

**Statement by Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General
Deposit of the 10th instrument of ratification of the OP-ICESCR
New York, 5 February 2013**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to warmly welcome the deposit of the 10th ratification instrument, by Uruguay, of the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The entry into force of this instrument adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 2008, the Human Rights Day, will therefore take place in three months, on 5 May 2013.

More than sixty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promised universality, indivisibility and equal value of all human rights for all people. Its drafters wisely chose not to rank rights. On the contrary, they recognized that civil and political rights go hand in hand with economic, social and cultural rights.

Yet, for far too long economic, social and cultural rights were not given the same attention and status in law, lagging behind on means for promotion and protection, as well as resources, when compared to civil and political rights. This historic gap in the protection of economic, social and cultural rights was finally addressed with the adoption of the Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol will now enable victims to seek justice for violations of their economic, social and cultural rights at the international level, through the submission of communications before the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Thus, it represents a milestone in the international human rights system. The individual communications procedures mirrors those already existing under the already existing communications procedures under the ICCPR, CEDAW, CPRD, CAT, CERD and CED. It will also enable the Committee to conduct inquiries if it receives reliable information indicating grave or systematic violations by a State party of any of the economic, social and cultural rights under the Covenant.

In many national jurisdictions, the introduction of legal remedies in cases of violation of economic, social and cultural rights has clearly benefited right-holders. The entry into force of Optional Protocol will allow for the development of jurisprudence that will clarify the scope of application of these rights and offer further guidance to States parties and national courts to devise adequate remedies for victims.

With the entry into force of the Optional Protocol, the United Nations has now been able to come full circle on the normative architecture envisaged by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I strongly encourage other State parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to ratify the Optional Protocol and ensure the widest possible protection of economic, social and cultural rights, on an equal footing with civil and political rights.
