

OIC/IPHRC-22/2024/211047

Jeddah: 28th May 2024

H.E. Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakhiet
ASG Humanitarian, Cultural & Social Affairs
OIC General Secretariat, Jeddah.

Subject: IPHRC Inputs for the Thematic Report on Best Practices in the Context of recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Excellency,

Reference to your letter # OIC/HSCA-05/CULT/2024/001423 dated 09th May 2024 requesting IPHRC inputs for the thematic report on “Best Practices in the Contribution of Development to the Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights in the Context of Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic” pursuant to the HRC resolution 53/28 of July 2023.

I am pleased to enclose herewith the IPHRC inputs for your kind information. A copy of the same is also transmitted electronically to the UN office at the emails mentioned in their letter with a copy to Mr. Halim Grabus, OIC Geneva Mission.

Please accept, Ambassador, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,



Prof. Noura Zaid Alrshoud
Executive Director of the OIC-IPHRC Secretariat



CC: Mr. Halim Grabus, Professional Officer, OIC Mission to UN in Geneva



IPHRC INPUTS FOR THE OHCHR THEMATIC REPORT ON

***"BEST PRACTICES IN THE CONTRIBUTION OF
DEVELOPMENT TO THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF
ALL HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF RECOVERY FROM
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"***

Introduction:

The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is one of the principal organs of the OIC that focuses on human rights issues of contemporary concern. IPHRC was established by the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in 2011 as an independent expert advisory body. The establishment of the IPHRC is part of OIC's efforts to bridge perceptual gaps and bring compatibility with the universal human rights principles. It also reflects the importance that OIC attaches to addressing human rights issues at the national and international levels in an organized, independent, and sustained manner.

As per Article 5 and 15 of the OIC Charter, IPHRC shall promote civil, political, social, and economic rights enshrined in the organization's covenants and declarations and universally agreed human rights instruments, in conformity with Islamic values. Chapter III and IV of the IPHRC Statute provide details of its objectives and mandates, which, among other things, include advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Member States as well as fundamental rights of Muslim minorities and communities in non-Member States in conformity with universally recognized human rights instruments with the added value of Islamic principles of justice and equality. IPHRC also carries out consultative tasks for the CFM, conducts studies and research on priority human rights issues, and submits recommendations for consideration.

IPHRC position on post Covid-19 pandemic recovery:

The cumulative political and socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic presented with an imminent threat to the promotion and protection of human rights with receding freedoms, widening disparities and further marginalization of persons in vulnerable situations, including women and girl child, elderly, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, minorities and people living under occupation or in armed conflict situations. The pandemic also proved that the world needs structural changes to efficiently eradicate inequalities beyond the ambitious political narratives that fail to inspire real action.

IPHRC, during the pandemic and in the post pandemic world has upheld the importance of upholding human rights principles of participation, equality and non-discrimination to mitigate the effects of the global pandemic in a manner that **'No one is left behind'**. It has called upon all governments to adopt inclusive and participatory policies in its recovery efforts from the ongoing pandemic. The agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals must be pursued in a manner that is consistent with the States' obligations under international human rights law, which include their responsibility to respect,

protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights of all without any discrimination. Hence, the post-Covid-19 recovery phase should not be guided by the simple need to address the damages inflicted by the pandemic but to transform the structures that could not protect the vulnerable during the crisis. Human rights must be the guiding norm in shaping the post-pandemic response, both for the public health emergency and broader impact on people's lives and livelihoods.

There is a need to pursue Agenda 2030 from a human rights-based approach to address the myriad of challenges, which tackles the structural causes of discrimination and inequality, empowers the rights-holders and holds the duty-bearers accountable. IPHRC has emphasized the need to embark on an inclusive and equitable recovery at the global level with a strong recommendation to provide debt-relief, enabling low-income developing countries the fiscal space to mitigate the crises and realize the SDGs to ensure basic human rights of their peoples. In this context, the Commission also highlighted the vital link between international cooperation and realization of SDGs by developing countries, which should be expanded to align global financial and economic architecture as reflected in the Right to Development. **Accordingly, the Commission urged all countries to adopt, on priority, a legally binding instrument on the Right to Development to meaningfully contribute to achieving the SDGs without discrimination and in a timely manner.**

Persons with Disabilities:

IPHRC laid special focus on marginalized segments, including Persons with Disabilities, with an emphatic appeal to sign, ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and design their respective national policies and post-pandemic recovery efforts based on human rights-based approaches. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that protection, response, and recovery efforts will not be effective unless everyone is equally valued and included. Hence, urgent action was proposed to ensure that everyone, including persons with disabilities, are included in public emergency planning, health responses, and recovery efforts. Persons with disabilities, whose rights are often forgotten, even during normal times, were increasingly susceptible to the fatalities of the pandemic due to lack of resources, hostilities, or discrimination by the concerned authorities. The OIC, guided by the Islamic values of social justice and solidarity, recognized the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities to build inclusive and harmonious societies. The revised '**Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights**' has duly emphasized the importance of the rights of persons with disabilities in various contexts. Also, the OIC has initiated the Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities, which would help Member States align their national

policies and legislation with universal human rights standards, particularly the UNCRPD.

While emphasizing the need to transform the societal perception of the person with disabilities from 'social burden' to 'social resource,' IPHRC also called upon all Member States to: (i) design policies and targeted interventions to remove psychological, social, cultural and environmental barriers, which hinder the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities; (ii) follow multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach by integrating civil society, religious leaders, media and private sector to enhance public awareness and influence public policies aiming to improve public perception; (iii) enhance opportunities for their employment and accessibility to education and healthcare services; (iv) formulate national disability strategy/plan of action for improved investments in rehabilitation assistive technologies; and (v) enhance capacities to gather data, statistics and qualitative information to better assess and address the situation of persons with disabilities.

Protection and promotion of Rights of Women and the Child during and after pandemic:

The other most important segment of population which remains a priority with the IPHRC is the protection and promotion of rights of Women and the Child. IPHRC acknowledged and appreciated the women's contribution, constituting 70% of the global health and social care workforce, as front-line respondents, scientists, and caregivers at home and in communities making critical lifesaving contributions during all phases of pandemic under most challenging circumstances. At the same time, however, this critical, yet, less recognized segment of society remains disproportionately affected by the socio-economic and health-related shocks of Covid-19. Thus, exposing them to structural inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination reflected through a statistically significant rise in violence against women, a high proportion of young girls without education, and women unemployment during the pandemic. These unfortunate statistics seriously undermine the hard-fought gains of women empowerment achieved over time.

The revised '***Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights***' was adopted during the times of pandemic during the 47th Session of the OIC-Council of Foreign Ministers, which places particular emphasis on the protection and promotion of women's rights and other disadvantaged sections of society. The newly adopted Declaration will strengthen the normative structure for women's rights and the girl child in compliance with the Islamic values and the universal human rights norms.

IPHRC called upon all governments to: (a) adopt gender-sensitive policies in all recovery efforts related to the Covid-19 pandemic and to prioritize health care

access, especially during dispensation of vaccination, to women, who are the vital component of every family in all societies; (b) ensure women's adequate representation, meaningful participation and leadership in the formulation of COVID-19 response and recovery strategies, including social and economic recovery plans; (c) ensure inclusive alternative educational tools free of charge, including in rural or remote areas where internet access is limited; (d) focus on targeted socio-economic interventions for disadvantaged women i.e. migrant and in humanitarian settings; and (e) employ technology-based innovate ways and means for collection of disaggregated data for policy formulation as well as to protect women against violence and abuse; (f) ensure that national laws and policies against illegal practices affecting women are strengthened and enforced to sanction the violators with minimum delay.

Violation of Rights of Palestinians under Israeli occupation regime:

Reflecting on the human rights situation the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, IPHRC expressed grave concerns over the human rights violations disproportionately affecting the lives of millions of Muslims across the world. From critical human rights situation faced by the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, the continued sufferings of Palestinians and Kashmiris under the worst occupation regimes, ever-increasing instances of Islamophobia; to the rising number of refugees and displaced people around the globe. Against the growing incidences of hate speech, xenophobia, racial and religious intolerance, IPHRC urged all stakeholders in the international community to reinforce respect for diversity, multiculturalism, inclusiveness, democracy, and the rule of law, which are at the core of human rights and fundamental freedoms. To this end, it urged all States to work together with their political, religious and community leaders to: promote a better understanding of the universal human rights values; collectively deal with the underlying causes of racism and religious intolerance, including their contemporary manifestations, i.e., Islamophobia; uphold the values of multiculturalism, and to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security.

IPHRC regretted that inhuman discriminatory policies of Israel, the occupying power, continue to be implemented during the most challenging times of Covid-19 pandemic flaring up across the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), which seriously impeded Palestinian authorities' ability to effectively address the pandemic. The Israeli occupation authorities obstructed the emergency response for Palestinians by shutting down multiple clinics, adding restrictions on vital movement, including delays and denials in issuing travel permits. Patients in the Gaza Strip needed permits to reach health services in different parts of OPT, with the majority needing access to East Jerusalem, are unable to obtain Israeli-issued permits to access the needed healthcare. Worst still, as a preventive and protective measure, Israel released Israeli prisoners. This is yet another example

of sheer discrimination that is violative of all human rights instruments. Palestinians under occupation, as a protected population under international humanitarian law, should have equal access to basic healthcare and corresponding treatment without discrimination. The pandemic was exploited by the Israeli authorities to further intensify its military actions, electronic and other mechanisms of surveillance and to create new "facts on the ground" through annexation of Palestinian land to alter the legal, demographic, geographic, and historical status, which squarely contravenes the Fourth Geneva Convention, UN Charter, and UN Security Council and OIC Resolutions.

Right to Development:

The right to development is a fundamental human right recognized in international law, affirmed notably by the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. One of the priority areas of work for IPHRC is the protection and promotion of the Right to Development.

IPHRC has upheld that this right encompasses economic, social, cultural, and political rights that are essential for individuals and communities to fully realize their potential and improve their quality of life. In the context of post-pandemic recovery, the right to development takes on added significance as nations seek to rebuild their economies, societies, and institutions in a way that is inclusive, sustainable, and equitable. Here are some ways in which the right to development can inform post-pandemic recovery efforts:

- **Equitable Access to Vaccines and Healthcare:** Ensuring universal access to COVID-19 vaccines and healthcare services is essential for protecting public health and enabling communities to recover from the pandemic. Efforts to distribute vaccines fairly, especially to marginalized and vulnerable populations, are crucial for upholding the right to health and promoting inclusive development.
- **Social Protection and Economic Support:** Post-pandemic recovery efforts should prioritize social protection measures, such as income support, unemployment benefits, and food assistance, to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. These measures can help ensure that individuals and families have the resources they need to rebuild their lives and participate fully in the recovery process.
- **Investment in Education and Skills Development:** Investing in education and skills development is essential for building human capital and fostering long-term sustainable development. Post-pandemic recovery plans should prioritize measures to ensure that all individuals have access to quality

education and training opportunities, including digital literacy and remote learning resources.

- Promotion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for promoting sustainable development and addressing global challenges, including poverty, inequality, and climate change. Post-pandemic recovery efforts should align with the SDGs and prioritize actions that contribute to their achievement, fostering economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.
- Participation and Empowerment: Meaningful participation and empowerment of individuals and communities are essential for ensuring that post-pandemic recovery efforts are responsive to their needs and priorities. Governments should engage with civil society organizations, local communities, and marginalized groups to develop inclusive recovery plans that address the diverse needs of all segments of society.
- By prioritizing equity, participation, and empowerment, nations can work towards a recovery that leaves no one behind and fosters the well-being and dignity of all individuals and communities.