

Participation in political and public affairs: Current challenges and best practices

30th Session of the Human Rights Council - Side Event

29 September 2015, 13:00-15:00
Palais des Nations, Room XXIII



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic



Background

The right to participate in public affairs, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international treaties, is crucial for ensuring democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Yet, in practice, the effective implementation of this human right is often challenged by numerous obstacles – discrimination, restrictive policies, insufficient political will, general distrust in public authorities, decline in traditional forms of political participation or structural inequalities. At the same time, the practice of implementing this right by States and other stakeholders offers numerous good examples and innovative measures on how to effectively tackle and overcome these challenges and to increase participation.

To discuss these issues, the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organize a side event, aiming to: (1) present the OHCHR study (A/HRC/30/26) on best practices, experiences, challenges and ways to overcome them with regard to the right to participate in public affairs and discuss its findings and examples of best practices, and (2) bring together practitioners with expertise in promoting equal participation in political and public affairs and provide a forum to share experiences, through interactive debate with the audience.

Opening statements from:

H.E. Ambassador Jan Kára,
Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva

Ms. Mona Rishmawi,
Chief, Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Speakers: *(see back for bios)*

Ms. Anja Seibert-Fohr, Vice-Chairperson, United Nations Human Rights Committee

Ms. Dima Jweihan, Executive Director, Middle East and North Africa regional office of the International Center for Not for-Profit Law

Mr. Tomáš Rákos, CEO, Democracy 2.1

Refreshments will be served.

All are welcome. Please apply in advance for a UN grounds pass.
For further information about the event, please contact Ms. Monica Alban (malban@ohchr.org)

Speakers' bios

Prof. Dr. Anja Seibert Fohr is Vice-Chairperson of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, which she joined in 2013. She is also Director of the Institute for International and European Law at Goettingen University Law Faculty and holds the Chair of International Law and Human Rights. Previously, she held several research and academic positions in Germany and United States and was legal adviser to the German delegation to the OSCE. Dr. Seibert-Fohr holds two German law degrees as well as an LLM in International and Comparative Law and a Doctorate of Juridical Science from George Washington University. She has written extensively on human rights issues, including on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Dima Jweihan is the Executive Director of the Middle East and North Africa regional office of the International Center for Not for-Profit Law in Amman, Jordan. Since she joined ICNL, Ms. Jweihan has been engaged in a number of civil society law reform initiatives in the region, including work to build the capacity of CSOs and government officials on civil society law implementation. She is a graduate of the London School of Economics & Political Sciences, where she specialized in Regulations and Public Policy. Ms. Jweihan received her LLB from the University of Jordan.

Tomáš Rákos is the CEO of Democracy 2.1 (D21), a new innovative project based in the Czech Republic. D21 implements a ground-breaking voting method based on the effect of offering more votes per voter. This project aims at reinventing and enhancing democratic electoral decision-making and data aggregation processes, increasing a level of citizens' inclusion and participation, as well as providing decision-makers with robust data for further use. Mr. Rákos is in charge of strategic planning and innovations. He started his career as a reporter, working for the Czech Radio and Czech Television.

* * * * *