

Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

8th March 2021

**H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan,
President,
Human Rights Council,
Geneva, Switzerland**

Excellency,

I have the honour, on behalf of the Advisory Committee, to convey our warmest greetings and good wishes on the occasion of International Women's Day and to express our gratitude to Your Excellency for having addressed our Committee at the opening of its twenty-fifth session last month.

The Advisory Committee highly appreciates the points that Your Excellency raised and fully supports any concrete step that would strengthen its interaction with the Human Rights Council, particularly in view of the recurrent issue of insufficient mandates that the Committee faces. The suggestion to have formal and informal meetings with Member States was welcomed by the Committee as such meetings, convened regularly, will indeed provide an effective channel of communication with States, particularly the sponsors of draft resolutions, and foster an informal dialogue on mandates that the Committee may be entrusted with in future. In this context, the Committee looks forward to its traditional informal dialogue with the Bureau of the Council, as well as regional and political group coordinators, during its twenty-sixth session scheduled from 16-20 August 2021.

Meanwhile, I would like to inform Your Excellency that in line with paragraph 77 of the Annex to Council resolution 5/1, the Committee discussed the issue of research proposals and new priorities in its private meetings during its curtailed, virtual twenty-fifth session last month. As an outcome, I have the pleasure to transmit to Your Excellency, on behalf of the Committee, the following priority topics/research proposals for consideration by the Council:

- **“Study on practices negatively affecting the human rights of migrants”.** A research proposal with this title was submitted by the Committee at its 24th Session in February 2020, along with a Concept Paper, for consideration by the Human Rights Council (see A/HRC/AC/24/2, pp. 18-21).
- **“Pandemics and Human Rights”.** This of particular importance given the disproportionate negative impact that pandemics have on the poor and less privileged. The human rights impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been focussed upon by thematic human rights rapporteurs and a broader survey has also been undertaken by OHCHR, Geneva. Health pandemics may be anticipated to affect the world in future too and Member States may like to advise in case they desire an input from this Committee on a broader and more comprehensive examination of the issue.
- Alternatively, a sharper focus on the same topic may also be sought, such as: **“Protection of Academic Freedom: Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 Pandemic”.**

The Committee has since its last Session also been exploring the following ideas:

- The Advisory Committee was mandated by Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/41/11 to prepare a report on “New and emerging digital technologies and human rights”. The report would be submitted to the Council at its forty-seventh session. However, it would focus exclusively on civilian technologies in view of the difficulty to also adequately cover in a single report the human rights concerns surrounding new technologies used in warfare, especially those pertaining to drones and autonomous weapons. Interest in emerging technologies in law enforcement and the military domain and their impact on human rights has also been expressed by Member States in their responses to this Committee. Accordingly, consideration may be given to seeking a follow up study from the Committee on **“New and Emerging Digital Technologies in the Military Domain and Human Rights”**.
- Climate actions being seriously explored, beyond reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, include those that can be broadly classified as “Climate Geo-engineering” - a deliberate, large-scale intervention in the Earth’s ecosystem so as to counteract climate change. Such an approach broadly seeks to address climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere (using carbon capture, utilisation and storage methods) or using solar radiation management to cool the Earth. Most of the low-temperature pathways presented in the “IPCC Special Report on 1.5 °C” reference in overshoot scenarios to stratospheric aerosol injection to cool global temperature as a way to ‘temporarily reduce the severity of near-term impacts’. Accordingly, it is possible that climate geo-engineering through solar radiation management may, in some form, become part of a more mainstream climate science response to climate change. However, solar radiation management has huge and unclear risks associated with it as well as human rights implications that are presently not in focus. A paper by the Committee exploring the interrelationship between **“Climate Geo-engineering and Human Rights”** may be useful and timely.

The Committee would appreciate if the above-mentioned ideas/themes/research proposals are considered and, if any are found to be of interest, suitably incorporated, as and where appropriate, in fresh mandates to it emanating from the Council.

The Committee also intends to brainstorm on these and other topics at its August 2021 session with a view to possibly submitting other ideas/proposals to the Council.

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



Ajai Malhotra
Chairperson
Human Rights Council Advisory Committee