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Agenda item 1

Organizational and procedural matters

Statement by the President

PRST 43/1. Human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

On 29 May 2020, the President of the Human Rights Council made the following statement:

“The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

Deeply concerned about the loss of life and livelihoods and the disruption to economies and societies by the COVID-19 pandemic, and its negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights around the world,

Emphasizing the importance of human rights in shaping the response to the pandemic, both for the public health emergency and the broader impact on people’s lives and livelihoods,

Stressing that States bear the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming the right of everyone, without distinction of any kind, to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, while emphasizing that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing,

Recognizing the efforts made by Governments, as well as by health-care workers, the majority of whom are women, and other essential workers around the world, to deal with the pandemic through measures to protect the health, safety and well-being of their people, and emphasizing the importance of providing health-care and other essential workers with the necessary protection and support,

Deeply concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities, and that those most at risk are persons in vulnerable and marginalized situations, including older persons, migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minorities, indigenous peoples, persons deprived of their liberty, homeless persons and persons living in poverty, and recognizing the need to ensure non-discrimination and equality while stressing the importance of age- and gender-responsive and disability-sensitive measures in this regard,



Expressing deep concern at the stigmatization, xenophobia, racism and discrimination, including racial discrimination, surfacing in the COVID-19 pandemic in many parts of the world, and stressing the need to combat it,

Emphasizing that COVID-19 has become a global pandemic that can only be countered effectively through international cooperation, unity, solidarity and collective action, based on a multilateral approach and strong international institutions,

Recognizing with deep concern the impact of high debt levels on countries' ability to withstand the impact of the COVID-19 shock,

Reaffirming the fundamental role of the United Nations system in coordinating the global response to control and contain the spread of COVID-19 and in supporting Member States, and in this regard acknowledging the crucial leading role played by the World Health Organization,

Emphasizing the importance of timely, equitable and unhindered access to safe, affordable, effective and quality medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics, and other health products and technologies necessary to ensure an adequate and effective response to the pandemic, including for the most vulnerable people affected by armed conflicts, extreme poverty, natural disasters or climate change, and of the urgent removal of unjustified obstacles thereto,

Reaffirming that emergency measures taken by Governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be necessary, proportionate to the evaluated risk and applied in a non-discriminatory way, have a specific focus and duration, and be in accordance with the State's obligations under applicable international human rights law,

Recognizing the need for all stakeholders to be part of the responses to COVID-19, to have access to timely and accurate information online and offline, to be involved in decisions that affect them, and also the need to facilitate contributions by civil society as well as the private sector to these responses,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the guidance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights-compliant responses to the COVID-19 pandemic¹ and the Secretary-General's policy brief on COVID-19 and human rights entitled "We are all in this together";²

2. *Recognizes* the active role of the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, including the special procedures, as well as the human rights treaty bodies in highlighting the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and offering guidance to States in ensuring a human rights-compliant response to the pandemic;

3. *Calls upon* States to ensure that all human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled while combating the pandemic, and that their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are in full compliance with their human rights obligations and commitments;

4. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights around the world, including good practices and areas of concern, and to present the report to the Human Rights Council at its forty-sixth session;

5. *Invites* the High Commissioner to give an oral update on the human rights impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Human Rights Council at its forty-fourth session following the presentation of her annual report, and an oral update at its forty-fifth session to be followed by an enhanced interactive dialogue;

6. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter."

¹ www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID19Guidance.aspx.

² www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_human_rights_and_covid_23_april_2020.pdf.