

## **JOINT STATEMENT**

Thank you, Madam President,

This is a joint statement.

COVID-19 has redefined how civil society engages with the Human Rights Council and its related mechanisms. For human rights organisations that are not based in Geneva, and particularly for organisations based in the Global South, the restrictions to travel and attend sessions have significantly affected the opportunities to participate in Council sessions and to interact with the international community that gathers around it.

The pandemic and related health, safety and travel restrictions have limited the number of organisations who attended the 44th session, and as limitations continue, we expect to see the same for HRC45. While remote participation is a much-needed alternative, and its advancement should be encouraged, it should not be understood as a substitute for attending the session in person.

On different occasions leading to the resumed HRC43 and HRC44 civil society organisations raised concerns about the modalities of participation and overall access to Council discussions and outcomes. After the last session, a group of organisations also submitted to your office the results of a survey which provided feedback on the main challenges encountered and suggestions on how to overcome those obstacles.

The recommendations contained in the document provided concrete suggestions to make the use of remote participation tools more accessible and inclusive.

Madam President, we much appreciate that the recommendations were considered during the last Bureau meeting and that you encouraged States to include civil society perspectives in the negotiation of resolutions and informal consultations. We would like to reiterate the following recommendations:

- Continue to provide and publicise concrete and user-friendly advice on how to make videos, including recommended software/editing system to meet the stringent technical requirements;
- Allow more flexibility on technical requirements for video statements (e.g. deadlines for submission, resolution, length, etc.) and arrange for channels for technical support to the CSOs when needed;
- Provide regular updates about the Programme of Work, including delays and significant changes, and make them widely available during the session, including by broadly publicising the new app Sched;
- Follow-up on the request to provide ECOSOC accredited NGOs with access to the part of e-Delegate where draft resolutions, co-sponsors list and comments to the text before it being tabled are posted, or else create a separate page on the extranet where this information is automatically mirrored as soon as it is published to e-Delegate;

- Ensure all informal negotiations, as public meetings, are webcasted and always available on the listen-live service provided by UNOG. Make the recorded webcast or audio files available after the informals for civil society in different time zones;
- Ensure all HRC meetings are webcast in all UN languages to enable non-English speakers to follow proceedings, as it has been the case for webcast during voting.

Finally, we would like to ask the President and the Secretariat whether you have seen any significant increase in requests for speaking slots in the past sessions and if you have considered any measures regarding the possibilities of remote participation during the General Debates?

Thank you.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)

CIVICUS

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)

Human Rights House Foundation

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI)