



Human Rights Council virtual meeting with High Commissioner for Human Rights to discuss human rights implications of COVID-19:

Interventions by States and NGOs

9 April 2020

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INTERVENTIONS BY STATES:

European Union (EU)

This is the time for solidarity and cooperation. EU supports multilateral solutions, it is working to secure financial solutions to partner-countries for more than 20 billion euros. All measures should be in accordance with international law, including human rights. EU will continue to promote good governance, the rule of law, gender equality, non-discrimination, decent work conditions, fundamental values and humanitarian principles. We need to act swiftly on health, economic, and social aspects while maintaining the humanitarian approach on all our actions. Inclusive decision-making should involve the civil society, with access to information being a key element. Response measures should adhere to human rights standards including limiting restrictions on human rights to what is strictly necessary and proportionate to the evaluated risk. The OHCHR is of utmost importance in advising governments to ensure their response plans are people-centred and uphold the dignity and human rights of all without discrimination of any kind. Question: How can we ensure gender-responsive measures and strategies to adequately address the risks of the most vulnerable?

Azerbaijan (on behalf of NAM)

The Covid-19 crisis caught us all unprepared. Lack of proper attention from the international human rights platforms to economic and social rights and to relevant international cooperation is among the factors exacerbating the devastating impact of Covid-19 both in developed and developing countries. Unilateral coercive measures are deeply confronting the efforts of the affected countries in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. Questions: Could you please elaborate on possible measures that can foster an environment of global solidarity and international cooperation, including through introducing, at later stage, adjustments and corrections to the post-pandemic daily work of the Office and the Human Rights Council (HRC). Could you please elaborate on the human rights aspects of the impact of the unilateral coercive measures on global response to the pandemic, in particular on access to medicines, equipment and other related medical material, as well as on emergency medical cooperation programmes?

China

Firstly, we need to continue to make efforts to protect people's lives and the right to health. Unilateral sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible. Secondly, we need to take effective measures to minimize the pandemic's impact on social and economic development. Efforts should also be made to ensure the rights of women, children, the elderly, the disabled, migrants, and other vulnerable groups. Thirdly, we need to jointly oppose stigmatization and politicization of public health issues; practices related to racial discrimination and xenophobia are to be abandoned. China will continue to support international cooperation against the epidemic with the WHO playing the leading and the coordination role. We welcome the High Commissioner and her Office to make contributions within their mandate. China has mobilized the whole nation, set up collective control and treatment mechanism, and acted with transparency. China is now speeding up the restoration of normal life and work. China has taken an active part in international efforts. China's President attended the extraordinary G20 Summit. China expresses its willingness to share its expertise and experience, and is ready to provide support and assistance to those in need. We will continue to work together with others to win the final victory over the Covid-19.

Republic of Korea

We face an unprecedented crisis that requires extraordinary measures to be taken, but we should never forget to place human rights at the centre of our response. We thank the High Commissioner for raising her voice through public interventions. This crisis is bringing even greater difficulties to the vulnerable groups in our societies. We need to push back against the growing trend of stigmatization,



discrimination, racism and xenophobia. New digital technologies and medical innovations are increasingly being used to detect, trace and monitor patients as well as to provide information to the public in a timely manner. These technologies should be used to protect the right to life and health, while taking the least intrusive approach to other human rights such as the freedom of movement, the freedom of expression and right to privacy. The Republic of Korea is fighting against the virus on the basis of transparency, openness and democratic values. In the spirit of solidarity, we are ready to share our best practices, information and the lessons learned with the global community.

Netherlands

The Netherlands aligns itself with the EU statement. In this global crisis, the UN's human rights voice needs to be loud and clear. It is essential to find creative ways to continue our human rights work amidst the current crisis that has many human rights angles. The current crisis knows no borders and will have long-term social and economic consequences. We can only defeat it through effective international cooperation and real solidarity under the leadership of the strong United Nations. We strongly support OHCHR's action in the Covid-19 response. OHCHR should play a central role in integrating and protecting the human rights approach the UN-wide response to the pandemic. The human rights implications of this crisis are twofold: direct human right challenges arising from the health crisis and intended or unintended consequences of government measures (negative effect on the freedom of expression, the position of vulnerable persons, including women, religious minorities or LGBTI persons), and addressing the health crisis is paramount to ensure that derogations of certain human rights are fully in compliance with international human rights standards and are of a temporary nature. Question: Madam High Commissioner, could you elaborate on the role of your Office in monitoring government's responses?

Russian Federation

This global crisis helps us to rebuild what matters most; our world is small and interdependent. Humane approach and international solidarity are vital. Recognizing the leading role that states and WHO play, we welcome the efforts of the High Commissioner and OHCHR in addressing challenges and impacts of Covid-19. We also support the steps taken by the General Assembly in adopting a relevant resolution. We note with regret that a number of critical issues have not been addressed. Russia put forward a draft declaration of solidarity of the United Nations in the face of challenges of Covid-19. Regrettably a small group of states locked down that initiative. Unilateral coercive measures are not mentioned in the OHCHR Covid-19 Guidance. Unilateral coercive measures undermine countries' capacity to respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic. Russian Federation asks the High Commissioner to continue to pay close attention to this issue and add the relevant passages to the Guidelines. The second vital issue is the unprecedented wave of racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Russian Federation will continue its cooperation with all relevant stakeholders in combatting Covid-19 and its consequences.

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Close to 25% of the world population that are targeted by the universal sanctions of some sort should also be counted as the ones among the most vulnerable. We agree with the call of the High Commissioner to end sanctions. Questions: What follow-up initiatives or measures have been taken by OHCHR to advance this critical call, also made by Secretary General? What are your recommendations for the Council and the treaty bodies to follow-up on this issue?

Philippines

The Philippines has launched a 3.9-billion dollar emergency cash subsidy program, the largest and widest in the Philippines history, to benefit 18 million low-income household, and has rolled-out 542 million dollars of aid package to the affected workers and establishments. In light of the global emergency appeals, the Philippines's president has approved a donation of 100,000 US dollars to the ICRC. Philippine's president declared on March 18 the unilateral ceasefire. The Covid-19 crisis has a



disproportionate impact on developing countries and on vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees. We underscore the imperative of the actions to strengthen the Council.

Brazil

Covid-19 is challenging human rights of everyone everywhere. Health systems have near collapsed in many countries. Without enhancing our preparedness and building resilience we will not survive either this or future pandemics. We are deeply concerned with the difficulties in obtaining of essential medical supplies due to export restrictions. Access to goods will determine who lives and go dies. It is imperative to guarantee the access to treatment and health products in an equitable manner and at affordable price. Question: Can Madam High Commissioner elaborate on the inequalities exacerbated during the present pandemic? Economic rights are also being threatened. We must do our best to limit the impact of the emergency on people's livelihoods. Vulnerable people in these extraordinary times deserve extraordinary measures and attentions.

Sweden (on behalf of Nordic countries)

Sweden, on behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway, expresses its full support to the work of OHCHR, Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies. It is the test of our societies, governments, communities, individuals, and the UN system. In this unprecedented situation, it is legitimate for states to adopt extraordinary measures to protect their citizens but all responses must be in accordance with international law and full respect for human rights. We must ensure transparency of actions and equitable and effective responses to tackling both the immediate health crisis and the socio-economic consequences. We must also protect human rights defenders, journalists and media workers. Any use of emergency powers and tools of surveillance technology must be in line with international law. There is an increased vulnerability of women and children to violence. We support the call of the Secretary-General to make gender equality, the prevention and redress of violence against women the key part of national response plans. Question: Madam High Commissioner, in your view, what are the major challenge for human rights, gender equality, democracy and the rule of law?

Iraq

We would like to underline the following: 1. The importance of international cooperation and solidarity in responding to the global health crisis (information sharing, emergency aid, prevention and control of the pandemic, technical and advisory assistance to the states in need). 2. Everyone should receive the same level of medical care without any discrimination. 3. [...] Budget should be allocated to prevent the spread of the virus. Human rights obligations might be affected – Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures should consider this challenge. the Iraqi government has taken all the necessary measures through its security and health institutions in the fight against pandemic. Iraqi citizens were evacuated from some countries abroad. We would like to thank all states that provided assistance.

India

Efforts and solidarity needed on the national, regional and global level by all the stakeholders. The crisis brought multidimensional challenges. There is a need to address economic challenges, especially in the post-pandemic time. India's focus is to contain the spread of Covid-19 by adopting the required measures, while at the same time doing its best to alleviate the situation of those most affected, particularly the marginalized and the poor, especially women, children, and migrants. The Government is providing 24 billion dollar assistance package to save lives and livelihoods. Global response is needed. We conduct online trainings for emergency response teams, and we are ready to share our experience.

Marshall Islands

We closed our borders and effectively quarantined everybody since mid-February. Acting early and with transparency is crucial to effectively managing crises. We are concerned by governmental



hesitation and obfuscation in the face of the current pandemic. We urge the UN organizations to prioritize human health over political considerations and to include all countries and territories in the international discussions. We must be mindful about the fundamental freedoms. Covid-19 response must not amplify systematic pre-existing racist behaviours. We must continue multilateral cooperation for the sake of protecting our most vulnerable populations. We ask you, Madam President to consider the opinion of the Advisory Committee on responding to the pandemic from the human rights based approach.

Syrian Arab Republic

The impacts of the crisis will have immediate and longer term socio-economic effects on all countries, especially on the developing countries. There is an urgent need to ensure adequate supply of medical equipment everywhere. To this end, solidarity and cooperation at the international level remain indispensable. The continuous application of the unilateral coercive measures is having a destructive impact on national health capacity in targeted countries and on their effective response, especially in relation to procurement and provision of urgently needed medical equipment and supplies to treat their population. Additionally, USMs are undermining basic human rights and socio-economic development in targeted countries, adversely affecting the essential humanitarian cooperation with international organizations. We welcome the calls of lifting or suspending sectorial sanctions made by the High Commissioners and some Special Procedures, and our Question is: How are those calls going to be incorporated under the five areas of focus referred to in the High Commissioner's letter of 31 of March, so that they can become a catalyst to serve their purpose?

Germany

Germany aligns itself with the EU statement. The human rights-based approach should be adopted. The work of the Geneva-based human rights mechanisms should continue as much as possible. Guidelines on Covid-19 and human rights, as well as the many appeals published by the Special Procedures are very valuable. The Council, as the global voice of the human rights, cannot and should not remain silent in the current crisis. The Council should find as soon as possible a technical way to reconfirm the importance of the human rights principles in all efforts to stop the Covid-19 virus. A way to achieve this might be a resolution of the Council or a Presidential statement.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the EU. The fight against the global pandemic is an unprecedented challenge, which requires global unity, cooperation, solidarity and compassion. We thank the High Commissioner for her availability and for the openness and transparency of her Office. We congratulate the OHCHR for setting up the initial Response Plan to Covid-19. More examples of positive interactions between states, and good practices of fighting the consequences are needed. Question: Can we have a dedicated space provided by the OHCHR to share these practice? In which areas could the states be the most supportive to the ongoing work of the Office?

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The world is undergoing a crucial time in the history of humanity facing the Covid-19 pandemic which affects us all. There is an urgent need for international cooperation and solidarity. Required measures must be taken to save most lives possible. It is of utmost importance to give a multilateral approach to the crisis. Our government adopted timely measures to contain the virus. But it is quite difficult if not impossible for us to work in the context of illegal unilateral coercive sanctions being applied. We support the call of Secretary General of lifting unilateral economic sanctions that undermine the capacity of our country to respond to the pandemic. The government of the USA insists to maintain its policy of imposition of illegal sanctions. Question: Madam President, in your appeal dated 24 of March, you called for these sanctions to be mitigated or suspended – what initiative your Office is taking to demand the implementation of this urgent call?



Austria (on behalf of a group of countries)

Austria speaks on behalf of the 16 member states of the group of friends on the safety of journalists (in Geneva, New York, Paris, and Vienna). Free, independent and pluralistic media play an indispensable role in informing the public during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. We see with great concern the increase in restrictive measures taken by some states that disproportionately limit the right to freedom of expression and impeach journalists and media workers from reporting on the Covid-19 crisis. Arrests, persecution and harassment against journalists, expulsion of foreign correspondents due to the Covid-19 coverage as well as smear campaigns to discredit the work of the journalists, and the criminalization of the alleged misinformation online and offline may constitute human rights violations. It is crucial that governments preserve free, safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers. Madam High Commissioner, you referred to criticism not being a crime – we fully support this. We encourage the OHCHR to offer guidance to governments on the human rights obligations in regard to safeguarding freedom of expression and freedom of the media during this crisis. Question: Could you share with us your observations regarding the most serious threats to freedom of the media and expression during this global crisis and the consequences thereof?

Georgia

Georgia has taken a number of actions since the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed. We are working with international financial organizations and global economic foundations, including /.../, ADB [Asian Development Bank], and we are thankful to the European Union for the financial support. Georgia welcomes the efforts of the UN member states and European institutions. Pursuant to Article 4 of the ICCPR Georgia exercised its right to derogation, of which the Secretary General has been notified. Georgia would like to bring to the attention of the international community and the High Commissioner the human rights situations in the occupied territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, particularly, particularly the rights of the most vulnerable population. Question: How can we reach to the residents of the occupied territories and ensure their protection?

Malaysia

Malaysia stands in solidarity with the international community. Global responses must be robust and specifically targeted to address the immediate health crisis and the resulting humanitarian need. Multifaceted programmes are in place in Malaysia, including efforts to mitigate socio-economic impact especially on the most vulnerable groups. Malaysia is also working bilaterally with its neighbours, as well as with regional and international organizations, such as ASEAN and WHO. Strengthening cooperation and sharing good practices is instrumental. Equitable access to treatment and livelihood must be given utmost priority. Malaysia will support all efforts, including those led by the High Commissioner, to this end.

State of Palestine

Even as the Covid-19 brings many activities to the standstill, armed conflicts and other situations of violence continue to exact a heavy toll on vulnerable communities. To people already living in the volatile security conditions, the spread of this disease poses an additional threat to their lives. In this regard, we support the call to ceasefire by the Secretary General. Regrettably, Israel-occupying powers are exploiting the state of emergency to accelerate its illegal plans: military raids and attacks on Palestinian civilians, including the detention of Palestinian volunteers disinfecting public facilities, undermine efforts to combat this pandemic. Regular and constant abuse and harassment is inflicted by the Israeli occupying forces on vulnerable Palestinian population. These actions clearly violate the international law, especially during the health crisis, including Article 56 of the first Geneva Convention. There is also a growing concern for Palestinian prisoners and detainees. Questions: What are the efforts of the OHCHR to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable communities,



including refugee communities and people under the situation of armed conflict? What are the efforts of OHCHR to protect Palestinian prisoners?

Slovenia

Slovenia fully aligns with the statement delivered by the EU. We closely monitor the developments around the world and in the developing countries. Several strict measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 had to be adopted in Slovenia. As we tackle this pandemic, it is essential to be able to access best possible information which can lead to making informed decisions. We are grateful to the OHCHR for providing relevant information, including through its website. We thank you for stressing the impact that the Covid-19 can have on the vulnerable groups, especially its impact on women. As one of the countries emphasizing the consequences of the demographic changes all over the world, we would like to specifically stress the vulnerability of older persons. Questions: Has the OHCHR already reviewed some of the measures taken by the UN member states, and could OHCHR share some of these good practices already at this stage? We must ensure that the UN does not fail to respond to needs of the older persons as a group at particular risk.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

We would like to make three points. First, we reiterate the UK's support to the United Nation's fund, programs and agencies in their efforts to tackle this health and humanitarian challenges. UK has already provided 900 million dollars to the United Nations to fight Covid-19 – and we will provide more. Second, we need to be aware of the wider consequences of our actions and the need to minimize the long-term damage to our economies, societies and politics. We are facing the prospect of the worst economic recession of our lifetime. Third, as the High Commissioner said, we should seek for our measures to be proportionate, time-bound, transparent, and regularly reviewed. Scrutiny of our actions and international agencies has never been more important as it is now, given the unprecedented actions that we are taking, but we need to ensure that our parliaments, our media and our civil society are able to play their role. We thank the High Commissioner for her independent voice, and the OHCHR for the role that they play.

South Africa

Covid-19 is about human rights, it is affecting all human rights in their indivisibility and their interdependence. The question is how we brace ourselves to be able to emerge from the crisis, and create clear markers with respect to the frameworks that we have and the values that are fully established and embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the developing countries, the very ground on which 2030 Agenda is implemented has shifted fundamentally. This is also so for the developed countries: we are all going to be challenged monumentally. We appreciate the reminder by the High Commissioner on Article 2 of the International Convention on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights of the importance of international solidarity and cooperation. South Africa's approach, based on human rights and "pro-poor", has been developed in consultations with the civil society and the media. We are ready to share our experiences, particularly in regards to the justiciability of rights – right now, the civil society is taking our government to court to see about the income-support for women. Questions: How can the countries ensure that citizens can access rights in courts even in these difficult times? We appeal for some work to be done by the OHCHR on global public health to be considered as public good, particularly in regards to vaccines, respirators, etc. We need multilateral system more than ever, e.g. through a Summit to be organized in the post-crisis period. We also urge the OHCHR to intensify its work on racial stereotyping and scapegoating.

Pakistan

We support the High Commissioner's efforts in five areas to fight the Covid-19. This challenge can only be countered by solidarity and compassion. We would like to make several points. First, Pakistan provides its resources to the fullest to mitigate Covid-19 health, social and economic impacts. An emergency package of 8 billion dollars has been made available for medical supplies and social



protection of our people (including twelve thousand direct cash transfers). Secondly, online hate and offensive hashtags are stigmatizing minorities and religious groups. The active proliferation of the hate speech should be monitored, and those actors who promote or tolerate it should be held accountable. The social media companies should also respond to this human rights concerns in a timely manner. Thirdly, in terms of the High Commissioner's call for supporting vulnerable communities and groups, we wish to draw attention to the pre-Covid-19 abuses of the Kashmiri people that exacerbated this pandemic. According to the Indian newspaper, "The Economic Times", Indian occupied Kashmir is amongst the highest Covid-19 cases areas. India continues its efforts to undermine the demographic situation in Kashmir. We urge the OHCHR to continue to monitor the human rights situation in Kashmir amidst this pandemic.

Liechtenstein (on behalf of a group of countries)

The statement is delivered on behalf of Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. We agree with the High Commissioner that the international response to the Covid-19 pandemic must be guided by solidarity, cooperation and the rule of law. The protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms must be the basis on which the response to the crisis is taken. Any limitations to this rights and freedoms must be consistent with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality and in accordance with the international law obligations, and should be taken in a temporary and supervised manner. Any measures should be holistic and aimed at protecting the most vulnerable without any form of discrimination. The timely dissemination of accurate, clear and evidence-based information is essential and helps to prevent discrimination and xenophobia. We express our full support to the call to immediate ceasefire from the Secretary-General. We also support the Secretary-General's call to address the horrifying surge of domestic violence. States should provide protection measures to victims and communicate about how those affected can get assistance. We welcome the UN General Assembly's strong message of solidarity and cooperation on 2 April 2020, by adopting the Resolution on Global solidarity to fight of the Covid-19. We would like to thank all people working on the forefront, particularly the women who account for 70% of the workforce in this field. Question: Madam President, what would be the best support that the institutions such as the Human Rights Council could provide to your Office in the current situation?

Japan

We are facing an unprecedented crisis. Global solidarity and international cooperation are needed now more than ever. Japan has provided the assistance of 136 million US dollars to international organizations for their activities in Iran and neighbouring developing countries to help them fight Covid-19. The Japanese government has also adopted a supplementary budget proposal, including additional support through UN Agencies, subject to approval in the coming weeks. While combating the pandemic, we should ensure full respect for human rights. It is essential to ensure freedom of expression and press, and prevent all forms of discrimination, stigmatization, domestic violence and child abuse. We must protect vulnerable people and groups, and people most in need of support. Questions: What measures can member states take in order to prevent and redress human rights violations, including all forms of discrimination and stigma? What concrete support can OHCHR provide in relation to human rights issues in the fight of Covid19?

Egypt

We fully agree with the need for holistic approach to be undertaken to mitigate the impacts on human rights, including the right to life, work, food, education and access to medicine. Questions: How the OHCHR can contribute to ensure that the response plans developed follow the recommendations to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, in particular for developing countries suffering from limited resources and health-care capacities? What measures can be taken to alleviate the heavy burden of the foreign debt?



Cuba

the High Commissioner and her Office should promote a resolute international call to end all unilateral coercive measures, particularly in the context of this unprecedented crisis. It is essential to strengthen solidarity and international cooperation. The tightening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States government against Cuba constitutes the main obstacle to the development of our country, and is a flagrant of the human rights of the Cuban people. Cuba will continue to denounce the US blockade in the most vigorous, firm and categorical way. Maintaining and intensifying these measures in current situation deepens the genocidal nature of this policy by undermining our country's ability to face the situation. The area of special sensitivity: the blockade makes access to reagents, medicines and medical equipment considerably more difficult and expensive. It further hinders our ability to receive and provide international assistance. Cuba sent 14 specialized medical brigades in 14 country, and around 600 medical professionals.

Indonesia

The takeaway of today's conversation is that our work, our Council holds one of the keys in resolving the Covid-19 crisis. We should continue guaranteeing the right to an adequate standard of living and combating stigmatization, xenophobia and racism. We should show our collective support and acknowledgement to the role of human rights defenders, namely, doctors, nurses and other health providers, as well as those that are on the frontlines of providing support to their communities. Question: on human rights trend emerging from the pandemic, as also raised by Ambassadors of Azerbaijan and Brazil, how the UN human rights mechanisms can support further the work of the WHO in ensuring that as medicines and vaccines are developed, they are shared equitably with all countries and people? How has the work of the OHCHR at country level and regional offices been affected by the current crisis? Do you foresee an adjustment in the priority programmes of your Office? We must also continue to educate and address those who choose not to adhere to the legitimate government measures, those who spread misinformation and those who harass medical personnel, patients, or law-enforcement authorities in the response to Covid-19.

Nepal

While navigating through this extraordinary situation, we underscore the critical need for compassion and cooperation, understanding and solidarity at all levels. Coordinated response is a must. We underline the importance of sharing good practices of national response measures, and providing support to developing and least-developed countries in terms of critical medical supplies and strengthening public health infrastructure and health services. We appreciate the High Commissioner's placing emphasis on ensuring the respect to human right of all, including vulnerable groups. We wish to stress in particular that migrant workers, away from home and families, are desperate about obtaining information about critical access to health services, food, and ways to grapple with loss of jobs and confinement. All migrants should have equal access to public health responses and basic social protection measures, including emotional support, without discrimination.

Chile

There is a challenge of how to protect and promote human rights and fundamental liberties in front of the necessity to improve the health situation. It is important to maintain and expand the international cooperation and solidarity. Two important initiatives by Chile: within the Americas, PROSUR has been doing some important work through video conferences among their heads of states and health authorities exchanging good practices. Second, we would like to mention a recent accord agreed between Chile and countries in the region and Asia-Pacific countries to maintain open trade, especially for essential goods needed in the health crisis. There is no excuse to weaken multilateralism in this moment.



Tunisia

Tunisia reiterates its full support to the work of the OHCHR and any measures that can improve the well-being of the individuals all over the world. We further support the High Commissioner's call to world leaders to act with solidarity, cooperation and care. This crisis poses a global threat to our collective humanity and demands a human rights based approach that would leave no one behind. Tunisia adopted many measures and concrete steps in line with human rights standards. We recognize the important role of the civil society in supporting people in this crucial moment. We reiterate our full support to the UN Security General's Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Tunisian President has made a proposal to the UN Security Council of resolution calling for urgent international action to curb the effects of the coronavirus pandemic as the Covid-19 is becoming a threat to peace and security all over the world.

Armenia

The pandemic of this magnitude does not respect borders and it requires non-discriminatory, united, compassionate and concerted efforts. Questions: We would appreciate the views of the High Commissioner's on two issues. First, the call of the Secretary General for immediate ceasefire. Armenia supports the call – is the OHCHR following the instances of incitement to hatred and intolerance that can lead to violence and what measures can be taken to ensure that Covid-19 crisis is not taking advantage of promotion of hatred? Second, many countries introduced emergency laws in order to be able to counter the spread of the Covid-19. Is there any preparatory work carried out to provide the states with the Guidelines how to do that, and how can the Member States contribute to the work of the Office to this end?

Ukraine

Ukraine has fully endorsed the Secretary-General's call for the global ceasefire. We support the work done so far by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner. Ukraine also endorses the call by the UN leadership to address the issue of health emergencies and socioeconomic impact. The dire humanitarian situation caused by the spread of the pandemic does not have to be exploited in order to escape international legal responsibilities. The Special Session dedicated to the effects of Covid-19 on human rights is quite pertinent and has to be thoroughly considered by the UN Member States. Questions: Should we perhaps start thinking about elaborating of some Guiding Principles on protecting human rights while countering pandemic diseases or emergency situations? How do the OHCHR field missions cope with the circumstances of spread of the Covid-19 while delivering their mandates? To what extent the restrictive measures aiming at fighting the Covid-19 spread amplify the existing problem of denied access to monitoring human rights situations?

Maldives

Maldives acknowledges the areas of concern that the High Commissioner has highlighted: protection of the most vulnerable groups, including women, children and migrant workers; equal access to health care for all, and the social and economic implications. The government of Maldives has implemented several policy measures, and we are doing all we can to protect human rights of our people through our response plans. Maldives places great emphasis on transparency, and on keeping the public well-informed. Maldives is working closely with bilateral and regional partners. Maldives emphasizes the need for compassion, cooperation and solidarity.

Bangladesh

The foremost priority would be to promote a global robust response to contain the outbreak and to protect the health of our people, including the elderly, children, persons with disabilities and the migrants who are the most vulnerable. The right to food shall also be protected, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable in the view of looming food crisis. To that end we should keep the global food supply chain functional. We should also ascertain how the post-pandemic economic shocks will affect the right to work of people, particularly in the view of the rising unemployment and



underemployment in developing and the least developed countries. In view of reports about the incidents of racism, xenophobia, hate speech and discrimination, we need to act swiftly and combat the stigma including by using mass media and social networks in order to spread the public awareness of human rights. On pandemic and what it might mean to the climate crisis: we believe much can be learned about how the pandemic affected the crisis, and how the ways of responding to Covid-19 might influence our common fight against climate change. Global coordinated response through the platform of solidarity is needed. If the Council is to play in it a constructive role, we should avoid divisive tendencies and act accordingly.

Australia

Like many countries, Australia has introduced domestic and border measures to slow the spread of Covid-19. These proportionate and temporary measures are saving lives. While we accept that certain restrictions may be necessary in the face of this pandemic, it is more important than ever that states comply with their international human rights obligations. Emergency measures can disproportionately affect those in vulnerable situations, so the increased risk of domestic and sexual violence, an impeded access to essential services for persons with a disability are just two such examples. National human rights institutions and civil society have a particularly important role to play in monitoring the impact of the emergency measures. States must ensure that emergency measures are necessary, proportionate, transparent, non-discriminatory and temporary. Australia condemns the actions of some states in taking advantage of the pandemic and the global community's attention to the Covid-19 to undermine human rights or submerge democratic or judicial processes. Some states use the emergency measures to silence any form of dissent, including whistle-blowers, and to intimidate and imprison journalists. Lockdown measures have been used to tackle LGBTI persons and religious minorities. Australia is concerned for health, safety and well-being of those unjustly detained in prisons around the world. During the Covid-19 pandemic we call for the release of all prisoners unjustly detained or with humanitarian cases for clemency including those who have been detained on the basis of religion or belief.

INTERVENTIONS BY NGOS:

CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation (Joint Statement).

Joint Statement endorsed by: Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights; Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man; Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain; Amnesty International; Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA); Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC); Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS); Center for Reproductive Rights; Centre for Civil and Political Rights; CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation; Committee to Protect Journalists; Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI); Conectas Direitos Humanos; DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project); Franciscans International; Geneva for Human Rights - Global Training (GHR); Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF); International Bar Association; International Commission of Jurists; International Disability Alliance; International Federation for Human Rights Leagues (FIDH); International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA World); International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR); International Service For Human Rights (ISHR); IWRAW Asia Pacific; Justiça Global; Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada; Nazra for Feminist Studies; Right Livelihood Foundation; The Advocates for Human Rights; Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA); Validity Foundation - Mental Disability Advocacy Centre; World Organization Against Torture.

We recognize the good faith efforts of many states to effectively protect the right to life, and the right to health. All responses to the pandemic must be deeply rooted in the cross-sectional human rights approach. We are particularly concerned by states abusively resorting to emergency powers and undue restrictions on fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and right to access information. Some governments have enforced Internet restrictions and shutdowns which prevent people from accessing vital information. Access to information is critical in efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19. Equally, attacks on journalists and media reporting on government responses are of a



great concern. We are further concerned by the expanding state practice worldwide to monitor and closely control people's movements, even at the cost of their privacy. Efforts to contain the virus must not be used as a cover to usher in a new era of invasive digital surveillance. We ask the High Commissioner to monitor the situation closely. We further call on Member States to ensure all measures adopted in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic fully take into account and comply with states' international human rights obligations, to ease the pressure on the prison system and lower the risk to the health of the prison population, to pay special attention to traditionally marginalized or vulnerable groups, to ensure any use of surveillance to track the spread of coronavirus is limited in purpose and time.

International Network for Protection Against Elder Abuse (Joint Statement)

Joint Statement on behalf of 12 organizations working with older people: AGE Platform Europe Association of Former International Civil Servants for Development (GREYCELLS) Graduate Women International (GWI) HelpAge International International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse International Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) International Council of Jewish Women International Federation on Ageing (IFA) LDS Charities The NGO Committees on Ageing in Geneva, New York and Vienna and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva (NGO CSW).

While we appreciate the recognition by the High Commissioner that older persons are at particular risk in the COVID-19 pandemic both in terms of morbidity and mortality, they also face particular threats to, and abuses, of their human rights. We are extremely concerned that the current crisis is highlighting existing ageism and age-based discrimination that are a daily reality for many older persons and are reflected in policies and actions across different sectors. Questions: We would like to ask Madam High Commissioner: How is the OHCHR including the rights of older persons in the guidance it provides and in the capacity building and training activities by its field offices? How does your office ensure that the rights of older people are consistently and systematically addressed throughout all UN responses?

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development: (joint statement)

Joint Statement by Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain Amnesty International Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) Center for Reproductive Rights Centre for Civil and Political Rights Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales - CELS (Argentina) Child Rights Connect CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) Conectas Direitos Humanos DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) FIAN International Franciscans International (FI) Geneva for Human Rights - Global Training (GHR) International Bar Association International Commission of Jurists International Disability Alliance International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA World) International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) Justiça Global Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada Nazra Feminist Studies Right Livelihood Foundation Save the Children The Advocates for Human Rights Validity Foundation - Mental Disability Advocacy Centre World Organisation against Torture.

Effective international cooperation and assistance will be essential to stemming the tide of this pandemic. States and international institutions should ensure that those who are most marginalized and at greatest risk are protected. States should ensure that health services and goods necessary for prevention and care are accessible, available and affordable for all. Health workers and other frontline workers should be provided with adequate protective equipment, information, training and psycho-social support. States should ensure that intellectual property regimes do not impede access to vital medicines and vaccines for populations in need. States should provide emergency accommodation to people who are homeless. States must take measures to ensure that the right to food is guaranteed. People in precarious forms of labour, the majority of which are women will be disproportionately affected by the pandemic. States must ensure that everyone has access to social security protections. Faced with school closures, states, should explore innovative and accessible ways to provide access to



education and ensure adequate levels of financial support for those who need it. In situations of conflict and occupation, it is critical that governments ensure full and unimpeded access for humanitarian and medical aid. We urge states to tackle underlying inequalities and ensure the full respect and fulfilment of rights without discrimination. This can help make us more resilient and better equipped to prevent or address another such crisis.

International Service for Human Rights: (Joint Statement)

Joint Statement endorsed by: Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights; Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man; Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain; Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA); Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC); Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS); Center for Reproductive Rights; Centre for Civil and Political Rights; Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales - CELS (Argentina); Child Rights Connect; CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation; Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI); Conectas Direitos Humanos; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd; DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project); Dominicans for Justice and Peace; Franciscans International; Fundacion Regional de Asesoría en Derechos Humanos, INREDH; Geneva for Human Rights - Global Training (GHR); Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF); International Bar Association; International Commission of Jurists; International Disability Alliance; International Federation for Human Rights Leagues (FIDH); International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT); International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA World); International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR); International Service For Human Rights (ISHR); Justiça Global; Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada; Nazra for Feminist Studies; Peace Brigades International; Plan International Inc.; Right Livelihood Foundation; Save the Children; The Advocates for Human Rights; The Association for Progressive Communications (APC); Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA); Validity Foundation - Mental Disability Advocacy Centre; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF); World Organization Against Torture; IWRAW Asia Pacific.

We hope this will be the first opportunity of many – to share good practices, address violations and provide a forum for discussion. This is a much-needed regular activity for the Council while the formal session is suspended. We call on the HRC Presidency to continue examining possibilities to ensure that the Council is able to discharge its duties and mandate despite the crisis, including addressing human rights violations. We urge the HRC Presidency to ensure that civil society participation is not unduly restricted or disproportionately affected and to meaningfully consult with civil society on the modalities for participation. The Council should convene a special session on the impacts of COVID-19 on human rights, once feasible. There should be a zero-tolerance policy for gross and systematic violations and any abuse of the current crisis to crackdown on human rights. The Special Procedures should continue to work together to provide clear guidance to states and respond robustly to violations; Special Procedures should address the impacts of COVID-19 in their reports to upcoming HRC sessions in a coordinated manner. Certain groups are more acutely experiencing the impact of both COVID-19 and emergency measures taken by governments. For example, measures taken increase women and girls' vulnerability to violence, exacerbate the feminisation of poverty, and put further pressure on women and girls in their caretaking roles. We welcome the focus by the High Commissioner and the call by Special Procedures regarding marginalized groups and urge them to continue issuing guidance and recommendations highlighting the specific impacts and necessary action in this regard. This is critical to ensure that no one is left behind. As the UN works out how its mechanisms and bodies can operate virtually, new and increased risks of reprisals and intimidation could emerge for defenders engaging online. Relevant mechanisms and bodies, including the HRC, must remain vigilant about attempts to intimidate those who engage and must respond when such incidents are communicated to them. The UN Secretary-General should push for the immediate release of human rights defenders, journalists and indeed anyone arbitrarily deprived of liberty or forcibly disappeared.