

## 44<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

### Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women

#### Panel 1: Accountability for women and girls in humanitarian settings

*Concept note (draft as of 10 June 2020)*

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| <b>Date and venue:</b>           | <b>To be determined</b><br>(will be broadcasted live and archived on <a href="http://webtv.un.org">http://webtv.un.org</a> )   |
| <b>Objectives:</b>               | To look at current challenges, gaps and promising practices with regard to key parameters and types of accountability, and steps for effective strategic partnerships, coordination and funding.   |
| <b>Chair:</b>                    | <b>H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger</b> , President of the Human Rights Council - TBC  |
| <b>Opening statement:</b>        | <b>Ms. Michelle Bachelet</b> , United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - TBC   |
| <b>Moderator:</b>                | <b>TBD</b>   |
| <b>Panellists:</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ms. Sara Hossain</b>, Lawyer, Honorary Executive Director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Bangladesh) - TBC</li><li>• <b>Ms. Enid Muthoni Ndiga</b>, Senior Vice President, Global Legal Program of the Center for Reproductive Rights (Kenya) - TBC</li><li>• <b>TBD</b></li></ul>   |
| <b>Outcome:</b>                  | A summary report on the discussion will be prepared by OHCHR.  |
| <b>Mandate:</b>                  | In its resolution 6/30, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed the principle of gender equality and the need for the full implementation of the human rights of women and decided to hold an annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women. The first panel of the 2020 annual discussion will address accountability for women and girls in humanitarian settings.   |
| <b>Format (to be confirmed):</b> | <p>The total duration of the annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women will be four hours, divided into two panels of two hours each.</p> <p>At this panel, the opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists, the latter guided by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two slots and chaired by the President or Vice-President of the Human Rights Council. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, moderator's introduction, panellists' presentations, their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two slots of interventions from the floor for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).</p> <p>The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).</p> |
| <b>Background:</b>               | <p>Conflicts and disasters are affecting more and more people around the world, with women and girls constituting around 50 per cent of the refugees, displaced and stateless persons. In 2020, nearly 168 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, which represents 1 in about 45 people in the world. This is the highest figure in decades. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, projections of current trends show that more than 212 million people may need humanitarian assistance by 2022. Conflict and climate change as well as widespread and more difficult to control infectious diseases, economic distress and debt problems are the trends that will most likely contribute to increase humanitarian needs in the coming years.</p> <p>While conflicts and disasters affect everyone, they can exacerbate discrimination, gender inequality and intersections preceding the crises, creating additional obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls. In the face of extreme adversity and insecurity, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to, inter alia, further gender-based violence, restrictions on their freedom of movement and participation in political and public life, access to health care, including</p>   |

sexual and reproductive health services, safe water and sanitation, housing, education and food.

Despite the scale and severity of the problems affecting women and girls in humanitarian contexts, ensuring accountability and effective remedies for violations against them is uncommon and even challenging. There are many reasons for this, including the stigmatization and marginalization of victims claiming their rights, lack of knowledge of rights, the collapse of institutions, inadequate State infrastructure, and limited capacity and disruption of services due to the emergency or crisis.

Accountability for violations of the human rights of women and girls in humanitarian contexts has often been limited to the punishment of perpetrators. While this is important, rights-based accountability goes beyond criminal justice and even beyond the courts. Moreover, accountability is not only a response to individual violations, but is essential at all stages of policy design, implementation and monitoring to support systemic change and to establish accountability systems at all levels. Rights-based accountability involves multiple, participatory and transparent forms of monitoring, review and oversight, it places affected populations, especially women and girls, at the centre of all interventions and provides them with effective access to remedies, which may take various forms, for all human rights violations they have suffered. While this approach is primarily concerned with the obligation of States to respect all the rights of individuals, it is also concerned with how the United Nations, human rights and humanitarian actors and donors should plan, design, monitor, implement and evaluate policies and programmes to ensure that no woman and girl is left behind in emergencies and crises. Rights-based accountability involves also genuine engagement of women and girls in identifying and determining needs, priorities for funding and service, processes for access and delivery, and crisis response. They may do so by meaningfully participating in decision-making and expressing their agency in many ways, including as human rights defenders, service providers and first responders, combatants or members of armed groups or resistance movements, environmental activists, survivors and active participants in both formal and informal peace processes.

Recognizing the importance of the need to promote and protect the human rights of people living in humanitarian contexts, the Human Rights Council has devoted its attention to various aspects of human rights in such contexts, including through the adoption of four resolutions. The current panel discussion provides an opportunity to connect these pieces of work and engage in a comprehensive review of accountability for all human rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings. It will be looking at current challenges, gaps and promising practices with regard to key parameters and types of accountability, and steps for effective strategic partnerships, coordination and funding.

**Background documents:**

- [Human Rights Council resolution 6/30](#) (December 2007) on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system
- [Human Rights Council resolution 31/6](#) (March 2016) on the rights of persons with disabilities in situation of risk and humanitarian emergencies
- [Human Rights Council resolution 35/16](#) (June 2017) on child, early and forced marriage in humanitarian settings
- [Human Rights Council resolution 37/20](#) (March 2018) on rights of the child: protection of the rights of the child in humanitarian settings
- [Human Rights Council resolution 39/10](#) (September 2018) on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights in humanitarian settings
- [Human Rights Council report 39/26](#) (June 2018) on the follow-up on the application of the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, [General recommendation No. 30](#) (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations