

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

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***Is Equality Lite* the new UK human rights standard?**

Room 4a House of Lords

November 13, 6.30pm

Panel

Amanda Ariss, Chief Executive, Equality and Diversity Forum

Prof Sir Bob Hepple QC, Emeritus Master of Clare College

Chair Lord Judd of Portsea

The Coalition Government's commitment to progressing the Equalities and Human Rights agenda has been called into question. Recent events have seen the ending of over 40 years of public funding for local equalities and human rights organisations working to improve community relations and to provide support to the victims of discrimination. Meanwhile, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's budget is being slashed, with many of its functions likely to be taken over or removed. Some fear that increased Whitehall control over the EHRC's internal governance will lead to the loss of its coveted status as the UK's 'Category A' National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). Prompted by the 'red tape' challenge, the Government also proposes to repeal sections of the 2006 Equalities Act and to review the public sector equality duty which requires policy-makers to consider the impact of their decisions on disadvantaged groups. Additionally the 1998 Human Rights Act, scathingly attacked by a senior cabinet minister last year, may be replaced with a British Bill of Rights. Will other countries follow suit?

The UK takes pride in its position as a leading advocate of human rights and as an exemplar to the rest of the world. But as the 2nd Universal Periodic Review commences, some see its policy on human rights as little more than 'do as we say not as we do'. These critics observe that the UN periodic review mechanism seeks to encourage continuing improvement in member states' adherence to international human rights standards and places high expectations on countries such as the UK that are looked to for positive leadership. Our speakers will share their views on these issues and conduct their own 'health check' of the UK's record on Equalities and Human Rights. They will also consider what the UN's Accreditation Committee should expect to find in determining whether the Equality and Human Rights Commission can retain its NHRI status.

All are welcome. Please allow 20 minutes to pass through the security zone. Enter by the Cromwell Garden entrance. For further information: contact David Wardrop

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