Closing Remarks

*Thank you Madam Chair*

*Madam Nada Al-Nashif, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights*

*Excellencies and dear colleagues,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for bringing together key stakeholders for an important discussion on the practical ways to further enhance and strengthen the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic, social and cultural rights are an integral part of the international human rights framework leading to stable and inclusive societies. And while it was well-known that economic, social and cultural rights have been constantly underfunded, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its ensuing economic crisis, unraveled the fatality of the current situation, which entails wide array of vulnerabilities, be it the feeble education and health systems, or the prevalence of deep-seated and structural inequalities and discrimination patterns.

Hence, Egypt along with Bolivia, China, Pakistan and South Africa took the initiative last year to introduce a new resolution that aims to figure out how can the Office of the High Commissioner as well as the Human Rights Council learn from the lessons of the pandemic to change the regrettable realities of economic, social and cultural rights in our modern world, and to improve the level of its respect and enjoyment. The current workshop is one of the outputs of that resolution.

This workshop was an exemplary opportunity to have a critical reflection from the countries and experts on the progress, challenges and the future of the economic, social and cultural rights. Now it is the Office turn to build upon all these insights, and share with us its vision, as mandated by resolution 49/19, on how to reinforce its work in this field.

For instance, we look forward that the Office will step up its efforts to assist countries with tailored and context-specific analyses and advice on how to boost investments in health, education and social protection, and how to ensure that the benefits of the economic growth leave no one behind.

Moreover, and instead of the one-sided focus on civil and political rights, we call upon the Office to also applaud and celebrate every step taken by the governments in economic, social and culture rights, and to highlight the best practices, providing a catalyst and an incentive for others to follow the same course. The High commissioner himself has a special role in this regard, and we invite him to consistently and vehemently advocate the protection of these rights, and publicly applaud the achievements.

Furthermore, we need more technical assistance programs to combat tax evasion and illicit financial flows to help countries maximize their available resources to progressively achieve a universally social protection system, or additional programs to develop context-related roadmaps to strengthen the integration of human rights in water and sanitation, within the current global water crisis. Additionally, and in the context of the current global food crisis, the Office needs to guide countries on how to protect the interests of the small-scale farmers, small-scale fishers and informal sector workers.

The mounting calls for the engagement of OHCHR on economic, social and cultural rights demonstrate the importance and relevance of the work of OHCHR. However, the demands admittedly go beyond the capacity of OHCHR to deliver. Hence, it is critical that OHCHR be appropriately supported to effectively engage in the endeavor to strengthen economic, social and cultural rights worldwide.

In conclusion, we are looking forward that the recommendations emanating from this workshop will pave the way for a strengthened engagement of the Office in the field of promoting economic social and cultural rights. And in this regard, I would like to thank all the delegations, civil society representatives and experts for their active participation and constructive engagement during the workshop.

I Thank you!