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Opening of the eighteenth session of the

Human Rights Council Advisory Committee



Opening Remarks

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Palais des Nations, Room XX

Mr. President of the Human Rights Council,

Mr. Chaiperson of the Advisory Committee,

Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege to be with you all today. Since I assumed duties as Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division, this the first time that I have to interact with your Committee. I value this opportunity, as your expertise and the important work carried out by the Committee certainly have an impact on the effective realization of human rights across the globe.

I am joining the President in congratulating the new three members of your Committee - Mr. Lazhari Bouzid (Algeria), Ms. Mona Omar (Egypt) and Mr. Xinsheng Liu (China) – as well as Mr. Lebedev, Mr. Obata, Ms. Hananía de Varela and Mr. Ziegler on their re-election to the Committee for another three-year term.

The President has just given an outcome of the session (33) held in September that has a particular interest in the work of this Committee and provided an overview of the programme of work of the 35th session of the Council, which will start in one week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I see from the draft programme of work of this current session, that the Committee has before it a week full of interesting discussions and meetings. The Secretariat of the Advisory Committee has developed a comprehensive programme of work and introduced novelties so as to ensure that more and more actors – delegates, NGOs, national human rights institutions, academics etc., benefit from your expertise and the important work you are doing. The Secretariat has taken steps to ensure that OHCHR and UN colleagues working in specialized areas, including in field or regional offices, are able to participate in the discussions being held in Room XX.

Distinguished members,

Let me now turn to your current mandates dealing with leprosy-related discrimination, unaccompanied migrant children, illicit funds and regional arrangements.

I am pleased to note that the final report **on leprosy-related discrimination** will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its 35th session. This well-articulated and commendable study provides the Council with valuable insights into the implementation of the principles and guidelines to eliminate this underestimated discrimination against person affected by leprosy. This Committee was the first, through its study, to shed light on the plight of another type of discrimination: albinism.

Turning now to another theme that has been of importance to this Committee over the past year is that of migrant children. As you know, migration continues to be central in the agenda of the OHCHR. The study on **unaccompanied migrant children** and adolescents is not only timely but also much expected in the current alarming context, every day we sadly learn about incidents sometimes involving up to thousands of migrants. The Office has a long standing commitment to the human rights of migrants, and in recent years, it has significantly stepped up its advocacy and work on protecting the human rights of all migrants. Particular attention is given to women, men and children who are most marginalised and at risk of human rights violations.

The situation of migrants today depicts the continuing failure of States and of the international community as a whole to protect their rights. Migrants facing exploitation, discrimination and violence, and migrant children, who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents, are in an even more vulnerable situation.

In October 2016, the Secretary General appointed Mr. Manfred Nowak to lead a new global study on the situation of children deprived of their liberty. The study, mandated by the UN General Assembly in resolution 69/157 in December 2014, will include good practices and recommendations for action to effectively realize all relevant rights of the child.

Most countries lack data on the number of children deprived of liberty, and on the reasons, length and places of detention. Children deprived of liberty thus often remain invisible and forgotten. To address this pressing situation, the UN General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to commission an in-depth global study on children deprived of liberty. The Global Study will include good practices and recommendations for action to effectively realize all relevant rights of the child.

The study will be conducted in cooperation with Member States, UN organizations including the UN Human Rights Office, national human rights institutions, civil society, academia – as well as children, among other stakeholders. With the establishment of the mandate, I trust that your study will also feed into this process.

As you know, in June 2016, the Committee on the rights of and the Committee on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers (CMW) announced that they would examine in detail the rights of children in the context of international migration, with a view to adopting a joint General Comment in early 2017, which will provide a comprehensive, rights-based approach to the situation of children affected by migration. I am very pleased that you will have the opportunity to be briefed by the Rapporteur of the CMW of this landmark General comment, Mr. Pablo Ceriani and colleagues working with Mr. Nowak and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children.

The close working relations established by the Committee with other UN bodies and mechanisms working on the subject and /or related issues is clearly an excellent practice that needs to be followed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Another mandate that you will be discussing this week is **the impact of the flow of funds of illicit origin and the non-repatriation** thereof to the countries of origin on the enjoyment of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, with a special emphasis on the right to development.

Among its other goals, the study was commissioned to compile relevant best practices and main challenges, and to make recommendations on tackling those challenges based on the best practices in question.

I am pleased to note from reading the draft report that it provides an extremely helpful introduction to what these funds are, as well as a comprehensive analysis of how they affect human rights. This is indeed a complicated topic that needs to be understood from a human rights perspective and therefore, I look forward to reading the final report to be submitted to the Council later this year.

Distinguished Delegates,

Your most recent mandate is on **regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights**. At this session you will discuss your preliminary report. This study is of particular importance to OHCHR as the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in his Change Initiative is calling on colleagues in field to work closely with regional mechanisms.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the programme of work for this week, I have also noticed with great satisfaction that a discussion on how to integrate **a gender perspective** in your studies has been included. I welcome this positive development since the last discussion on this critical topic took place in 2013.

The Secretariat has also organized for the first **time a dialogue between the Experts of your Committee and the 11 government officials from Least Developed Countries and Small Islands Developing States** supported by the Trust established by the Council.

The Delegates – 6 women and 5 men- are from the following countries: Bhutan, Cape Verde, Jamaica, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Timor Leste, Tonga and Trinidad and Tobago. Among them, four do not have permanent representation in Geneva (Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Tonga).

For 10 of them it will be the first time to attend a regular session of the HRC although they are working on human rights issues. And by the same token, they will also have the opportunity to interact with your Committee for the first time as indeed it would be interesting for the Council’s Think Thank to hear their challenges and opportunities and seek their views on themes that are particularly relevant to the LDCs and SIDS. This discussion will be held on Thursday 23 February 2017 (from 5:00 to 6:00 pm). We are all looking forward to an interesting exchange of views.

Distinguished Members,

As the OHCHR seeks to advance human rights for all and in all parts of the world in close partnership with civil society, national institutions and the broad international community, we are glad to be able to count on your expertise and on the important work carried out by your Committee.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Let me conclude here by assuring you of the full support of the Secretariat in carrying out your activities.

I wish you very fruitful deliberations at the present session.

Thank you

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