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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

Implementation of human rights instruments**

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their thirty-second annual meeting, held from 27 to 30 July 2020, pursuant to Assembly resolution [57/202](#). The meeting was rescheduled and held online owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

* [A/75/150](#).

** The present report was submitted late because the session was postponed for reasons related to COVID-19.



Report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their thirty-second annual meeting

Summary

The present report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their thirty-second annual meeting, held online from 27 to 30 July 2020, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [57/202](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit the reports of the Chairs of the treaty bodies on their periodic meetings, convened annually pursuant to Assembly resolution [49/178](#). The meeting was held online owing to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which prevented the Chairs from holding an in-person meeting. The meeting was initially scheduled to be held in New York from 1 to 5 June 2020 in response to the call by the General Assembly, in its resolution [68/268](#), for strengthened interaction with States. The Chairs discussed the most pressing agenda items only, owing to the challenges posed by online meetings, and focused their discussions on the review by the Assembly of the human rights treaty body system in 2020, including the preparation of a written contribution from the treaty body system to the co-facilitators appointed by the President of the Assembly to consider the state of the human rights treaty body system and report to him. They met with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and senior officials of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. They held consultations with the co-facilitators and held discussions with civil society organizations. The decisions and recommendations of the Chairs are set out in section IV of the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The thirty-second annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies was held online from 27 to 30 July 2020, with simultaneous interpretation provided at the Palais des Nations, in room XVI. The Chairs held eight formal meetings, two of which were public and six of which were private. All public meetings were accessible by audio on the Listen Live platform of the United Nations Office at Geneva and through physical presence in room XVI. The meeting was convened online owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which prevented the Chairs from having an in-person meeting. The meeting had initially been scheduled to be held in New York from 1 to 5 June 2020.

2. The meetings of the Chairs are convened annually pursuant to General Assembly resolution [49/178](#). In 2020, the meeting was scheduled to be held in New York on the basis of the recommendation made by the Chairs at their 2017 meeting. That recommendation was made in the light of resolution [68/268](#) and to strengthen interaction between treaty bodies and States parties in view of the upcoming 2020 review of the treaty body system by the General Assembly.¹

3. In paragraph 38 of its resolution [68/268](#), the General Assembly encouraged the human rights treaty bodies, with a view to accelerating the harmonization of the treaty body system, to continue to enhance the role of their Chairs in relation to procedural matters, including with respect to formulating conclusions on issues related to working methods and procedural matters, promptly generalizing good practices and methodologies among all treaty bodies, ensuring coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods.

4. The annual meeting of the Chairs is a forum for the exchange of information, including the maintenance of communications and dialogue among the Chairs on common issues and challenges.²

5. The Chairs held focused discussions, including, in particular, on the review by the General Assembly of the human rights treaty body system in 2020.

6. The following documents served as background to the meeting:

- (a) Provisional agenda and annotations ([HRI/MC/2020/1](#)), as revised;
- (b) Discussion paper of the informal working group on COVID-19 and the table of activities carried out online or remotely and the modalities thereof.

II. Organization of the meeting

7. The Chairs held focused discussions, including, in particular, on the upcoming review by the General Assembly of the human rights treaty body system in 2020. The meeting was attended by the following Chairs of human rights treaty bodies, and Vice-Chairs in the case of non-availability of the Chair: Yanduan Li, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Hilary Gbedemah, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Jens Modvig, Chair of the Committee against Torture; Can Ünver, Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; Malcolm Evans, Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel,

¹ For further information on the meetings, see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/AnnualMeeting.

² The meeting of the Chairs of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies was first called for by the General Assembly in its resolution [38/117](#). The Assembly, in its resolution [57/202](#), requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly the reports of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their periodic meetings.

Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Nora Sveaass and Victor Zaharia, Vice-Chairs of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture; Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; Mohammed Ayat, Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances; Danlami Basharu, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Renato Zerbini Ribeiro Leão, Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Ahmed Amin Fathalla, Chair of the Human Rights Committee.

8. The Chairs adopted the provisional agenda, as revised, and the revised programme of work, of the meeting (see annex I).

9. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) made opening remarks. The Assistant Secretary-General highlighted that the meeting of the Chairs was taking place at a critical juncture of both high risks and great opportunities. She made reference to the 2020 review as an opening to advance fresh and creative ideas to strengthen the system. She stated that the COVID-19 pandemic and the United Nations cash flow crisis, however, represented a dual impediment to the crucial work of treaty bodies. She then stated that, in order to address that challenge, it was necessary to look ahead, think strategically and work together towards creative solutions that allowed States Parties to assume their responsibilities in providing treaty bodies with the tools to implement their mandates even in the present challenging circumstances.

10. She made reference to the three reports of the Secretary-General on the status of the treaty body system as mandated by the General Assembly in resolution [68/268 \(A/71/118, A/73/309 and A/74/643\)](#), which clearly showed how vigilantly OHCHR had defended and supported the mandates of the treaty bodies, including with regard to budgetary matters, at the highest possible level. One clear gap that had been identified was in the level of support for treaty bodies and the shortcomings of the existing funding formula, which States did not fully implement. She stated that the High Commissioner had repeatedly raised that problem with Member States in Geneva and New York and would continue to do so. She encouraged the Chairs of the treaty bodies to speak with one voice and work together to remove the obstacles affecting the efficient delivery of their crucial mandates.

11. Lastly, she encouraged the Chairs to use the consultations carried out as part of the 2020 review, including their meeting with the co-facilitators, as a unique opportunity to convey their proposals and messages to Member States. The current crisis, she said, could be turned into an opportunity to support a strong, modern human rights treaty body system, with the protection of rights holders at its heart.

12. Mr. Pedernera Reyna was elected Chair of the thirty-second annual meeting, and Mr. Basharu was elected Vice-Chair on the basis of the established principle of rotation.

13. The outgoing Chair, Ms. Gbedemah, thanked all the Chairs for their active participation and support during her tenure as Chair. She stated that it had been a very intense period, during which all Chairs had tried to do the maximum in terms of ensuring that the treaty body strengthening process led to the true strengthening of the treaty body system and the effective protection of rights holders.

14. She highlighted several areas in which significant progress had been made. The Chairs of the treaty bodies had adopted the common vision of the Chairs on the future of the treaty body system at their thirty-first annual meeting in June 2019, and since then the Chairs had promoted the common vision of the Chairs through their exchanges with Member States and other stakeholders. Ms. Gbedemah listed the activities in which she had participated, such as the side event in the margins of her

annual presentation to the Third Committee in October 2019 co-organized by the Geneva Academy and OHCHR, presenting the perspectives of the Chairs on the Treaty Body Review. In April 2020, she had participated in an informal event co-organized by the Geneva Academy and Columbia Law School on how to operationalize the position paper of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on the future of the treaty body system (A/74/256, annex III). At the beginning of June 2020, she had participated in the informal meeting of the Chairs, which had coincided with the launch of the co-facilitation process by the President of the General Assembly, and she had participated in an informative briefing organized by the co-facilitators with State delegations, putting forward the vision of the Chairs. She had also met with State delegations on a bilateral basis, at their request.

15. She made reference to the fact that, since March 2020, all Chairs had had to adapt to working remotely online owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and, in response, the Chairs had initiated a reflection group, the informal working group on COVID-19, to meet and debrief on the online sessions which were taking place so as to be able to collect good practices to inform the considerations of the Chairs on the way forward.

16. In concluding, she shared the experience of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in launching an online knowledge hub where it organized webinars on women rights in the context of COVID-19. The peer-to-peer learning was based on the Convention, the Committee's COVID-19 guidance and the #Faith4Rights toolkit. The Committee had partnered with key civil society actors, including Religions for Peace and the South Asia Forum for Freedom of Religion or Belief, which focused on the national-level implementation of outcomes and recommendations. She stated that that experience could be replicated with participants from different treaty bodies and be focused on specific cross-cutting human rights topics.

17. Mr. Pederneros Reyna, as the newly elected Chair of the thirty-second meeting of the Chairs, thanked the outgoing Chair for her leadership in steering the previous year's meeting and welcomed participants to the meeting of the Chairs. He stated that he would do his utmost to preserve and deepen the spirit of collegiality, commitment and leadership that had characterized the meetings of the Chairs in recent years. He also stated that, in view of the pressing challenges being faced by the treaty bodies, the important role of the treaty body system in the United Nations needed to be reaffirmed with concrete actions and results.

III. Summary of the discussions

A. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020

18. The Chairs held discussions with the co-facilitators appointed by the President of the General Assembly to consider the state of the human rights treaty body system.

19. In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Pedernera Reyna conveyed the Chairs' appreciation for the opportunity to have an exchange with the co-facilitators. He highlighted the importance of the 2020 review for the future of treaty bodies and the ongoing engagement of the Chairs in the process, building on their vision adopted in June 2019.

20. In their opening remarks, the co-facilitators stressed the role of treaty bodies as key components of the United Nations human rights architecture and fundamental pillars of the universal human rights system. They referred to the need to keep treaty bodies strong and independent and to strive for improvement for an even more effective and efficient treaty body system.

21. The co-facilitators recalled that the mandate for the 2020 review derived from paragraph 41 of Assembly resolution 68/268, by which the Assembly decided to consider the state of the human rights treaty body system by 2020 and to review the effectiveness of the measures taken in that regard. They indicated that it was further underlined in the resolution that the process would give rise to a decision, if appropriate, on further action to strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

22. The co-facilitators stated that, under the mandate given to them by the President of the General Assembly, they were undertaking informal consultations with Member States in both New York and Geneva, with contributions from OHCHR, the treaty bodies and other relevant stakeholders. They stated that the outcome of that process would be a report containing recommendations, in order for Member States to assess and decide, if appropriate, on further action to strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

23. The co-facilitators briefed the Chairs about the first informal consultation with Member States in New York, organized online on 27 July 2020, at which 93 statements had been made by delegations and groups of delegations, and about their plans to hold further consultations with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society and national human rights institutions, in Geneva on 28 August 2020. They also informed the Chairs that a call for written submissions with the objective of building up a substantive basis for the process had resulted in 89 submissions by States, civil society and other stakeholders, including treaty bodies and experts.

24. During the ensuing exchange, the Chairs shared their priorities, concerns and proposals on how to strengthen the treaty body system with a view to strengthening the protection of rights holders. They provided to the co-facilitators with information regarding the content and implementation of the proposals contained in the vision that the Chairs had adopted in 2019 on the future of the treaty body system, including steps taken to date towards the alignment of working methods across the Committees. They gave concrete examples of enhanced coordination between treaty bodies, the increased availability of the simplified reporting procedure and regional engagement. The co-facilitators were also briefed on the progress made by the two Covenant Committees (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Human Rights Committee) to move to predictable review cycles and on a number of other proposals that had been made, such as replacing every second full plenary review with a focused review.

25. The Chairs explained how limited resources had hampered the delivery of their mandates. They referred to the need to make resource allocation forward-looking and to bolster Secretariat resources so that they were adequate to support the increasing workload. The importance of ensuring adequate and predictable resources for all mandated treaty body activities, including to support the specific mandates of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances was also highlighted. Furthermore, the Chairs called for funding to set up a digital portal for individual communications and urgent actions to submit, access and track relevant information.

26. The Chairs shared with the co-facilitators their experience in working online since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving concrete examples of remote work that had been achieved, while stressing that remote work could never fully replace in-person interaction. The Chairs also pointed out a number of challenges that treaty bodies had faced working online. They called for improved availability of user-friendly online tools with interpretation and resources to support treaty body members in working remotely. The co-facilitators were provided with detailed examples of the

obstacles that needed to be removed to ensure accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities working online.

27. In their concluding remarks, the co-facilitators thanked the Chairs for their important inputs. The discussion showed that, while important progress had been achieved since the adoption of resolution 68/268, there was still significant room for improvement. The co-facilitators stressed their commitment to take the Chairs' priorities and concerns into consideration and to carefully study their proposals, with a view to pursuing the shared objective of strengthening the treaty body system and ensuring that it could effectively protect human rights.

28. The Chairs interacted with civil society organizations that raised concerns about the challenges faced by those organizations in following the work of the treaty bodies during the COVID-19 pandemic. A representative of the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, which is part of the non-governmental organization network on United Nations treaty bodies, TB-Net,³ commented on the importance of webcasting the meetings of the Chairs, of sharing information with civil society on the work of treaty bodies and of raising awareness of the efforts by treaty bodies to increase coordination among themselves.

29. For related decisions and recommendations, see section IV of the present report.

B. Any other business: working methods and tools in relation to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19

30. Under the agenda item any other business, the Chairs discussed their working methods and tools in relation to COVID-19 and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19. The discussion was initiated during the informal meeting of the Chairs that had been held online from 2 to 5 June 2020. As a follow-up to the informal meeting of the Chairs, the Chairs agreed that an informal working group on COVID-19 would be convened to exchange views and to present findings and suggestions to the formal meeting of the Chairs:

(a) On the impact that COVID-19 has had on the modalities of the work of treaty bodies in the light of the sessions which are held online;

(b) On the substantive contributions of treaty bodies related to the human rights implications of COVID-19.

31. The working group was convened on three occasions with Committee focal points on the 2020 review or other focal points appointed by the Committees. Written observations and comments submitted to the working group, the draft agenda and notes of the meetings prepared by the Secretariat were posted on the dedicated page of the Chairs' extranet, accessible to all treaty body experts.

32. Ms. Sveaass, a member and the Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture was appointed facilitator of the working group and Mikiko Otani, a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, was appointed rapporteur of the working group. A total of 28 members actively participated in the meetings, which were held online on 7, 10 and 17 July 2020. The working group also interacted with staff from the Division of Conference Management at the United Nations Office at Geneva and

³ Comprises: Centre for Civil and Political Rights; Child Rights Connect; Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Disability Alliance; International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism; International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific; and World Organisation Against Torture.

the Chief of Programme Support and Management Services of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

33. The facilitator and rapporteur presented the discussions and findings of the working group, for consideration by the Chairs, drawing on a discussion paper and a table of the activities carried out by the treaty bodies remotely since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.

34. The facilitator and rapporteur highlighted that the working group had tried to identify challenges, obstacles and good practices to inform the thirty-second meeting of the Chairs, to allow the Chairs to further elaborate and coordinate the response of treaty bodies and collectively address the common challenges and obstacles with regard to carrying out the mandated activities.

35. They stated that the treaty bodies had aimed to find new ways to continue to discharge their mandates during COVID-19 when in-person meetings were not possible, on the clear understanding that it was a matter of responding to the present crisis and learning lessons for any future emergencies.

36. They also underlined that, while treaty bodies had carried out many activities online during the COVID-19 period, some mandated activities could not be pursued remotely, such as the visits of the Sub-Committee on Prevention of Torture.

37. The facilitator and rapporteur stated that sharing and learning from the experience of other treaty bodies was extremely useful. They highlighted that inter-committee interaction and joint efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic should continue, so as to ensure that treaty bodies could better discharge their mandates during the present challenging time.

38. The Chairs interacted remotely with non-governmental organizations following the discussion. A representative from Child Rights Connect, a member of TB-Net, expressed concern regarding the protection gap left during the lockdown period and stressed the importance of communication and information-sharing with non-governmental organizations and civil society working on country dialogues.

39. For related decisions and recommendations, see section IV of the present report.

C. Any other business

40. Under any other business, the Chairs exchanged with the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chief of Programme Support and Management Services at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Issues discussed included: the outlook for treaty body sessions (in person, online or in hybrid mode); the choice, availability and cost of online platforms; and the lack of compensation for treaty body members for time and expenses related to online meetings. The Chairs also presented a proposal for the terms of mandates of treaty body members to be extended by one year, as the experts were not able to fully discharge their mandates in the present circumstances. The Chairs were provided with an update on the efforts of OHCHR and the United Nations Office at Geneva to facilitate the work of the treaty bodies online, including with a view to ensuring accessibility and the provision of reasonable accommodation for experts with disabilities.

41. In conclusion, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights assured the Chairs that the Office would do everything that it could to support the work of the treaty bodies and find creative means to address the challenges faced by treaty bodies. She went on to say that the Office would remain actively engaged

in discussions on strengthening the treaty body system in the framework of the General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.

42. For related decisions and recommendations, see section IV of the present report.

D. Modalities and organization of future meetings of Chairs and other intersessional activities

43. The Chairs re-affirmed the decision taken at their thirty-first meeting that it was necessary to meet and interact more than once a year and to enhance intersessional activities through face-to-face contact or remotely by videoconference. They agreed to meet again remotely in the coming months at a suitable time to be proposed by the Secretariat.

44. For related decisions and recommendations, see section IV of the present report.

IV. Decisions and recommendations

45. At their thirty-second meeting, the Chairs adopted the following decisions and recommendations and entrusted the Secretariat with the finalization of the report.

A. General Assembly review of the human rights treaty body system in 2020

46. The Chairs agreed to convey to the co-facilitators of the 2020 review the following priorities, concerns and proposals on how to strengthen the treaty body system effectively:

- (a) To reaffirm the framework of General Assembly resolution [68/268](#);
- (b) To support the continued implementation of the position paper of the Chairs ([A/74/256](#), annex III);
- (c) To empower and strengthen the role of the Chairs to implement the recommendation in the outcome document of the Dublin II meeting on strengthening the United Nations human rights treaty body system at the meeting of the Chairs on 10 and 11 November 2011, namely, that treaty bodies should ensure that Committee Chairs are mandated to take decisions in respect of working methods and procedures, which are common across the treaty body system and have previously been discussed and agreed to within each of the Committees, with particular reference to reporting and individual communications procedures. Such a measure would be implemented by all treaty bodies, unless a Committee subsequently dissociates itself from it. In addition, the Chairs decided that closer coordination between Chairs was required and they would therefore meet more frequently on an online basis;
- (d) To encourage treaty bodies to continue to develop and align their methods of work so as to adjust them to the most recent needs and challenges;
- (e) That the formula for calculating the meeting time of treaty bodies contained in General Assembly resolution [68/268](#) should take into account the prospective work of treaty bodies, in the light of the decision taken by both Covenant Committees to apply a predictable calendar of reviews, and to ensure sustainability by adequately funding the treaty body system to fulfil its mandate (see letter from the Chair of the Human Rights Committee of 16 July 2020).⁴

⁴ Available at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/AnnualMeeting/Pages/MeetingChairpersons.aspx.

(f) That all Committees should be provided with the necessary financial resources to allow them to fulfil their various mandated activities, including the review of State party reports, individual communications, urgent actions, inquiries and visits, inter-State communications, early warning and urgent actions procedures, guidance on the interpretation of the provisions of the treaty through general comments or recommendations, follow-up on or request for further information relevant to the implementation of the treaties, the preventive mandate, carried out mainly through country visits, of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and its mandated work concerning the establishment and operation of national preventive mechanisms and the visiting preventive mandate of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the corresponding human resources for the Secretariat. The formula of resources needs to be adopted to support all mandated activities;

(g) To ensure the provision of resources for the implementation of the decision of the Covenant Committees to establish predictable review cycles over an eight-year period to review all States parties, whether reporting or not reporting, by 2023;

(h) To ensure the provision of resources for the implementation of the decision of the Convention Committees to establish a predictable review cycle for all States parties in accordance with a fixed review schedule, whether reporting or not reporting, and consider replacing every second review with a focused review, which may consist of an in situ visit by one member of the treaty body with one member of the Secretariat to engage with the State party;

(i) To support the Committee on Enforced Disappearances in the establishment of a predictable review cycle to review countries in accordance with a fixed review schedule to review all States parties, whether reporting or not reporting, as well as any other Committee which may decide the same in the future (see letter from the Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances of 24 July 2020);⁵

(j) To encourage States to accept the option of replacing every second review with a focused review, which may consist of an in situ visit;

(k) To ensure the provision of resources to treaty bodies in their efforts to make the simplified reporting procedure the default procedure for periodic reports, and if the treaty body concerned so decides, for initial reports, from which States parties can opt out;

(l) To encourage dialogue with States in the region (see letter from the group of treaty body experts of 6 July 2020);⁶

(m) That the formula should take into account, on the one hand, the common needs of the treaty bodies and, on the other hand, the specificities of treaty bodies in the light of additional mandates;

(n) That, going forward, there should be a more realistic allocation of Secretariat resources to support the increasing workload of the treaty bodies, including in the light of the large number of individual communications and requests received under the urgent actions procedure and the related significant backlogs;

(o) That there should be a one-off investment to set up a digital portal for individual communications and urgent actions for the parties to submit, access and track relevant information, including on the status of a case;

(p) That the budgetary allocation and availability of resources for treaty bodies should not be subject to fluctuations, as the treaty bodies deal with the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

implementation of legal obligations of States which, if interrupted, give rise to immediate protection gaps and impact directly on individual rights;

(q) That a dedicated project, along the lines of the webcasting project, should be established to enable the use of digital technology by treaty bodies, in accordance with their needs, and taking into consideration the needs of developing countries;

(r) That, bearing in mind that many Committees already carry out some specific tasks and mandated activities intersessionally, i.e., outside their formal in-person meeting time, to use those best practices and lessons learned in addition to those of Committees which have held sessions online owing to the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic to plan for the contingency of not being able to hold in-person meetings for the last trimester of 2020 and the beginning of 2021;

(s) That, whereas it is important to emphasize that work online is a supplementary tool, it cannot replace in-person meetings, which are an essential requirement to implement the mandate of treaty bodies. While there are common challenges and obstacles to the fulfilment of the required conditions for online work, as mapped by the informal working group on COVID-19, the following should be continued and made available among treaty bodies, as well as for States parties, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, to ensure that the continuing work of treaty bodies is inclusive, accessible and visible: sharing and learning from experiences of activities among treaty bodies; the planning of forthcoming activities, including practical issues regarding functionalities or the availability of online platforms; and coordinated responses to COVID-19;

(t) That, in accordance with the note by the Secretariat on administrative arrangements for experts of December 2019,⁷ an expert who resides at the place of the meeting shall receive a daily subsistence allowance at 20 per cent of the usual rate for each full day of attendance to cover incidental expenses. Treaty body experts are currently working online from their places of residence, which are also their meeting places during the COVID-19 pandemic. That portion of the daily subsistence allowance, in addition to the actual costs incurred by treaty body experts in connecting to online platforms that require a high-speed internet connection, or specific equipment, which represent the extra costs incurred by treaty body experts due to the fact that they are working from home, should be disbursed and budgeted for;

(u) That there are specific challenges and obstacles for experts with disabilities, as provisions for accessibility for persons with disabilities are available only for formal in-person meetings of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Experts with disabilities require, in addition, special assistance to connect to online platforms that are not accessible to persons with disabilities and who cannot otherwise access them. This is an issue of reasonable accommodation, as provided for in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and is also in accordance with the recently adopted United Nations system-wide policy on disability inclusion.

⁷ United Nations and OHCHR, *Handbook for Human Rights Treaty Body Members* (December 2015), annex II.

B. Any other business: working methods and tools in relation to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19

47. The Chairs agreed to extend the mandate of the informal working group on COVID-19 and the Chairs would be asked to confirm the names of up to two participants per treaty body.

C. Any other business

48. At the thirty-second meeting, the Chairs addressed a letter dated 11 August 2020 to all Member States to inform them about the situation that treaty bodies had faced owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. As no in-person treaty body meetings had been held, the Chairs sought the support of States in addressing the backlog that had caused by means of additional session time, spread over the three years to come, and to consider extending the mandates of treaty body experts by one year so that they have the opportunity to serve effectively for their full four-year terms, in view of the disruption caused by COVID-19.

49. The Chairs also addressed a letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a copy to the Secretary-General, on 5 August 2020. The Chairs raised the issue of financial support for experts participating in online meetings, as well as for the personal assistants of experts with disabilities.

D. Modalities and organization of future meetings of Chairs and other intersessional activities

50. The Chairs recommended that a one-day meeting of the Chairs be convened online in the coming months, to assess the current situation in relation to COVID-19 and the General Assembly review of the treaty body system.

E. Agenda and location of the thirty-third annual meeting of the Chairs of human rights treaty bodies

51. The Chairs reiterated their decision, made at their twenty-eighth meeting, in the light of General Assembly resolution [68/268](#), to hold their annual meetings, in the years leading up to the review of the human rights treaty body system in 2020, and subsequent years, as necessary, to ensure appropriate follow-up, subject to approval by the General Assembly, at United Nations Headquarters. They reiterated their wish to continue to strengthen their interaction with senior United Nations officials, including the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, and with representatives of Member States, United Nations agencies and programmes and civil society organizations in New York.

Annex

Provisional agenda, as revised, and revised programme of work

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.
- 4.–8. Agenda items 4–8 will be discussed at a later stage.
- 9.1 Any other business: working methods and tools in relation to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19, presentation by the facilitator and the rapporteur of the informal working group on COVID-19.
- 9.2 Any other business.
10. Adoption of the recommendations and conclusions of the thirty-second meeting.

Programme of work

Monday, 27 July 2020

12.30–2.30 p.m. (private)

Opening of the meeting

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.

4–6 p.m. (public)

5. Opening remarks by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, OHCHR, Ilze Brands Kehris.
- 9.1 Presentation by the facilitator and the Rapporteur of the informal working group on COVID-19 and exchange of views.

Participation of civil society

Tuesday, 28 July 2020

12.30–2.30 p.m. (private)

3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.

4–6 p.m. (private)

Meeting with co-facilitators on the General Assembly review of the treaty body system 2020.

Wednesday, 29 July 2020

12.30–2.30 p.m. (private)

3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020

4–6 p.m. (public)

3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.

Participation of civil society

Thursday, 30 July 2020

12.30–2.30 p.m. (private)

- 9.2. Additional items.

4–6 p.m. (private)

10. Adoption of recommendations and conclusions on the thirty-second meeting of the Chairs.

Closure of the meeting
