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30 April 2025

Dear Convener,

I am writing to provide the Committee with an update on international human rights treaty reporting, monitoring, and implementation, specifically in relation to the seventh cyclical review of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

You will recall that my predecessor, Emma Roddick MSP in her role as Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees, updated the Committee on international human rights activity in March of last year.<sup>1</sup> In that update she provided the Committee with an overview of expected activity in relation to the seventh cyclical review of ICESCR over the course of 2024-25, including an Interactive Dialogue with the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN Committee) in Spring 2025.

That Interactive Dialogue took place on 13-14 February 2025 and my officials – as part of a UK delegation to the UN – provided evidence on action taken since the last review in 2016 to implement ICESCR in devolved policy areas. Interactive Dialogues are important scrutiny and accountability mechanisms, and the Scottish Government welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to observing and implementing international obligations.

The UN Committee noted Scotland's distinctive approach to the progression of human rights in Scotland and commented favourably on action taken to incorporate international human rights instruments into domestic law – including our commitment to incorporating ICESCR through the proposed Human Rights Bill. Additionally, they commented positively on action taken to tackle child poverty and reduce drug related deaths.

I want to acknowledge the significant contribution of civil society and National Human Rights Institutions throughout the review process. It was a historically significant session as the UN Committee received the largest number of civil society reports for any State party review.

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<sup>1</sup> [Letter from the Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees, 28 March 2024](#)

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This is an achievement which we should collectively be proud of and is a clear testament to an active, dedicated and engaged sector across Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Following the Interactive Dialogue the UN Committee published its Concluding Observations which set out a number of recommendations covering both reserved and devolved policy areas. The UN Committee notes the crucial role that Parliament plays in advancing the present Concluding Observations and as such I welcome the opportunity to engage with this Committee as we reflect on next steps. I understand that in the past detailed Scottish Government position statements in response to Concluding Observations have received limited engagement and I have asked my officials to engage closely with stakeholders to understand what form of Scottish Government response could be of most value in driving forward implementation and scrutiny.

In this regard, we are progressing work to develop a tool that tracks the recommendations of international treaty bodies and their implementation in Scotland, as the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice's committed to do so before this Committee in October 2024. A Design Group made up of organisations and individuals with expertise in monitoring and implementing human rights across Scotland has been convened to inform this work. In recognition of the crucial role that Parliament plays in implementation and scrutiny, I am grateful that Scottish Parliament officials are members of the Design Group.

I hope that the information provided is helpful to your Committee and look forward to engaging with you further at your evidence session on Tuesday 6 May.

Yours sincerely,

**Kaukab Stewart**  
**Minister for Equalities**

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