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**Statement by H.E. Ms. Elisabeth TICHY-FISSLBERGER**

**President of the Human Rights Council**

At the opening of the twenty-fourth session

of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

Monday, 17 February 2020, 11 a.m.

Palais des Nations, Salle XX

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I address you for the first time this morning in my capacity as President of the Human Rights Council.

I can see that I have already had the pleasure of meeting some of the members of the Advisory Committee and I am very pleased to meet the new members to whom I express my congratulations - (i) Ms. Costas Trascasas (ES), (ii) Mr. Kolesnikov (RU), (iii) Ms. Nakai (JP) and (iv) Mr. Palummo (UY); and on their **re-election for a second term**: (i) Mr. Bouzid (DZ); (ii) Mr. Liu (CN); and (iii) Ms. Omar (EG).

It, it is an honour to be here with you today and to thank you for the valuable contributions, which you make to the Human Rights Council’s work. It is with great pleasure that we have witnessed last year that the Advisory Committee took up a topic, which it was high time that somebody took it up, which is a topic of **new technologies** and the human rights challenges they bring with them. We have in Geneva a lot of discussions around this area - Geneva which sees itself as the digital capital of the world - and many organizations are somehow looking at the topic but nobody does so in a comprehensive way. And we know that this is in very good hands and the Advisory Committee.

There are not many people who are at home both in technology and in the law and I think this is where the two meet and we are very much looking forward to the topics which you are taking up. I believe that it is key that the Council makes good use of the expertise and inputs that your Committee can make to tackle important and new challenges like this one.

Let me continue by giving you a short overview of other t**opics, which are relevant to our work and which were considered by the Council since your Committee last met**. During the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Salmón, the outgoing Chair of your Committee, engaged in an interactive with the Council and presented the progress on the mandates entrusted to your Committee. She also presented the report that was submitted to the 41st session of the Council in June last year, namely on the activities of the vulture funds and their impact on human rights and the contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights. The Council also held its **annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective** throughout the work of the Council and its mechanisms, which benefitted greatly from the participation of Ms. Salmón as a panelis. The discussion of the panel focused on the gender responsive initiatives to accelerate gender equality. Now that sounds a lot of jargon, but I understand it was a very important meeting and, as the only second female President of the Human Rights Council, it is very important to me to carry on the legacy of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women. So, I am pleased to inform you that at its upcoming session next week the Council will hold a **high-level panel discussion to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Next week the panel discussion will not only celebrate the vision of women's rights as articulated by the Beijing Declaration and the progress made in 25 years, but it will also focus on what work still needs to be done - the unfinished agenda of the Beijing declaration.

Last September, the Council also held its by annual panel discussion on **unilateral coercive measures and human rights**, a topic on which your Committee has worked a lot in the past.

Distinguished experts and Excellencies,

Allow me to say a few words of the programme of work which we are setting for the **43rd session of the Human Rights** Council, which will open next Monday with statements by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Foreign Minister of Switzerland as usually. There will also be about 90 dignitaries from a whole range of countries, most of them foreign ministers, but also four Heads of State.

During the session, in addition to the high-level panel discussion on the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration that I have already mentioned, the Council will hold **three more panel discussions**: one on the 30 years of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which as you all know, is the most ratified of conventions; the second one on the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities; and thirdly, the annual commemoration of the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination.

At the upcoming session, we also expect **40 resolutions** to be presented, which is quite a lot.

I am also pleased to learn that the Committee's report on the **non-repatriation of illicit funds** has been submitted to the upcoming Council session, as well as the report on the **role of technical assistance and capacity building on fostering mutually beneficial cooperation** in promoting and protecting human rights. The Council is looking forward to the submissions of **three more reports at its 45th session** on: the importance of legally binding instruments on the rights to development; secondly, national policies and human rights; and thirdly, negative effects of terrorism and the enjoyment of human rights, which your Committee, will work on during this session.

I am also pleased to learn that your Committee will consider the question of women's representation in the Council’s work during this session. This issue is of particular importance to me during my presidency and I am pleased to announce that last week I appointed a lady ambassador as **special focal point to take care of questions like women's participation in the Council but also cases of harassment**, for which there is a new code of conduct by the United Nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to outline some of the **issues that will guide my presidency** during this year.

First of all, I would like to say that we should all make an effort, you and us, to do something for a **better visibility of the Council and a better understanding of what the Council exactly does**. Most people do not know and if they know anything at all, they have clichés, criticism, which come in the media. They do not believe that the Council and its advisory body and other mechanisms really contribute to making the life better for real people in the real world. I think this is what should try to contribute on. I have tried to appeal to all delegations to help me find positive stories, positive human rights stories, which would not have happened without the Council, and we should all try to make an effort and spread them. This is one of the things, which I would like to do during this year.

Another thing, which we feel very much in the Human Rights Council, which maybe you do not feel to the same extent in the Advisory Committee, is that we are working against the **backdrop of not very easy geopolitical context for multilateral work** in general and human rights in particular. And I would like to help a little bit in building trust between delegations and to actually get a real dialogue going on human rights, which is not so much, taking account of what is going on in terms of politics in the outside world - I mean outside world around the Council.

We also work against the **backdrop of a serious financial crisis of the United Nations**. You know that, it is not only the decreasing budgets, which have again been decided, but in addition to that, it is a liquidity crisis - it is the fact that some delegations do not pay, or pay less, or pay later than they should. And all of this gives rise to a discussion about the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council, where we have to be very careful in order not to throw out the baby with the bath water and not make cuts in the work of the Council in such a way that the efficiency of the Council is diminished. Of course, there are lacks of efficiency that we can work on, but we have to support the right ones, in order not to harm the council as such.

We are happy to be guided by your Committee on many questions. We hope that the Advisory Committee, which is, after all, in a way the think-tank of the Council can help us be vigilant, I think one thing to be vigilant about is **the multiplication of mandates** **we have, the extent to which they overlap**, the extent to which some of them are introduced for political reasons, without a lot of new impact into the Human Rights Council. Which is why I think this year we should **focus a little bit more the outcomes of resolutions** we adopt and see how much they cost and how much they actually bring, because very often the council adopts new mechanisms and does not really know how much they will cost and whether we are going to have the money.

All I am saying is that efficiency is not about cutting speaking time, which we do a lot, but it is also about making sure that we really have the instruments, which make us promote the work, which is the Council's work - protection of human rights all over the world.

I look forward to your discussions. I look also forward to meeting with you on a more informal basis as during this meeting. I thank you very much for your work. I know that for the benefit of the Council you spend a lot of time in your various countries and in your various capacities on research, which is very difficult, which sometimes is somehow ungrateful - where the Council sometimes asks you to explore questions where it knows they are almost impossible to answer and then they get forwarded to the Advisory Committee. We appreciate that very much. I hope you will have a very fruitful and very interesting session now and I look forward to having more such meetings in the future.

Thank you very much.

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