



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy, for everyone.



Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: The contribution of parliaments to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Seminar for Asia-Pacific parliaments organized jointly by the Senate of the Philippines and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

26 - 27 February 2015, Diamond Hotel, Manila (Philippines)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION NOTE

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE SEMINAR

Parliaments and the United Nations Human Rights Council are natural partners. Without parliamentary action - be it passing laws or overseeing government action - very few recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the mechanism through which the Council examines the human rights situation in all UN Member States, will actually be implemented. Indeed, the mandate entrusted to parliaments to legislate and hold governments to account for their actions is of paramount importance to the work of the Human Rights Council.

In recent years, the IPU has made it a priority to raise awareness among parliaments about the Council and its UPR and the contribution they can make to it. The IPU systematically informs parliaments of the forthcoming examination of their countries' national reports. The IPU organizes capacity-building workshops for parliamentarians to enhance their understanding of the UPR and their role. This is much needed. A survey the IPU conducted recently found that many parliaments are still unfamiliar with the work of the Council or its UPR. The tide is however turning and parliaments are increasingly taking an active interest in the work of the Council.

On 29 May 2013, the Human Rights Council, with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), organized a panel discussion in Geneva to address the contribution of parliaments to promoting human rights at the national level and to the work of the Council. The participants in the meeting concurred that parliaments had a critical role to play in ensuring respect for human rights domestically and that parliaments and the Human Rights Council stood much to gain from closer cooperation. To this end, participants recommended to:

- Enhance further awareness among members of parliament about the existence of the Human Rights Council and its UPR and the need for their full involvement in its work;
- Promote stronger involvement of members of parliaments in the three different reporting stages of the Universal Periodic Review;
- Promote the adoption, by the Human Rights Council, of concrete steps to engage with parliaments and to take their work into account.

In order to follow up on the panel discussion, it has been suggested that the IPU encourage the organization of regional parliamentary meetings so as to help put the aforesaid recommendations into effect. It is in this context that the IPU will organize, with the collaboration of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights a regional event hosted by the Senate of the Philippines to bring together parliamentarians from Asia-Pacific. The aim of the seminar is to:

- Examine and draw lessons from the way in which national parliaments in the region have promoted human rights at the national level;
- Promote a better understanding of the work of the Human Rights Council and its UPR, and the role that parliaments and their members can play therein;
- Examine and draw lessons from national case studies of parliamentary involvement in the UPR;
- Promote synergies at the national level between parliament and other human rights stakeholders, in particular National Human Rights Institutions;

- Determine concrete follow-up action by each parliament, in cooperation with other national human rights stakeholders, with respect to the UPR review of its own country's human rights record;
- Send a strong signal to the UN Human Rights Council regarding parliamentary interest and commitment to its work, in particular the UPR;
- Promote, including through the IPU, the co-operation between Human Rights Council and the national Parliaments, including but not limited to the Universal Review Process.

2. VENUE AND DATE

The seminar will be held on 26 and 27 February 2015 at the **Diamond Hotel** (Main Ballroom). The following are the contact details of the hotel (Tel.: + 63 2 528 30 00 / Fax: + 63 2 522 01 50 / Website: www.diamondhotel.com / email: rgalvez@diamondhotel.com)

3. PARTICIPATION

This seminar is open to the parliaments from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These parliaments are invited to send a delegation of a maximum of five parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, gender-balanced and reflecting the political representation of the parliament. It is recommended that the members of the delegation work directly on human rights issues in their parliaments. Representatives of national human rights institutions, Philippines and Asian civil society as well as international organizations present in the Philippines are also invited to the seminar

4. WORKING LANGUAGE

The working language of the seminar will be English. However, interpretation booths can be set up for delegations wishing to bring their own interpreters. Participants are requested to kindly inform the organizers well in advance should they wish to make use of this arrangement.

5. ACCOMMODATION

Participants are informed that they are responsible for their delegation's accommodation. The hotels indicated below have been made available for participants attending the seminar at negotiated rates:

Diamond Hotel Philippines Rates inclusive of free breakfast free Wi-Fi in the room www.diamondhotel.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Deluxe Room (single/twin) \$ 122 / Php 5,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Premier Room (single/twin) \$ 149 / Php 6,700	<input type="checkbox"/> Diamond Club Room (single/twin) \$ 211 / Php 9,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Suite (single/twin) \$ 367 / Php 16,500
Armada Hotel Manila Rates inclusive of free breakfast free Wi-Fi in the room. Less than a kilometre from Diamond Hotel www.armadahotelmanila.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior Room (single/double) \$ 72 / Php 3,200	<input type="checkbox"/> Deluxe Room (single/double) \$ 78 / Php 3,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Premium Room (single/double) \$ 85 / Php 3,800	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior suite (single/double) US\$ 145 / Php 6,500

In order to guarantee the availability of rooms at the above rates, participants are kindly requested to make their reservations by duly completing and returning their hotel registration form indicating the duration of stay (number of nights) and their preferred room type by email or fax to:

Ms. RIZA A. OCTAVO Office of International Relations & Protocol, Senate of the Philippines	Tel.: + 63 2 552 67 46 Fax: + 63 2 552 68 94 email: oirp@senate.gov.ph
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6. VISAS

Passport holders from the following countries in the Asia-Pacific region are allowed entry into the Philippines for business, convention or tourism purposes without visa for a stay of up to thirty (30) days, provided they hold valid return tickets to their port of origin or their next port of destination: Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Passport holders from other Asia-Pacific countries not indicated above are advised to contact the Philippine Embassy/Consulate with jurisdiction over their area for the requirements in obtaining an entry visa to the Philippines. Participants may also contact the Consular Affairs Office of the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs (Manila) for further information and assistance at +632 556 00 00.

Participants are encouraged to file their visa application as early as possible, preferably on or before **23 January 2015**, due to the fact that the application process may take up to 3 weeks.

7. REGISTRATION

Participants are requested to complete and return the attached Registration Form **no later than 23 January 2015** to the following addresses:

Copy to:	
Ms. RIZA A. OCTAVO Registration Desk Office of International Relations & Protocol, Senate of the Philippines	Mr. Akiyo AFOUDA Inter-Parliamentary Union 5, Chemin du Pommier 1218 Grand-Saconnex Geneva (Switzerland)
Tel.: + 63 2 552 67 46 / Fax: + 63 2 552 68 94 email: oirp@senate.gov.ph	Tel.: + 41 22 919 41 23 / Fax: + 41 22 919 41 60 email: aa@ipu.org / postbox@ipu.org

8. ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE AND TRANSPORT

The Senate of the Philippines has assigned an **Airport Assistance Team** to provide airport courtesies and assistance for all arriving and departing delegates at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in all its 3 terminals. The team will meet each delegate and provide immigration, customs and luggage retrieval assistance.

Transportation from the airport to any of the two designated hotels upon arrival and departure will be provided by the Philippine Senate.

Participants are requested to complete the Registration form providing their arrival and departure details which should be sent to the Philippine Senate and IPU contact persons indicated above. This will enable the organizers to handle participants' flight details upon their arrival.

9. MEALS

Lunches will be hosted and coffee breaks provided at the meeting venue. Participants are requested to inform Ms. Riza Octavo (oirp@senate.gov.ph) of any dietary restrictions. The Senate President, Mr. Franklin M. Drilon, will host a reception on Thursday, 26 February, at 7 p.m. (venue to be communicated later).

10. DRESS CODE

The dress code for the seminar is business casual, except during the opening ceremony where participants are requested to wear formal business suit/national wear.

11. WEATHER

February is one of the coolest months in the Philippines. The weather in Manila is cool but sunny, with average daytime temperature of 25°C (77.9°F) but can often dip to a pleasant 20°C (68°F) in the evenings.

12. OTHER SERVICES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

- Currency:** The national currency in the Philippines is the **Philippine Peso** (PHP). As at 1 December 2014, the rate was at 1.00 PHP = US \$ 0.022
- Transport:** Manila is served by elevated railways which travel above Metro Manila's main highway. Many, if not all hotels in and around Metro Manila are a short walk to a ride elsewhere.
- Electricity:** The voltage in the Philippines is 220 Volts, alternating at 60 cycles per second (one may require a voltage converter)

13. CONTACT PERSONS FOR INFORMATION

<p>Ms. RIZA A. OCTAVO Office of International Relations & Protocol, Senate of the Philippines</p> <p>Tel.: + 63 2 552 67 46 / Fax: + 63 2 552 68 94 email: oirp@senate.gov.ph</p>	<p>Mr. Akiyo AFOUDA Inter-Parliamentary Union 5, Chemin du Pommier 1218 Grand-Saconnex Geneva (Switzerland)</p> <p>Tel.: + 41 22 919 41 23 / Fax: + 41 22 919 41 60 email: aa@ipu.org / postbox@ipu.org</p>
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