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Member States urged to consider proposals to strengthen UN treaty body system



High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay. UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

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Top United Nations officials today called on Member States to consider a set of proposals to strengthen the world body's human rights treaty body system, which has doubled in size over the past 12 years, and make it more effective.

The 10 human rights treaty bodies which make up the system are committees of independent experts that periodically examine the implementation of all treaties that State parties have ratified under international law.

Last month, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) released a report focusing on how to create a more efficient and streamlined approach to the treaty body

system. In it, the High Commissioner proposed the use of a reporting calendar, so that every report is reviewed on time, with the hope that this will result in equal treatment of all States.

She also recommended the utilization of new technologies, including webcasting and videoconferencing, to increase visibility and accessibility to these treaty bodies.

“We are today at a turning point in the history of treaty bodies,” High Commissioner Navi Pillay said in [remarks](#) to an informal meeting held at UN Headquarters in New York to discuss the report.

“With the report and all materials submitted during the consultation process, we are now better equipped to fully understand the extraordinary challenges generated by a rapid growth of the system and we also have numerous forward-looking proposals that address most key aspects of the functioning of treaty bodies,” she added.

Regarding the proposals, Ms. Pillay said that as long as their objectives remain met, they can still be fine-tuned, and further elaborated on and improved by Member States, treaty bodies and other stakeholders.

She added that the proposal for a comprehensive reporting calendar merits detailed attention and should not be shelved just because it has financial implications. “This proposal offers many advantages, including full reporting compliance, equality of treatment, predictability and efficiency, both at national and international level,” she noted.

[Addressing](#) the informal meeting, the President of the General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, cited two objectives of the intergovernmental process underway. The first is to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of the treaty bodies in assisting States parties in meeting their relevant obligations.

The second is to improve the impact of the bodies on rights-holders and duty-bearers at the national level by making their work more efficient while fully respecting their independence. “We should continue to keep this system independent and central to the promotion and protection of human rights,” he stated, adding that the system serves a great purpose.

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