**OHCHR workshop on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Closing remarks by the Deputy High Commissioner, Ms. Nada Al-Nashif**

**8 February 2023**

**Closing session 5’ (16:45 – 17:00 CET), Tempus, Palais des Nations**

Excellencies, dear colleagues, panellists,

I am pleased to join the closing session of this workshop, and to convey the deep appreciation of the High Commissioner who engaged with the distinguished panellists at the opening session.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Permanent Missions, experts, civil society members, researchers, UN panellists and all stakeholders who participated in these valuable discussions on further strengthening the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rich and constructive exchange over the past three days will inform the Office in our preparation of the High Commissioner’s vision, as mandated by the Human Rights Council, to operationalise economic social and cultural rights and to reinforce our work in promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights. This report will be submitted to the 54th session of the Human Rights Council this year.

Throughout the meeting, we heard about the risk we run, as a global community, if we fail to put human rights at the centre of prevention efforts, economic policies, the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and in our responses to the global polycrisis. We were also reminded that any progress achieved had to be counterbalanced with the unprecedented backlash against this progress.

We have, however, heard concrete proposals to use human rights to turn this moment into an opportunity. Many of the proposals echo the roadmaps that States already find in human rights treaties, recommendations from monitoring and other mechanisms, such as rich compendium of recommendations that come from the UPR. These included:

* using fiscal policies as a tool for the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights;
* increasing dialogue among and understanding of the international community of the links between debt servicing, fiscal space and human rights obligations;
* a renewed call on the need to ensure the prioritization of comprehensive social protection measures and the provision of universal health coverage;
* and measures to rebalance the chronic underfunding of public goods and services that has characterized recent decades.
* Speakers shared a wealth of evidence on concepts and measurements of poverty applicable in all nations that reflect human rights and dignity. Securing the meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty from the outset and at all stages of poverty eradication efforts, allows national policies/approaches to ensure that the different dimensions of poverty are better understood and addressed as a matter of human rights. The Ambassador of Bolivia reminded us, these are not just numbers/data sets, they have Faces and names and critical roles.

The Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights makes it clear that human rights underpin the work of the entire United Nations System. As the leading human rights entity in the United Nations System, we face a growing demand and interest for specialized and impactful support on economic, social and cultural rights to the United Nations country teams, but we grapple with considerable challenges as we work to deliver on our commitments.

The Human Rights Council’s work on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights, through its preventive mandate by addressing the root causes of conflicts that are often related to the denial of economic, social and cultural rights, discrimination, inequalities and social exclusion, is of vital importance. As the High Commissioner stated, ensuring the realisation of human rights requires more predictable and sustainable investment in the operational capacity of the Office. We welcome the commitment made this morning by Chile and Luxembourg to strengthen the operational capacity of the Office through the next resolution on “human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which is a step in the right direction.

We are grateful for the financial and operational support provided to us thus far, and we look forward to receiving your continued support to enable us to embed more integrated expertise at country and regional levels to enhance our work in this field, the “holistic” approach that Meghna referred to, the imperative of breaking the silos. We have heard a strong call from Member States to strengthen the financial resources for the human rights pillar of the United Nations. The respect, protection and fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights have a crucial role in ensuring an equitable and sustainable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The call was clear: we cannot and must not let the next crisis catch us unprepared.

In this context, we must leverage the comparative advantage of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in supporting Member States, NHRIs, human rights defenders, climate activists and all relevant actors to ensure that we do not go back to business as usual. Instead, we count on your continued support to renew and revitalise our efforts, including through stronger partnerships, so we can focus on advancing the realization of all human rights for everyone, everywhere.

In closing, I would like to once again, thank our panellists and participants for sharing their insights, proposals and advice.

This meeting has demonstrated a strong consensus on the universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependency of all human rights. These are not simply slogans or catch-phrases – they are the defining principles at the heart of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the cornerstone of our quest for development, peace and justice for all.

Thank you.