

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Consideration of Norway's Fifth periodic Report.

Introductory statement. Mr Petter Wille

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is pleased to meet with the Committee for further dialogue on Norway's implementation of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The UN treaty bodies play a crucial role in the international system for monitoring states' implementation of their human rights obligations. We strongly support international monitoring in this area, including the system of state reporting, and the dialogues with the Committees in consideration of reports. We are fully committed to cooperation with the Committee. Your concluding observations on previous reports have played an important guiding role in our efforts to improve our implementation of the Covenant.

Human rights are universal and indivisible, and the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights is as important as the implementation of civil and political rights. In our national legal system, we have incorporated the Covenant on equal footing with the ICCPR. The provisions of the Covenant may be invoked directly in national courts and the provisions of the Covenant are to take precedence over any other provisions of national legislation that may conflict with them.

I would also like to use this opportunity to commend the contributions of civil society representatives who have been involved in preparing supplementary reports to our fifth periodic report. We have studied them carefully, and taken due note of the comments therein.

Norway has an established practice of discussing follow up of concluding observations with the relevant authorities as well as with representatives of civil society, with a view to further improve our follow-up procedures for concluding observations. Allow me to add that our commitment to the treaty body system is also demonstrated by the fact that more than half of

the ministries have participated in drafting our periodic report and six different ministries are represented in our delegation today. These are; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Mr. Chair,

Subsequent to the submission of our fifth periodic report, we have had an opportunity to inform the Committee about certain new developments by means of our written answers to the list of issues forwarded to us by the Committee. We hope that our answers, as well as our new Common Core Document, which was submitted to the OHCHR earlier this month, will assist the Committee in its consideration of the report.

Although I want to be brief in this introductory statement, I would, with your permission, like to highlight some new developments which were not covered by our answers to the list of issues.

Firstly, Norway ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 3 June this year.

Secondly, the Child Welfare Act has recently been amended in order to strengthen children's rights to participation. The section on consideration of the child's best interests now clearly states that children are entitled to express their opinion during the whole child welfare case. The purpose of the amendment is to strengthen children's right to be heard in cases involving themselves.

The act has furthermore been amended with the view to strengthening the child's right to be heard in child welfare cases by allowing children to bring a person they trust in all meetings with the child welfare service. The trust person will give the child a stronger feeling of security and thus increase the child's ability to express its own views.

Two important amendments in the Children Act should also be mentioned. First, the provision on the child's right of co-determination now gives young children right to participate and be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial proceedings concerning parental responsibility, where the child shall live permanently and the child's right of access to the parents. The other amendment aims at strengthening the protection of children that are in danger of being subject to violence or sexual abuse by one of the parents.

Finally, I will mention that the Government in the near future will start the work for a universal anti-discrimination bill, which will replace the present discrimination legislation.

Mr. Chairman,

We are looking forward to our discussions with the Committee, and will do our best to answer any questions, and provide any additional information, the Committee may request.

Thank you.

