

## 34<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

### Panel discussion on maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights

*Concept note (as of 3 February 2017)*

- Date and venue:** 9 March 2017, 3 - 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva  
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** The Human Rights Council has repeatedly emphasized the human rights dimensions which underlie maternal mortality and morbidity. It has stressed that reducing maternal mortality and morbidity with full respect of States' human rights obligations and commitments will require efforts across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. This panel discussion will aim to generate concrete recommendations on actions that States and other stakeholders may take in order to accelerate progress in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity while upholding guarantees of human rights.
- Chair:** H.E. Mr. Joaquin Alexander Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statement:** Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Moderator:** H.E. Ms. Beatriz Londoño Soto, Permanent Representative of Colombia
- Panellists:**
- Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
  - Ms. Aminata Touré, former Prime Minister of Senegal and member of the High-level Working Group on Health and Human Rights
  - Ms. Carmen Barroso, Co-Chair of the Independent Accountability Panel (TBC)
  - Dr. Arzu Deuba, Member of Nepalese Constituent Assembly, Nepali Congress
- Outcome:** The discussion and recommendations will inform continued engagement of OHCHR and other stakeholders on the implementation of the SDGs, in particular in relation to maternal mortality and morbidity. An informal summary report of the panel discussion will be prepared and posted on OHCHR's website.
- Mandate:** In its resolution 33/18, the Human Rights Council decided to convene, at its thirty-fourth session, a panel discussion on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity as a human rights priority for all States, including in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that the discussion shall be fully accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Format:** The opening statement by the Deputy High Commissioner and initial presentations by the panellists, the latter responding to questions posed by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive discussion in order to encourage a sharing of viewpoints. 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 will be moved to the beginning of the list.
- States and observers, including representatives of civil society, take the floor for a 2-minute intervention each (total 45 minutes), followed by responses from panellists (15 minutes). A second round of interventions from the floor (45 minutes) will be followed by responses. At the end, panellists will be given three minutes each to make their concluding remarks, followed by the final remarks to be made by the moderator. To make the panel interactive, speakers are encouraged to focus their interventions on the themes of the panellists either by asking the panellists questions or sharing concrete experiences and recommendations on the issues identified. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

**Accessibility:** In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to allow them to participate in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, this annual debate will be made accessible to persons with disabilities. During the debate, international sign interpretation and real-time captioning will be provided and webcasted. Physical accessibility will be promoted by making room facilities wheelchair friendly. As per established guidelines, braille printing will be available on demand. The *Accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities* is available for further information.<sup>1</sup>

**Background:** The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda places the protection of human rights, including in the context of health and reproductive rights, as central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out therein. Delivering on this agenda while upholding human rights guarantees will require explicit attention to the human rights dimensions of the varied issues covered under the Agenda.

The Human Rights Council has long recognized the inextricable links between preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights denials, including discrimination against women, intersecting inequalities for certain marginalized groups, inaccessible or inappropriate health services, information and education, and challenges in the areas of nutrition, water and sanitation, and infrastructure. In this regard, the Council has particularly pointed out that reducing maternal mortality and morbidity with full respect of States' human rights obligations and commitments will require efforts across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in its report to the Council in September 2016 on maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights (A/HRC/33/24), presented a forecast of SDG implementation to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity utilizing a human rights based approach. This report suggested that delivering on the SDG ambition to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity would require : recognition of a holistic understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights; an explicit grounding in international human rights law; ensuring effective participation of affected individuals and civil society in all SDG related processes; establishing a special focus on inequalities and discrimination; recognition of the indivisibility of all human rights; careful choice of indicators for measuring progress; and building accountability into all interventions and strategies.

**Background documents:** Documents and resolutions on maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights, as well as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 33/18 of 30 September 2016](#)
- [OHCHR report on the follow-up on the application of the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity \(A/HRC/33/24\)](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals and Targets](#)
- [International Conference on Population and Development, Programme of Action, 1994 \(A/CONF.171/13\)](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995](#)

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/AboutCouncil.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/AboutCouncil.aspx)