**40th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming**

***Theme:***

***Human rights in the light of multilateralism: opportunities, challenges and the way forward***

*Concept note (as of 8 February 2019)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date and venue:** | **Monday, 25 February 2019, 4 - 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva** (will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>) |
| **Objective:** | Multilateralism is a hallmark and the *raison d'être* of the United Nations to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights. Upholding the values of multilateralism and international cooperation, which underpin the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is critical for the advancement of the three interlinking pillars of the United Nations – sustainable development, peace and security and human rights – and in collectively addressing the global challenges that affect us all.  The high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming will explore how integrating human rights in efforts to address inter-connected global challenges such as climate change and migration can strengthen multilateral and United Nations system-wide approaches to develop more sustainable and effective solutions. Moreover, the panel will discuss opportunities and challenges presented by the advancement of new digital technologies and how the United Nations system can integrate human rights principles and standards in harnessing such technologies to further enhance people’s participation, innovations, transparency and accountability in strengthening multilateralism. |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Mr. Coly Seck**, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statements:** | **H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations  **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  **H.E. Ms. Laya Joneydi**, Vice-President for Legal Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran |
| **Moderator:** | **Ms. Peggy Hicks**, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Panellists:** | **Ms. Deborah Greenfield**, Deputy Director-General for Policy of the International Labour Organization  **Ms. Mami Mizutori**,Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction  **Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill**, Executive Director of the Secretariat of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation |
| **Guiding questions:** | The panel discussion will be guided by the following overarching questions:   1. How does human rights, as United Nations normative values and international legal standards, help to strengthen multilateralism and advance agreement on human-centred and sustainable solutions to global challenges? 2. How is the United Nations system integrating human rights in supporting the multilateral processes and the implementation of global agendas? 3. How does the international human rights machinery – based on multilateral treaties and mechanisms – empower the United Nations system, Member States and other stakeholders in developing and implementing sustainable, durable and effective multilateral solutions for global challenges?   Additionally, and to illustrate the importance of human rights integration in multilateral processes and outcomes in specific areas of global concern, the panellists will reflect on human rights in the light of multilateralism from their respective areas of expertise (climate change, migration and digital technology) and on how the integration of human rights can strengthen coherent and effective United Nations responses in those areas.  In that regard, the panel will further consider questions such as:   1. What are some of the key human rights challenges facing migrants that require international responses? What is the significance of the recently adopted Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and how does it assist States and other stakeholders to protect the human rights of migrants? 2. How do climate induced disasters impact upon human rights? What are some of the opportunities and challenges for the integration of human rights in climate action and disaster risk reduction moving forward? 3. What opportunities and challenges arise in the digital age and what are the implications of new technologies for multilateralism and human rights? How can human rights help to ensure that people are at the centre of digital technology advancements and to harness the benefit of new technologies while minimizing risks? How can international cooperation address the challenges of unequal level of technological advancement among countries? |
| **Outcomes:** | The panel discussion is aimed at highlighting the important value of human rights at the centre of multilateral approaches in addressing global challenges. The panel will also generate recommendations for the United Nations system to further integrate human rights in supporting the implementation of multilateral agreements and treaties. |
| **Mandate:** | In paragraph 42 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, the Human Rights Council decided to hold an annual high-level panel discussion to interact with heads of governing bodies and secretariats of United Nations agencies and funds within their respective mandates on specific human rights themes, with the objective of promoting the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system. Following consultations, it was decided that the theme of the 2019 panel discussion would be “Human rights in the light of multilateralism: opportunities, challenges and the way forward”. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statements and initial presentations by the panelists, the latter guided by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive discussion chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council.  A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statements, moderator introduction, panellist presentations, responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for interventions from the floor, divided into two slots, for Member States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask questions. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Background:** | In his address to the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General highlighted how the world needs a reinvigorated and strengthened multilateral system, respectful of international rules, with the United Nations at its centre, as new conflicts multiply, climate change continues to advance, forced population movements continue to rise, digital transformation is changing the economy and society, with its advances and perils, to mention but a few of the current global challenges.  Multilateralism shall reinforce the advancement of the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, sustainable development, peace and security and human rights. It shall promote the protection of human rights in the world, drawing on the knowledge of international organizations, through effective advisory services and technical assistance.  Since its creation, the United Nations has spearheaded multilateralism, which ushered in numerous landmark achievements: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international human rights instruments; successful conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts; the reduction of child mortality and the winning of major battles against public health threats such as smallpox, polio, and AIDS; the establishment of multilateral trade rules and agreements; the adoption of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development -- a milestone to advance the integration of human rights into multilateral processes on a broad spectrum of issues of global concern; and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change – a critical issue for which multilateral efforts are of particular importance.  Multilateralism is essential to uphold the principle of international cooperation that runs throughout the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. Article 28 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights emphasizes that everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms contained in the Declaration can be realized. The Declaration on the Right to Development recognizes that the right to development cannot be realized, nor can all States fulfil their responsibilities, without effective cooperation among States. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also urges States to refrain from applying any unilateral measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.  The high-level panel discussion will focus on how the United Nations system supports and facilitates processes by which Member States and all stakeholders come together in multilateral forums putting people and their rights at the core of processes and outcomes, for sustainability and impact, specifically in the areas of migration, climate change and the digital age and technological advancement.  ***Migration***  Today, there are over 258 million migrants around the world living outside their country of birth. This figure is expected to grow for a number of reasons, including population growth, increasing connectivity, trade, rising inequality, demographic imbalances and climate change. Migration provides immense opportunities and benefits – for migrants, host communities and communities of origin. However, when poorly governed it can create significant challenges, including violation of the human rights of migrants. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018, is the first-ever United Nations global agreement on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions. The Global Compact rests on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the nine core human rights instruments. It is guided by the principles of state sovereignty, international cooperation, sustainable development, and human rights, and recognizes that a cooperative approach is needed to optimize the overall benefits of migration, while addressing its risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. The panel will reflect on how human rights are integrated in the recently adopted Global Compact and explore the opportunities provided by the Global Compact to strengthen human rights protection for all migrants regardless of their status.  ***Climate change***  Climate change directly and indirectly threatens the full and effective enjoyment of a range of human rights by people all over the world, including the rights to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture and development. The negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately borne by persons and communities already in disadvantageous situations owing to geography, poverty, gender, age, disability, cultural or ethnic background, among others. The negative impacts caused by climate change are global, contemporaneous and subject to increase exponentially according to the degree of climate change that ultimately takes place. Climate change therefore requires a global rights-based response. The Preamble of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change makes it clear that all States “should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights”. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted in 2015 at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan, was the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and it calls for a people-centred preventive approach. Together with the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) held in December 2018 to adopt the Rulebook for implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement they are yet examples of multilateralism ‘in action’, on issues of worldwide alarm.  The panel will explore what some of the opportunities and challenges are for the integration of human rights in climate action and disaster risk reduction moving forward.  ***International cooperation in the digital age***  Digital and technological advancement is interlinked with several global trends, such as growing inequality, demographic changes and governance challenges, including unilateral coercive measures that impede equal opportunities for development. Digital technologies can make a significant contribution to the realization and enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to development, and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, across international boundaries. International cooperation is therefore critical to realizing the full social and economic potential of digital technologies. A holistic, long-term vision for a future heavily influenced by technologies and other developments is needed in order to mitigate the risk of widening inequality across and within countries and to close the digital divide. The United Nations system has an important role to play in promoting an inclusive, equitable and human rights-based approach to addressing transformative changes, and in promoting international cooperation at all levels: North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The Secretary-General of the United Nations convened a [High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation](https://digitalcooperation.org/) in 2018 to look into how to strengthen cooperation in the digital space among Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, academia, the technical community and other relevant stakeholders. The panel is expected to raise awareness about the [transformative impact of digital technologies](http://www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/) across society and the economy, and contribute to the broader public debate on how to ensure a safe and inclusive digital future for all, taking into account relevant human rights norms. The panel will hence discuss some of the opportunities and challenges offered by the digital age and how multilateralism can ensure human rights-based digital technology advancements. |
| **Background documents and information:** | * Web page of the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) (2018): [https://cop24.gov.pl](https://cop24.gov.pl/) * Paris Agreement (2015): <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement> * Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, [General Assembly resolution 73/195](http://undocs.org/A/RES/73/195) of 19 December 2018 * Web pages of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation:   [https://digitalcooperation.org](https://digitalcooperation.org/) and [http://www.un.org/en/digital-cooperation-panel](http://www.un.org/en/digital-cooperation-panel/)   * Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [General Assembly resolution 70/1](http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1) of 25 September 2015 * Related thematic web pages of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Migration/Pages/GlobalCompactforMigration.aspx>   <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/hrandclimatechange/pages/hrclimatechangeindex.aspx> |