



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 46th SESSION

HRC46th session Organizational Meeting (08 February 2021)

Introductory remarks by Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan (Fiji), President of the UN Human Rights Council:

Despite the current COVID-19 pandemic and financial constraints, the Human Rights Council (HRC) will continue to uphold the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed exacerbated the pre-existing social inequalities. In addition, several governments have used the health crisis as a pretext to impose restrictions on the work of civil society organizations and human rights activists. The HRC has thus committed to ensure the open participation of civil society organizations in the HRC46th session and to further protect the inherent dignity of all people.

Panels announced for the HRC46th session:

- ❖ Switzerland (together with Belgium, Benin, Costa Rica, France, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia): biennial high-level panel on human rights violations in connection with death penalty. The panel will focus on whether the use of death penalty can reduce crime rates.
- ❖ China: meeting on the role of poverty alleviation in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- ❖ European Union: two panel discussions on the rights of the child and the sustainable development goals. The panels will focus on the successes and challenges in the implementation of the sustainable development goals in relation to the rights of the child. The first panel will examine the barriers that hinder the rights of the child (focus on children that have been left behind within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic); whereas the second panel will consider the good practices to enhance the rights of the child in the future.
- ❖ Mexico: panel on the participation of persons with disabilities in sport and physical activities. The panel will examine the importance of physical activities for persons with disabilities and consider the obstacles that impede persons with disabilities the full enjoyment of their rights.
- ❖ South Africa (on behalf of the African Group): panel on the mid-term review of the international decade of People of African Descent. The panel will focus on the youth as agents of change in the fight against racism and discrimination. It will also enhance cooperation between the youth and several UN organizations.
- ❖ The annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming will focus on the following theme: The state of play in the fight against racism and discrimination 20 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action and the exacerbating effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on these efforts.

Draft resolutions and other initiatives announced for the HRC46th session:

- ❖ Costa Rica (together with Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia, Switzerland): draft resolution on the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (for the enjoyment of a safe, clean, and healthy environment). The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems will also be noted.
- ❖ Denmark: thematic resolution on the prevention of torture. The draft resolution will focus on the (positive and constructive) role and responsibility of police and law enforcement personnel in the prevention of and fight against torture.
- ❖ Georgia: draft resolution on the cooperation with Georgia. This humanitarian resolution will focus on the cooperation between Georgia and the OHCHR.
- ❖ Malaysia (together with Azerbaijan): joint statement on the importance of human rights awareness in the public service, towards the effective implementation of measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Portugal: draft resolution on the issue of the realization of economic and socio-cultural rights worldwide. The resolution will consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of people's economic and socio-cultural rights.
- ❖ Germany (together with Brazil, Austria, Lichtenstein, Mexico): draft resolution to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy.



- ❖ Ukraine (together with Latvia, Lithuania, Poland): panel discussion on the human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. This year's panel discussion will focus on the international response to the human rights violations in the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.
- ❖ Ecuador: draft resolution on the guarantee of the right to health, through equitable and universal access to vaccines in response to pandemics and other health emergencies. The resolution is based on the gaps appeared between countries concerning the access to the COVID-19 vaccines.
- ❖ Azerbaijan: draft resolution (in its role as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement) on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. Furthermore, in its national capacity (together with Malaysia), joint statement on the importance of human rights awareness in the public service, towards the effective implementation of policies to combat the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Romania (together with Morocco, Norway, Peru, Republic of Korea, Tunisia): draft resolution on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. This bi-annual resolution establishes the theme of the fourth Forum on Human Rights, Democracies, and the Rule of Law (2022), which will be on the enhancement of democracies to build a better future.
- ❖ China: draft resolution on the importance of cooperation in the human rights field.
- ❖ European Union: draft resolutions on the freedom of religion, on the human rights situation in the DPRK (renewal of the Special Rapporteur's mandate), on the human rights situation in Myanmar (renewal of the Special Rapporteur's mandate), and on the human rights situation in Belarus.
- ❖ Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC countries): draft resolutions on the fight against intolerance based on one's belief and on the guarantee of accountability and justice for all the international law violations occurred in the occupied Palestinian territories (item 2). Furthermore, four draft resolutions on the occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan (item 7).
- ❖ Cuba: draft resolutions on the right to food, on cultural rights and cultural diversity and on the effect of external debt on the full enjoyment of (economic, social, and cultural) human rights.
- ❖ Cameroon (on behalf of the African Group): draft resolutions on the technical assistance and capacity building in the field of human rights in Mali, on the mandate of the independent expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, and on the negative impact of the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin on the enjoyment of human rights.
- ❖ Iceland (together with Moldova, North Macedonia, United Kingdom): draft resolution about the human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The aim of this resolution is to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran.
- ❖ Switzerland (together with the Bahamas, Barbados, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, the Maldives, Mauritius, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore, Sudan, Turkey, Vanuatu): draft resolution to request a holding of a high-level panel that will focus on the benefits of the universal participation of all the UN member states in the work of the HRC.
- ❖ United Kingdom: draft resolutions on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (renewal of the mandate of the Syrian COI) (as part of the Syria Core Group), (together with Canada, Germany, Montenegro, North Macedonia) on the promotion of reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka, and (together with Albania, Norway) on the human rights situation in South Sudan.

Final remarks:

- ❖ Due to the current health crisis, the HRC will operate completely virtually until the end of February – if not until March 23.
- ❖ The United States delegation in Geneva has reaffirmed the newly elected President Biden's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights – through the effective enhancement of multilateralism. Under the presidency of Biden, the US has thus re-engaged with the HRC in the role of observer and ally.
- ❖ The United Kingdom has requested for a special session on the human rights situation in Myanmar and expressed concern over the removal of its civilian government by the military and over the detention of political opponents and human rights defenders.