

U.S. Presentation to the UN Human Rights Committee
Opening Remarks by Ambassador Michèle Taylor
U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN Human Rights Council
October 17, 2023

Members of the UN Human Rights Committee, esteemed colleagues and dedicated civil society representatives.

The United States Delegation presents itself today for this Committee's consideration of our fifth periodic report concerning the implementation of our obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We do so with humility and are honored to appear before you today. The ICCPR has a central role in international human rights law, setting forth a broad array of civil and political rights that form the bedrock of equality and human dignity for every individual.

I wish to extend our gratitude to the Committee for its steadfast commitment to advancing civil and political rights worldwide. Your dedication has resulted in numerous improvements in law, policy, and, most importantly, in practice.

Our delegation today is a testament to our commitment to our international legal obligations with regard to civil and political rights. This delegation is composed of experts from across our government, including representatives from the U.S. State Department, White House Domestic Policy Council, and nine other federal agencies. We're also privileged to be accompanied by Attorney General Aaron Ford of Nevada, and Mayor Steven Reed of Montgomery, Alabama, reflecting the indispensable role of state and local government in fulfilling our treaty obligations.

But let me be clear; it is not merely out of obligation that we seek to live up to the standards of the ICCPR. For the Biden-Harris Administration, for the United States, it is a moral imperative at the very heart of our democracy and our pursuit of a more perfect union.

The rights enshrined in the ICCPR are foundational to the fabric of all thriving democracies. For example, ensuring the right to vote and to participate in public affairs is not only necessary to foster an active civil society and political pluralism, it is crucial to ensure equal treatment under the law and to address a broad range of human rights challenges.

We are deeply committed to the respect and protection of the rights enshrined in the ICCPR. The United States demonstrates that commitment by adopting and implementing measures to give effect to those rights.

Our commitment to the LGBTQI+ community remains unwavering, even in the face of mounting challenges. In the realm of Indigenous rights, our efforts are geared towards fostering strong ties between the Federal Government and Tribal Nations, ensuring that our policies are shaped by meaningful consultations with tribal leaders.

The United States' significant investments in maternal health and the recently unveiled blueprint to address maternal health crises underscore our commitment to reproductive rights. Many state leaders continue to develop and advance policies to address maternal mortality and protect women's access to reproductive health care. Women in all their diversity face unique challenges in realizing their many human rights.

The path to racial equity and justice remains central to our endeavors. The United States is working to advance racial equity and help realize the promise of America for members of marginalized racial, ethnic and Indigenous communities across the country. The United States has taken steps to acknowledge and address systematic racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance and the scourge of white supremacy within our own borders. Racial inequity is not an issue for a single U.S. department or agency – it is the business of the whole of the U.S. government in all our federal policies and institutions. We encourage other state parties to take a similarly holistic approach.

The United States is also working to ensure that prison conditions and sentencing are consistent with both our international obligations and our values.

We believe that no country is above scrutiny. I was to invite the Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism to visit the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. While we may not agree with all of the conclusions of the report, we recognize that these visits help the United States make progress.

As much as our government is committed to abiding by its obligations under the ICCPR and improving our approach to human rights issues across the country, we are but one stakeholder in what is, truly, a societal effort. I wish here to acknowledge that it is the vibrant tapestry of civil society that keeps us grounded,

holding us accountable to our commitments. Their shadow reports and consultations compel the introspection that allows us to adapt, evolve, and improve. At the U.S. Mission yesterday, we held our sixth consultation with civil society. These meetings are instrumental in our learning process, and we look forward to our ongoing engagement. Other topics discussed included access to housing, clean water, and food.

Reporting to and engaging with this Committee also helps the United States reflect on areas of progress and ongoing challenges. We welcome the Committee's questions and observations and will respond on as many of the questions as possible.

I'd like to conclude by repeating that the U.S. remains as committed to fulfilling our obligations under the ICCPR as we were when we ratified it. While we take great pride in our strides forward, we are equally forthright in acknowledging our areas for improvement. It is in this spirit that we present ourselves before you today.

Now, I invite my esteemed colleague from the White House Domestic Policy Council, Justin Vail, to share further perspectives.

Thank you.