**Session 5: Strengthening the capacity of OHCHR to operationalize economic, social and cultural rights**

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* Many thanks for the introduction, Ms LEE and for the invitation to participate.
* This has been a very inspiring seminar so far and I am honoured to be able to share a few thoughts on how Luxembourg sees the role of OHCHR in the field of economic, social, and cultural rights.
* Let me start with what should be the obvious. Volker Türk has said this in the beginning, and so have many other speakers over the past two days: human rights are universal and indivisible. Economic, social, and cultural rights are an indispensable part of the edifice of human rights: they need to be at the heart of our efforts to build forward better, if we want to come out of the current poly-crisis. Unfortunately, we are ever more often witnessing a different reality. Let me explain.
* At the same time when we are making enormous normative progress, we are facing unprecedented backlash against this progress: the climate crisis, conflicts, and COVID-19 pandemic are only part of the picture. What is even more troublesome is wilful reversal of human rights progress by those tempted by authoritarian policies through the shrinking of civic space and limited rights of all nature. On the other hand, harsh economic circumstances may also lead to austerity policy approaches with their negative impact on international development cooperation and solidarity when they are most needed effectively to confront the poly-crisis.
* We have heard a lot of criticism against austerity policies these last two days: unfortunately, the austerity mind-set also applies to the behaviour of one or the other donor, and the risk that the UN would suffer from budget cuts is real. We must at all cost make our best efforts that OHCHR and the human rights pillar of the UN are not hit hard by such measures. – In that regard, I hasten to repeat that collectively the European Union and its member states agree on not to lower their humanitarian assistance and official development assistance, even as we are facing additional demands for aid due to global crises and as a consequence of the Russian war in Ukraine.
* In that regard, it is important to remember that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action further strengthen the principle of indivisibility that was already implicit in the Universal Declaration. They also lay the cornerstone for the role of the Office of the High Commissioner. It is therefore a matter of coherence that this Office, that is to ensure respect for all human rights, should have the necessary tools to do so.
* My government is exploring possibilities to give more predictable, multi-annual, core support to the Office and we invite all other member states to do the same. We also need to bridge the gap between Geneva and New York in this regard – the Office should not be forced to rely exclusively on voluntary contributions.
* In the Human Rights Council, my delegation regularly underlines Luxembourg’s commitment to the independence and integrity of the OHCHR and the other Human Rights mechanisms. This requires enhancing the office’s capacities: while I do not want to prejudge Todd Howland’s comments in this regard, I would still like to offer a few thoughts on how to get there.
* On the one hand, the brave, but small team dealing with ESCRs here in Geneva needs to be strengthened: the current multiple anniversaries – UDHR75, VDPA30, but also the 25th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, should provide the right narrative framework to justify the need for greater coherence in how the Office works and what means are at its disposal. The SG’s Call to Action and Our Common Agenda lay out a roadmap for anchoring a new social contract in universal human rights.
* On the other hand, OHCHR’s presence in countries – both in terms of its own field offices and as part of UN Country teams – could benefit very strongly from having personnel that is as competent when it comes to ESCRs as on civil and political rights. The High Commissioner has outlined areas in which they could contribute to building technical capacity for the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights: the need for building political consensus is equally important and perhaps even more urgent.
* In the upcoming 52nd session of the HRC, Luxembourg will present, together with Chile, a resolution on Agenda 2030 and human rights: one part of that resolution will be to call for strengthened capacities for OHCHR to help ensure the post-2030 development programme is anchored in human rights: this will also be a topic for reflection ahead of next year’s Summit for the Future of the Secretary-General.
* Finally, Luxembourg will also continue to advocate for constructive and cooperative approaches under all of the HRC’s agenda items, in particular item 10 on technical cooperation and capacity building, as well as for full access for independent civil society to ensure that the voices of all rights-holders are heard.
* Human rights are rooted in the dignity of the individual, and they can only be enjoyed when implemented and protected collectively. A stronger OHCHR is one way to get there.