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**Call for Input: Human Rights Council resolution 51/10 on cyberbullying against persons with disabilities**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and has the honour to refer to Human Rights Council resolution 51/10 on cyberbullying, adopted on 6 October 2022.

Pursuant to this resolution, OHCHR organized a panel discussion on “Cyberbullying against children” on 27 September 2023 during the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council. Pursuant to the same resolution, OHCHR will also prepare a report on “**countering cyberbullying against persons with disabilities, identifying recent trends and challenges, as well as applicable human rights principles, safeguards and best practices**”. The report will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-sixth session in 2024.

To inform the preparation of the report, OHCHR would appreciate receiving written contributions, compromising of replies to the guiding questions in the annex from the UN Member States, UN entities and other international organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, the private sector and academia, and other interested parties.

Submissions should be received by **20 April 2024,** and be:

* Limited to 5 pages (approximately 3000 words)
* Submitted in accessible format (Microsoft Word format)
* Written in English, French or Spanish, and if possible, provided with a summary in English
* Sent by e-mail to [**ohchr-registry@un.org**](mailto:ohchr-registry@un.org)**, with CC to:** [**ohchr-cyberbullying@un.org**](mailto:ohchr-cyberbullying@un.org)**,** including in the e-mail subject line: input for the report to the Human Rights Council on cyberbullying against persons with disabilities.

Unless otherwise specified, all contributions will be made available in full and as received on the public OHCHR [website](https://www.ohchr.org/en/racism/agenda-towards-transformative-change-racial-justice-and-equality). Kindly indicate if the submission contains names, images or other information that should not be posted on the public OHCHR website. Please note that not all information shared will necessarily be reflected in the final report and that information falling outside the mandate will not be considered.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

26 March 2024

**ANNEX**

**Guiding questions on the inputs sought:**

The following questions, albeit not meant to be exhaustive, indicate areas of particular interest for the drafting of the report:

* **Please provide information, in particular any study or detailed assessment you have undertaken, about how cyberbullying affects the human rights of persons with disabilities. If available, please provide disaggregated data.**

We recognize that cyberbullying against individuals with disabilities is a critical issue that requires further exploration. Currently, however, there are no definitive studies or assessments in this specific area.

* **Please provide information about good practices (developed and/or implemented by States, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, business enterprises, international organizations) at local, national, regional or international levels, to address cyberbullying against persons with disabilities, including its root causes.**

Cyberbullying against people with disabilities is a relatively new concept to the Maldives. As a result, there is limited information and data available for reporting purposes.

* **Please provide information about any assessments made of how existing initiatives and responses to cyberbullying impact the rights of persons with disabilities. What improvements were achieved? Were and are there observed and potential negative impacts on the enjoyment of human rights related to those initiatives?**

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* **What other related threats and obstacles to effectively ensure the human rights of persons with disabilities online, including the right to privacy, the right to freedom of expression and the prohibition against discrimination, should be addressed in the report?**
* **Please provide information about measures taken to address those issues, including to ensure access to online platforms by persons with disabilities; to ensure inclusiveness and remove obstacles for persons with disabilities to the digital environment.**

We are currently in the process of ensuring that all government office websites are accessible to people with disabilities. This includes implementing specific measures for individuals with hearing and visual impairments. Our efforts include adding voice-over features to websites and using Latin translations for the local Dhivehi. We are also integrating open-source software for screen reading, such as Non-Visual Desktop Language (NVDA) in English. Furthermore, we have implemented Dhivehi screen reading for some websites and information, with plans to expand this initiative to include all government websites. Additionally, most government websites now offer three variations of text enlargement features.

* **What are good practices, mechanisms or models for ensuring the that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights in the online space, particularly on online platforms? Are there particular challenges in their implementation or adoption? What additional measures should be developed and implemented?**

As a nation, we are striving to enhance technical capacity to ensure digital accessibility for persons with disabilities, and to raise awareness in the community about the social inclusion of people with disabilities in the digital era. However, we face numerous challenges. One major obstacle is the lack of human resources and technical experts who can advance the vision and goals for digital accessibility in our country. Specifically, universally available open-source software that supports individuals with visual impairments is not easily translated into the local language of Maldives, Dhivehi. Adapting social media and other digital content to Dhivehi requires significant effort and customization.

* **Please provide information about whether specific measures have been taken to ensure accountability and access to remedies for persons with disabilities for violations or abuses of their rights in the digital space.**

The Constitution of the Maldives stipulates the fundamental rights and freedom afforded to all people living in the Maldives. As such, under Article 17(a), everyone including those with mental or physical disability, is entitled to the rights and freedoms included in the Constitution without discrimination of any kind. Article 17(b) stipulates that “special assistance or protection to disadvantaged individuals or groups, or to groups requiring special social assistance, as provided in law shall not be deemed to be discrimination”. In addition, Article 35 (a) and (b) of the Constitution states that children, elderly and disadvantaged persons are entitled to protection and special assistance from the family, the community and the State. Furthermore, Section 1102 (2) (i) of the Penal Code allows baseline sentences to be aggravated at least by one level, for any offences, committed against persons with disabilities.

In 2010, the Maldives enacted its issue specific legislation on the matter; the Disabilities Act (Law No. 08/2010), further reinforcing the constitutional rights. The overall objective of the Disabilities Act is to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities and to provide financial assistance. The State has to ensure that this Act is implemented, and to penalize those found guilty of discriminating against and violating the rights of any person with disability, which would include violations and abuses that take place in the digital space.