

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 49th SESSION

Meeting on enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building in promoting and protecting the human rights of persons in vulnerable and marginalized situations in recovery efforts during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

7 March 2022

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif**, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, highlighted women being hit harder by the pandemic, which had exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities. She called for strengthening solidarity, as vaccine injustice and structural and systemic asymmetries are leading to divergent recoveries and mentioned that the Office's country-focused efforts have produced practical advice on integrating human rights in economic policy.

The first panelist, **H.E. Mr. Freddy Mamani**, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bolivia, stressed that inequities in access to vaccines and medicines has further exacerbated the inequality gap worldwide. He recalled the importance of advancing a draft document on preparedness and response to health emergencies, and the need to recover the ancestral wisdom of indigenous peoples in order to face the climate, health and economic crisis the planet is experiencing. The second panelist, **Mr. Peter Herrmann**, Member of the European Academy of Science and Arts, focused on the need for communication across borders, training, providing transport facilities, concentrating energy, mobilizing the expertise of communities, and using new technologies in favor of real exchange and sharing. The third panelist, **Ms. Li Xiaomei**, Special Representative for Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China expressed that the distribution of vaccines is unfair, and that the international community should actively respond to the global development initiative proposed by China, noting, that China has become the country that provides the most vaccines to the outside world. The fourth panelist, **Ms. Valérie Schmitt**, Deputy Director of the Social Protection Department, International Labour Organization mentioned the need to build universal social protection systems, and that ILO's Flagship Programme on building social protection floors for all will contribute to national recovery efforts from the crisis by responding to the demands of 50 countries instead of 21.

Most countries expressed the impact of COVID-19 having exacerbated the fragility of people in vulnerable situations including women, girls, the disabled and the elderly. The **EU** expressed concern over the pandemic acting as a catalyst for the erosion of democracy and that legislation was promulgated to reduce freedom of expression and assembly in several countries. In addition, the EU highlighted being the leading donor to the ACT-Accelerator and its facility on vaccines, COVAX. **Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of Group of African States** said that policies put in place in the context of the recovery must necessarily take into account the protection needs of vulnerable and marginalized people. **Paraguay on behalf of a group of Latin American countries** (*Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay*) called for more robust actions from international organizations, tailored to the needs of each region, in terms of additional financial support and technical assistance measures. **Algeria** and **Tunisia** focused on the persistent disparity in the distribution of vaccines against COVID-19 between developing and developed countries and called for more international solidarity and cooperation, including through capacity-building and technical cooperation. Countries also shared numerous best practices on innovative digital tools that are helping sustain their efforts to provide social protection for the vulnerable groups.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme echoed the Secretary General's call for a renewed social contract that includes commitments to adequate housing and the provision of basic services.

NGOs denounced some COVID-19 control strategies lacking transparency, accountability, and meaningful community and civil society participation. Some called for more equitable and universal access to vaccines and others focused on the heightened effects of the pandemic on populations who

face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including LGBTI persons. In addition, NGOs showed concern for the elderly, particularly older women suffering from increased violence, abuse and neglect both at home and in institutions.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (24 country delegations):

Belgium (on behalf of GAF), Côte D'Ivoire (on behalf of African Group), Paraguay (on behalf of a Group of States), Azerbaijan (on behalf of a Group of States), European Union, Venezuela, Sierra Leone, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya, Thailand, Argentina, Australia, Togo, Tunisia, Costa Rica, Sovereign Order of Malta, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Georgia, Algeria, Maldives, Cambodia, Egypt, Bolivia.

NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (4):

International Lesbian and Gay Association, Harm Reduction International, Lutheran World Federation, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

National Human Rights Institutions (2): *Commission Nationale Indépendante des Droits de L'homme du Burundi, Indian NHR Commission.* **International Organisations (1):** *UN-Habitat*

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).