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Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

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11:15 – 11:30 **Breathing Break**

11:30 – 13:00 **Plenary Panel 2: Complaints handling by regional and global human rights mechanisms – procedural and substantive questions**

Speakers:

- Olivier de Frouville, Professor of Law and Director of the Paris Human Rights Center, University of Paris 2 (Panthéon-Assas) and Member of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances
- Joel Hernández García, President, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Leah Hoctor, Regional Director for Europe, Center for Reproductive Rights
- Gaye Sowe, Director, African Institute for Development
- Alexandre Skander Galand, Postdoctoral Researcher, Center for Fundamental Rights, Hertie School

Moderator: Sarah Cleveland, Columbia University and Member of the GHRP Advisory Board

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch Break**

14:00 – 15:30 **Parallel sessions in four working groups will explore how regional and global human rights mechanisms address particular concrete policy areas**

Working Group 1: Corruption and human rights: How can regional and global human rights mechanisms be engaged in the fight against corruption?

Speakers:

- Paul Hoffman, Advocate, Senior Counsel, South Africa
- Matias Huter, Managing Director, UNCAC Coalition
- Mary Jane Ncube, Independent Consultant and former Executive Director, Transparency International Zimbabwe
- Rodrigo Uprimny Yepes, Director of the Drug Policy Area, Dejusticia, Member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Member of the GHRP Advisory Board

Moderator: Patrick Mutzenberg, Director, CCPR Centre

Working Group 2: Environment and human rights: How do regional and global human rights mechanisms address this link?

Speakers:

- Helene Tigroudja, Professor of Law, Aix-Marseille University and Member of the Human Rights Committee
- Ginevra Le Moli, Assistant Professor, University of Leiden
- David Ugolor, Executive Director, Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice
- Sébastien Duyck, Senior Attorney, Climate and Energy Programme, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
- Natalia Kobylarz, Senior Lawyer, Registry, European Court of Human Rights

Moderator: Lucy Maxwell, Legal Associate, Climate Litigation Network

Working Group 3: How do universal and regional human rights mechanisms deal with international humanitarian law?

Speakers:

- Françoise Hampson, Emeritus Professor, University of Essex
- Jelena Pejic, Senior Legal Advisor, International Committee of the Red Cross
- Benyam Mezmur, Professor of Law, University of the Western Cape, South Africa, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- Matt Pollard, Senior Legal Advisor, International Commission of Jurists

Moderator: Emilie Max, Researcher, Geneva Academy

Working Group 4: Building back better: How should regional and global human rights mechanisms address the human rights to health and housing?

Speakers:

- Robert Lewis-Lettington, Chief of Section, Land, Housing and Shelter, Urban Practices Branch and Global Solutions Division, UN

Habitat

- Nathalie Laure Roebbel, WHO Coordinator, Air Pollution and Health
- Miloon Kothari, Independent Expert on Human Rights and Social Policy, Former Special Rapporteur, UN Human Rights Council and GHRP Advisory Board Member

Moderator: Virginia Bras-Gomes, Senior Social Policy Adviser and Former Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural and GHRP Advisory Board Member

15:30 – 16:00

Breathing Break

16:00 – 17:30

Concluding Plenary Panel: Lessons learned and outlook on how connectivity between global and regional HRMechanisms can be strengthened in concrete areas

- Short feedback by Working Group Moderators

Speakers:

- Iulia Motoc, Professor of European and International Law, University of Bucharest and Judge, European Court of Human Rights
- Christof Heyns, Director, Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa and Professor of Human Rights Law, University of Pretoria and Member of the Human Rights Committee
- Margarete May Macaulay, Commissioner, Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and former Judge at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (tbc)
- Solomon Ayele Dersso, Chairperson, African Commission on Human and Peoples 'Rights
- Joel Hernández García, President, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Moderator: Felix Kirchmeier, Executive Director of the Geneva Human Rights Platform

17:30-18:00

Closing of the Conference

Background

The Geneva Human Rights Platform (GHRP) provides a neutral and dynamic forum of interaction in Geneva for all stakeholders in the field of human rights – experts, practitioners, diplomats and civil society – to debate topical issues and challenges related to the functioning of the Geneva-based human rights system. Relying on academic research and findings, it works to enable various actors to be better connected, break silos, and, hence, advance human rights. The GHRP is hosted at the Geneva Academy and supported by the Swiss FDFA.

Its 2020 annual conference will focus on the issue of connectivity between regional and global human rights mechanisms, but also their links with national systems and their effectiveness in a number of specific policy areas. The conference shall bring together a large number of human rights actors from Geneva and beyond and offer a platform for exchange – on co-organized panels and via a “meeting space” during lunch break.

The modern human rights protection system is comprised of an intricate and disparate web of UN and regional treaties and oversight mechanisms. The last half-century has seen the promulgation of a large number of international and regional human rights instruments, including numerous multilateral UN human rights treaties and the various conventions and protocols of the regional human rights systems.

The multilateral conventions are overseen by 10 treaty bodies, which, though they exercise similar powers, were not created to function as a system. Each treaty body was created by States as a free-standing institution, functioning independently within the framework of its own mandate, with the power to independently establish its own procedures, and with its own reporting and review requirements for States.

The regional human rights systems in place in Africa, the Americas and Europe are overseen by regional commissions and courts as well as supporting regional political mechanisms, including the African Union, the OAS, and the Council of Europe. And human rights norms are enforced directly or incorporated by domestic law into numerous national legal systems.

While human rights by definition are conceived as universal, the proliferation of human rights norms and mechanisms at the global and regional levels raises significant potential for substantive complementarity and overlap, but also a danger of incoherence and redundancy of effort, confusion and fatigue within the human rights system.

In light of the rich development of human rights standards and oversight mechanisms in the seventy years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the human rights “system” is confronting an important challenge: How to better develop the substantive, communicative and institutional relationships – or *connectivity* – among our human rights instruments and institutions, and with States and civil society, among others? How can we ensure that the patchwork of our current human rights instruments and mechanisms functions as a larger cohesive whole, in order to reduce redundancy, better reinforce mutual efforts, close gaps in

human rights monitoring and accountability, enhance the capacity for norm enunciation and internalization, and ultimately to maximize the impact of a human rights system of limited resources on real conditions, faced by real people? How can we ensure greater connectivity among the multifarious components, to help them actually function as a *system*?

To explore these issues, the panels of the conference will highlight different aspects of connectivity, focusing on the question how the mechanisms deal with them and in which ways they are and could contribute to international debates.

A first panel will discuss and compare the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by regional and global human rights mechanisms, while a second panel will zoom-in on the way those mechanisms handle cases brought to them by individuals who see their rights violated. Those two plenary sessions set the scene for the debates of the day and will be followed by four parallel thematic working group sessions on the issues of corruption, environment, international humanitarian law and the right to health. Discussants will detail experiences from the various regional systems and the UN treaty body system, aiming to identify promising avenues for further connectivity.

The concluding session of the conference will take a practical look on how to enhance cooperation and connectivity between universal and regional human rights mechanisms in the areas discussed throughout the day.

For more details on the individual panels, please see separate panel concept notes.