



# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 47<sup>th</sup> SESSION

## Highlights of Week 1 (21-25 June 2021)

### Item 1



**Opening Session:** the extraordinary modalities were still in place for the 47<sup>th</sup> session. Regarding the participation of **Myanmar**, pending a decision by the General Assembly on the representation of Myanmar in the Human Rights Council, the Council postponed the consideration of the report of the UPR of Myanmar at this session and approved the programme of work. The holding of interactive dialogues with Myanmar will be subject to further consideration by the Bureau and the Council.

### Item 2



**High Commissioner's Report on Pandemic responses:** Ms. Michelle Bachelet and more than 90 states and NGOs that engaged into the Interactive Dialogue, brought up the issues of vaccine nationalism, debt distress of the low-income countries, the need for stimulus packages and human rights economy, and the use of the pandemic to hinder fundamental rights. Women have been more severely affected than men in all regions and all income groups, but were often excluded from COVID-19-related policymaking and decision-making. The impact on older people, people with disabilities, LGBTI, people deprived of liberty, among other groups, has been particularly severe.

**High Commissioner's Annual Report:** Ms. Bachelet updated the Council on the analysis, relevant developments and priorities of her Office in all geographic regions. She also addressed issues of significant concern in **Afghanistan, Belarus, Chad, China, Colombia, Tigray region of Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Philippines, Russia** and **Sri Lanka**. More than 100 states took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue, and 17 delegations delivered joint-country statements, including on human rights situations in **China, Iraq, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka** and **Saharian provinces/Western Sahara**, among others. In a Joint Statement, more than 300 NGOs urged the Council to take action on grave human rights situation in **Colombia**. States and NGOs also called for creation of a new mandate on climate change.



**Eritrea – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Mr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, presented his first report to the Council. Since November 2020, there are no tangible signs of progress or concrete evidence of improvement in the internal human rights situation in **Eritrea**. In addition, Eritrea committed heinous human rights violations extra-territorially, in the **Tigray region of Ethiopia**. **Eritrea** rejected the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and said that his report was full of presumptions. 28 state representatives took the floor, and only one civil society organization took the floor.

**Iran – Presentation of Report:** main issues addressed in the report: widespread use of death penalty, including on child offender; state violence in the context of peaceful assemblies; deaths in custody, torture, denial of medical treatment; climate of impunity, lack of due process and threat of reprisals; dire situation of Lawyers and human rights defenders; child marriages, marital rape, compulsory veiling laws; negative economic and social impact of sanctions on poverty. **Iran** said the report was based on an entirely political mandate and was biased. The Iranian had recently elected their new President, and Iran remained resolute in upholding human rights.

**Nicaragua – Oral Updates:** a worrying and accelerating deterioration of the human rights situation. Nicaraguans are unlikely to fully exercise their political rights during the elections on 7 November. Almost



none of the previous recommendations made by the OHCHR were implemented. In June, several members of the opposition were detained. Their arrests, marked by serious violations of due process, would prevent them from standing in the general elections, restricting also the rights of citizens to be able to vote for the candidates of their choice. **Nicaragua** said the country sought peace and wanted to avoid “imperial” interference in its internal affairs. The USA and European powers were accomplices in immoral use of unilateral coercive measures against international law.

### Item 3



**Adequate Housing – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal, addressed the Council for the first time and spoke on the achievements made by the mandate since it was established in 2000, including development of guidance, presentation of 33 Thematic Reports, 34 Country visit reports, and more than 385 Communications and public statements. Mr. Rajagopal also addressed his future priorities: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; discrimination in relation to housing; spatial segregation; discrimination and segregation; the climate crisis; the right to housing and its nexus to humanitarian response; the role of private and public actors, and a need for more detailed international guidelines on resettlement and relocation.

**Country visit to New Zealand**, was made by previous SR, Ms. Leilani Farha: the housing crisis confronting New Zealand is a human rights crisis. The housing policies must address historic injustices and the ongoing discrimination against Maori, Pacific peoples and persons with disabilities. **New Zealand** said they recognised the concerns, and shared the view that the housing crisis in Aotearoa New Zealand must be addressed urgently.

**Right to Health – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng, addressed the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on Black people, indigenous peoples and persecuted groups. She said that the impacts of racism, the legacy of European Colonialism and discrimination on multiple grounds would be at the core of her analysis and work. She said her other priorities would include sexuality, gender-based violence and femicide.



**Country visit to Fiji**, was made by previous SR, Mr. Dainius Pūras: Fiji had a strong political will to realize the right to health. **Fiji** welcomed the report and its recommendations, and said that pollution and climate change must be addressed in order to preserve human health.



**Rights of Migrants – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Mr. Felipe González Morales, announced a newly-released Joint Guidance Note on Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for All Migrants. He then spoke of the main topic of his report – the global issue of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea, and other worrying global trends including the militarization of border patrols, denial of access to territory and access to asylum, and the use of force. 31 states took the floor in their national capacity and four joint statements were made, including by the **EU** who said that all allegations of mistreatment were properly investigated by the relevant authorities, and regretted that the report failed to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by EU governments, and **China** who called to uphold the standards the Convention on the Rights of the Child, without discrimination and regardless of migration status. *Special Rapporteur also announced an upcoming panel discussion for further exchanges on his report which will [take place](#) on 7 July at 13:30.*

**Rights of IDPs – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, presented her activities to promote Guiding Principles on internal displaced in the framework of GP20. Her thematic report was dedicated to housing, land and property issues in the context of internal displacement.







**Rights of Education – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Ms. Koumbou Boly Barry, presented her report on the cultural dimensions of the right to education, and argued that the right to education was a cultural right in its own right. During the ID, states ensured that education that there was no discrimination in their education systems, with some illustrating how their governments fostered cultural diversity using educational programmes, while others noted that all societies should be allowed to forge their own paths. Many speakers expressed concern that millions of girls were at risk of not returning to schools in the aftermath of the COVID-19. Ms. Boly Barry also said that her next report would focus on the digitalization in the education system.

**International Solidarity – Interactive Dialogue:** Independent Expert, Mr. Obiora Chinedu Okafor, highlighted the importance of international cooperation by arguing that international public health security was both a collective aspiration and a mutual responsibility, especially during times of the pandemic. A number of speakers reaffirmed their support to the GAVI Alliance and welcomed the report's conclusions calling on all States and the private sector to provide support to the WHO. Ten NGOs also took the floor, half of which praised China's national and multilateral efforts in combatting COVID-19.

**Sexual orientation and gender identity – Interactive Dialogue:** Special Rapporteur, Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz recommended that States ensure the recognition of the right to bodily and mental integrity, autonomy and self-determination, and adopted an understanding of gender and gender identity and expression in conformity with the *corpus iuris* of international human rights law. As a mandate holder, he also issued the third global call: for a world accepting gender diversity based on self-determination; in addition to his 2019 call for a world free of crimination of SOGI, and his 2020 global call to end practices of "conversion therapy". Mr. Madrigal-Borloz also mentioned his recent visit to Tunisia.

**Discrimination against women and girls – Interactive Dialogue:** Ms. Melissa Upreti, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group, said the WG identified multiple factors that underlie the threats to women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights: discriminatory laws, failure by States to prioritize sexual and reproductive health rights, lack of investment in services, lack of legal accountability, among others. The approach to understanding and dealing with crises must be gender-responsive and acknowledge the hidden trauma and life-long, as well as intergenerational, consequences associated with the non-fulfilment of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights.

**Country visit to Romania. Romania** said the outcome report represented a valuable resource for the government, in their continuous effort to bridge the equality gap and improve the overall situation of women and girls, including those in most vulnerable situations.

### Other meetings and developments

**Female Genital Mutilation – High-level Panel:** at least 200 million women and girls affected by FGM in more than 90 countries. With the COVID-19 pandemic the risk for FGM has increased as 20 million girls are at risk of not going back to school. The African Union's Saleema initiative and its five-year action plan 2019-2023 is a great example of a multisectoral approach. **Burkina Faso** and **Tanzania's** best practices in eliminating FGM are also commendable.

The Council also heard a statement by the Attorney General of Ethiopia, Gedion Timothewos.

**Rights of Reply:** throughout the week, **Eritrea, Ethiopia, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, India, Iraq, Japan, China, Morocco, Greece**, among others, exercised their rights to reply in relation to statements made by other states or non-governmental organisations.

Geneva Centre's reports on selected HRC47 meetings are [available here](#). UN reports submitted to HRC47 [are available here](#).

All pictures in this report: screenshots from UN WebTV.