

Joint Statement on Equal Participation in Political and Public Affairs

Human Rights Council 42nd session
Item 3 (13 September 2019)

The Czech Republic on behalf of 54 states

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of a group of 54 countries - a full list will be uploaded to the HRC extranet.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates in Article 25 the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections and to have access to public service in his or her country. Other core international human rights treaties elaborate further on equal participation as an important human rights obligation enabling the enjoyment of an array of other rights and freedoms.

Equal and effective participation is of great importance for democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion and economic development. It also plays crucial role for advancing gender equality – the active participation of women, on the same terms as men, is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development and peace.

Unfortunately, for many, the equal opportunity to have a meaningful say in public decision-making is but a distant ideal. It is upon States to implement the right to participate in public affairs and to take all measures to ensure that every citizen has, in law and in practice, an effective opportunity to participate in political and public affairs at all levels. Since September 2018, States can find guidance and inspiration to this end in the OHCHR Guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. These Guidelines, operationalized by the consensual resolution 39/11 of this Council, introduce practical orientations and recommendations for States as well as – where appropriate – for other relevant stakeholders in relation to the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs.

We encourage all governments, local authorities as well as international bodies to use the Guidelines as a practical tool when integrating civic participation as a key governance principle and a human right into their laws and policies. We invite States to consider reporting on the national implementation of the Guidelines in their communications with Treaty Bodies and in the context of the UPR. The Guidelines have also potential to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We take note with interest of the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote these Guidelines and we recall the possibility for States to request from the OHCHR technical cooperation and capacity building regarding the use of these Guidelines. The Guidelines are now available in a user-friendly version in several

languages on the OHCHR website and the OHCHR has expressed its readiness to assist States with their implementation. In this regard, we welcome a first State request for technical assistance by the OHCHR in translating the UN Guidelines into laws, policies and practices. In years to come, we look forward to see a wide use of the Guidelines for the benefit of people on the ground across the world.

Mr. President, we strongly believe that stimulating civic participation is a very meaningful effort and we remain committed to working towards the improved enjoyment of the right to participate in public affairs at this Council and beyond.

I thank you.

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Argentina
4. Armenia
5. Australia
6. Austria
7. Belgium
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. Botswana
10. Bulgaria
11. Canada
12. Chile
13. Croatia
14. Cyprus
15. the Czech Republic
16. Denmark
17. Estonia
18. Finland
19. France
20. Georgia
21. Germany
22. Ghana
23. Greece
24. Hungary
25. Iceland
26. Ireland
27. Israel
28. Italy
29. Japan
30. Latvia
31. Liechtenstein
32. Lithuania
33. Luxembourg
34. Malta
35. Mexico
36. Moldova
37. Montenegro
38. the Netherlands
39. North Macedonia
40. Norway
41. Panama
42. Peru
43. Poland
44. Portugal
45. Romania
46. Serbia
47. Slovakia

48. Slovenia
49. Spain
50. Sweden
51. Switzerland
52. Turkey
53. Ukraine
54. the United Kingdom