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**Keynote Address**

**by**

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**LDCs/SIDS TRUST FUND WORKSHOP FOR THE PACIFIC REGION**

**“Engaging with the UN Human Rights Council through the LDCs/SIDS Trust  
Fund: Achievements, Challenges and Lessons Learned”**

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**19 November 2019**

Thank you Eric,

The Council is confronted by ever-changing challenges, with increased expectations from people all over the world that it will promptly address these challenges with lasting solutions.

With this in mind, at the beginning of the year I set four main **priorities** to guide my Presidency: to continue my predecessors' efforts to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council; to increase the visibility of the Council and bring more attention to the positive stories stemming from our work; to strengthen cooperation between the Human Rights Council and New York-based UN bodies; and to likewise strengthen the Council's cooperation with regional organizations, which I mentioned in my opening remarks earlier this morning.

With regards to the ongoing efficiency process, one of the key priorities has been to enhance the participation of small delegations in the work of the Council. In this regard, the Council and its Secretariat stepped up efforts towards enhancing access of small delegations to its work, especially for SIDS/LDCs. For example, during the Council's last two regular sessions, the Secretariat held a "**HRC Clinic**" once a week, where delegates of small delegations could go to ask procedural questions and seek guidance from a staff member of the Secretariat. This measure, which has contributed to making the Council more inclusive, has received very positive feedback.

The Council also took steps to improve its efficiency through the use of modern technology. For example, last June we introduced for the first time the **E-deleGATE** system in Geneva. This system is a very useful online tool that was developed in New York for the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. It replicates the traditional system and can be accessed from any electronic device. Delegations can submit zero drafts ahead of informal consultations, and changes can be easily followed as negotiations happen. The system also offers a possibility

to consult lists of sponsors at anytime from anywhere. E-deleGATE has greatly improved efficiency in the Council by allowing for the tabling and co-sponsoring of resolutions online, which results in draft resolution being available at a very early stage in our work.

Concerning efforts to strengthen the Council's cooperation with **New York**-based UN bodies, I took numerous steps throughout the year towards bridging the gap between Geneva and New York. For example, during the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Council, I invited Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, to engage in dialogue with the Council on the subject the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. Moreover, during my two visits to New York this year, I briefed the delegates of the Third Committee on the work of the Council and engage in an interactive dialogue with them, and in April I informally met the members of the Security Council, during which I invited them to consider means to reinforce communication and co-operation between the two bodies. It is my strong view that the wealth of information and recommendations produced by the Human Rights Council is an invaluable resource for the work of the majority of other UN bodies, which should be utilized to a greater extent.

Convinced of the need to reinforce Council's cooperation with all regions, as well as increase its visibility outside of Geneva, I visited the African Union in Addis Ababa last February. Human Rights Council Presidents have traditionally visited only the Council of Europe in Strasburg, but I was the first Council President to visit the African Union. During the visit, I held fruitful discussions with the Peace and Security Council as well as the Permanent Representative Committee. I also invited the President of the African Union Commission to come to address the Council, for the first time, during the high-level segment last February.

Turning now to the work of the Council this year. The Council continued to be active on many fronts during its regular sessions and intersessional meetings throughout the year.

For example, it continues to keep on its agenda a number of crises occurring around the world through its **investigative mechanisms**, such as in Burundi, in the Kasai region of the DRC, in Myanmar, in South Sudan, in Syria, in Venezuela and in Yemen.

This year, the Council focused on a number of **new situations and topics** that were not on its agenda before, such as Nicaragua, the Philippines and Venezuela. It started to look into the issues of discrimination against women and girls in the field of sport, of equal pay, and of social security. It also established a new subsidiary expert mechanism in the field of the right to development.

The Council's **UPR** mechanism provides States with a unique space for sharing best practices and cooperation in their endeavour to promote and protect human rights, while ensuring respect for the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity. Widely regarded as the greatest achievement of the Council, this peer-review mechanism also provides the world with a kind of map of the human rights situation in every UN Member State.

Between 2021 and 2026, the General Assembly will **review** the status of the Council, as mandated by its resolution 65/281. During the last review of the Council, which took place in 2011, the General Assembly and the Council worked together closely on the question of status, including through focal points appointed both in Geneva and New York, resulting in a high level of coordination and cohesion. At that time, the Council also reviewed its working methods, pursuant to GA resolution 60/251 of 2006. The 2011 resolution, however, does not explicitly mention that the work and functioning should be reviewed again.

The upcoming review of the status of the Council, whether it is accompanied or not by a review of the working methods, will uphold the Council's relevance and mandate only if it benefits from the strong engagement of all stakeholders, including SIDS/LDCs States, which will certainly have unique inputs for such a process.

Last month, I along with the Government of Senegal, hosted the 2019 Human Rights Council **retreat** in Dakar. Representatives of States Members of the Council, as well as regional and political groups and civil society organizations, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and representatives of UNEP, IOM, UNIDO and UNESCO were invited to participated. It provided all attendees with the opportunity to come together in an informal and friendly environment, to discuss four very timely and important issues for our world today: (i) climate change and human rights; (ii) mass migration and human rights; (iii) human rights in the face of growing inequalities and corporate social responsibility; and (iv) human rights in the digital age.

Participants engaged in frank discussions and productive debate, producing insightful ideas and recommendations on how to best tackle each of the four challenging issues that are indeed confronting all of humanity today.

There was common agreement that these four issues are indeed human rights issues that must be addressed by the Council, with the overarching conclusion that they must be addressed by the Council as well as the international community as a whole, as a matter of urgency. Greater international collaboration is necessary to achieve real change, and the Council is well positioned to coordinate and lead collaboration efforts. Many participants highlighted the importance of building bridges between the Council and other areas of the United Nations System, as well as strengthening the Council's cooperation with relevant regional organizations.

The Council's mechanisms were also a reoccurring focus of discussions, including the work being done by the special procedures, the studies undertaken by the Advisory Committee, and the recommendations produced by the UPR. For example, it was widely agreed that UPR reports and recommendations for each State under review could include a specific section on climate change.

I truly believe that the retreat paved the way for all stakeholders to work together to find common ground on possible concrete steps by the Council to address these issues.

Finally, I want to emphasize that in 2019, the Council adopted 42 resolutions with reference to the **Sustainable Development Goals**. These resolutions covered a variety of topics relating to economic, social and cultural rights, as well as climate change, administration of justice, corruption, digital technologies, international cooperation, illicit funds, foreign debt, arms transfers, slavery and unilateral coercive measures.

Country-specific resolutions also referred to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, such as resolutions on Cambodia, Belarus, Eritrea and Myanmar.

When it comes to specific groups of rights holders, the Council also looked into the implementation of the Agenda in relation to women and girls, children, youth, workers, human rights defenders, indigenous peoples and internally displaced persons.

I was pleased to note that references to the Agenda are now in resolutions adopted under a wider range of agenda items of the Council's programme, and not only in thematic resolutions. More and more resolutions on country situations are referring to the issue, including through the angle of technical cooperation and capacity building.

Let me conclude these remarks by emphasizing the Human Rights Council's commitment to leaving no one behind. This is our common goal, and the only guarantee for a better world where the rights of all are respected.

Thank you.