

## Panel discussion on the impacts, opportunities and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights

*Preliminary concept note (as of 8 June 2020)*

<b>Date and venue:</b>	<b>TBD</b> (will be broadcast live and archived on <a href="http://webtv.un.org">http://webtv.un.org</a> )
<b>Objectives:</b>	<p>This panel discussion will address human rights impacts, opportunities and challenges linked to the use of digital technologies. The panel discussion aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to raise awareness and enhance understanding of the impacts, opportunities and challenges of rapid technological change on the promotion and protection of human rights;</li><li>• to identify opportunities for States, the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to address such challenges and make use of the opportunities of digital technologies in the promotion of human rights;</li><li>• to identify the roles the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, and key areas of engagement in the digital age;</li><li>• to exchange views with regard to enhancing mutual understanding and interaction between governments, civil society, the private sector, technical communities with regard to the human rights impacts, opportunities and challenges linked to the use of digital technologies.</li></ul>
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger</b> , President of the Human Rights Council (TBC)
<b>Opening statement:</b>	<b>Ms. Michelle Bachelet</b> , United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (TBC)
<b>Panellists:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mr. Changrok Soh</b>, Member of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee</li><li>• State, business and civil society representatives (TBC)</li></ul>
<b>Outcome:</b>	The debate will seek to raise awareness and enhance understanding of the human rights impacts, opportunities and challenges linked to the use of digital technologies and help to identify priority areas of interest for the Human Rights Council. It will also serve as an opportunity for the Advisory Committee to give an oral update on its preparation of its report on the possible impacts, opportunities and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights, as requested by Council resolution 41/11.
<b>Mandate:</b>	In its resolution 41/11, the Human Rights Council decided to convene a panel discussion at its forty-fourth session on the impacts, opportunities and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights, and also decided that the discussions will be fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the Human Rights Council requested the Advisory Committee to prepare a report on the possible impacts, opportunities and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights, including mapping of relevant existing initiatives by the United Nations and recommendations on how human rights opportunities, challenges and gaps arising from new and emerging digital technologies could be addressed by the Human Rights Council and its special procedures and subsidiary bodies in a holistic, inclusive and pragmatic manner, and to present the report to the Council at its forty-seventh session. In this regard, the Human Rights Council also requested the Advisory Committee to present an oral update on its preparation of this report during the panel discussion.
<b>Format (to be confirmed):</b>	The panel will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two slots. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, panellists' presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved

for two slots of interventions from the floor for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).

The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system 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 panellists questions. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

**Accessibility (to be confirmed):**

In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, the event will be made accessible. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided and webcasted during the debate. The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities is available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Accessibility.aspx>.

**Background:**

The use of a vast array of new and emerging digital technologies by Governments, business enterprises, international organizations, academic institutions and other stakeholders continues to cause or contribute toward significant transformations of societies. They may be powerful tools in their capacity to make significant positive contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights. At the same time, these rapidly developing technologies raise serious questions as to the risks and negative impacts on human rights, and how appropriate responses to the challenges can be undertaken.

In recent years, the Human Rights Council and its special procedures, several human rights treaty bodies, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have increasingly addressed issues linked to digital technologies, including topics such as the right to privacy in the digital age, the gender digital divide, the safety of journalists online, online violence against women and girls, the role of new technologies for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, hate speech online, content moderation by social media platforms, responsibilities of the information and communications technology sector and the digital welfare state, to name just a few.

Moreover, the Secretary-General has determined digital technologies as one of his priority areas of action. In 2018, he established a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, which published its report entitled “The age of digital interdependence” in June 2019. A series of follow-up multi-stakeholder discussions provided inputs and advice on the status and feasibility of advancing the report’s various recommendations, informing the development of the Secretary-General’s Road map for digital cooperation, launched on 11 June 2020.

Pursuant to Council resolution 41/11, the Advisory Committee established a drafting group at its twenty-third session in August 2019 and discussed the draft preliminary outline of the report submitted by the drafting group (A/HRC/AC/24/CRP.5) at its twenty-fourth session in February 2020. The drafting group is currently working on a revised draft, which will be considered by the Advisory Committee at its twenty-fifth session later this year, with a view to presenting the mandated report to the Human Rights Council at its forty-seventh session.

The present panel discussion in combination with the report of the Advisory Committee mandated in resolution 41/11 is part of a broad effort to raise awareness and enhance the understanding of the human rights impacts, opportunities and challenges linked to the use of digital technologies and to identify priority areas of interest for the Human Rights Council.

**Background documents:**

- Multiple resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, the most recent of which include:
  - [Human Rights Council resolution 41/11](#) of 11 July 2019 on new and emerging technologies and human rights

- [General Assembly resolution 73/218](#) of 20 December 2018 on information and communications technologies for sustainable development
- [General Assembly resolution 73/17](#) of 26 November 2018 on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets
- [General Assembly resolution 73/179](#) of 17 December 2018 on the right to privacy in the digital age
- [Human Rights Council resolution 37/2](#) of 22 March 2018 on the right to privacy in the digital age
- [Human Rights Council resolution 39/6](#) of 27 September 2018 on the safety of journalists
- [Human Rights Council resolution 38/7](#) of 5 July 2018 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet
- Report of the Secretary-General on the road map for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation ([A/74/821](#))
- Report of the Secretary-General on the question of the realization of economic, social and cultural rights in all countries: the role of new technologies for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights ([A/HRC/43/29](#))
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to privacy in the digital age ([A/HRC/39/29](#))
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet: ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective ([A/HRC/35/9](#))
- A large number of special procedures reports, a non-exhaustive list of which can be found on the [OHCHR website](#).