



The Geneva Centre For Human Rights
Advancement and Global Dialogue
In Special Consultative Status with the Economic
and Social Council of the United Nations



Fifth round of consultations for the long-term efficiency process
of the Human Rights Council

29 November 2018

Statement by
Mr. Blerim Mustafa

Junior Project and Communications Officer

Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am making this statement on behalf of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue and the African Centre Against Torture.

Our group of NGOs welcomes the zero draft PRST on enhancing the long-term efficiency of the Human Rights Council serving as a useful starting-point to increase the value-added of the Human Rights Council in the debate on human rights and to provide a cooperative atmosphere that would be conducive to the fulfilment of the Council's objectives.

On the first track, our group of NGOs wishes to express its support to the recommendations put forward to reduce the number of panel debates and interactive dialogues as well as the time devoted to organize these events during the regular sessions of the Council. This working methodology will allow the Council to save vulnerable time and resources and we therefore align ourselves with the proposals made in this regard.

With regard to point 11 in the zero draft PRST that recommends, *inter alia*, that the duration of individual and clustered interactive dialogues should in "*principle not exceed two and four hours respectively*", our group of NGOs considers that the limit of 2 and 4 hours provides a timespan which often exceeds the current practice except for few special cases which can last longer. Therefore, there would not be much saving of time involved by imposing this generous cap. We support this position with the additional rider that this should not end up becoming a new entitlement for all IDs! As for clustering thematic issues, this coupling only has a meaning if the two issues clustered are closely inter-related. In that case, one could save some more time. But the only real clusters are between closely connected themes. For others, where two unrelated themes are plonked together, we should stop calling them misleadingly "*clusters*".

Our group of NGOs also wishes to remind the Council that the time-saving projected under this item will be futile if the number of Special Procedures Mandate Holders and therefore that of IDs continue to increase unabated. At the time of the creation of the Human Rights Council, there were 40 Special Procedures all told. These numbers have been increasing continuously creating a mere accumulation of SPs rather than a "*system*" as directed by the GA. Indeed, there are now more than 60 IDs every year, not including special investigative missions. Yet, Resolution 60/251, paragraph 6, directs the Council to, *inter alia*, "*where necessary, improve and rationalize all mandates [...] in order to maintain a system of special procedures [...]*."

In order to avoid a situation where the continuing future increase in the number of Special Procedures Mandate Holders takes up the time being saved elsewhere, it is suggested that a moratorium on the creation of new mandates be decided until the Council carries out the belated yet mandated review and rationalisation of thematic Special Procedures Mandate Holders that are now in place.

Lastly, speaking time tends to be considered in this debate as a variable parameter that can always be squeezed down to accommodate the podium or the over-loaded agenda. This could make the Council become a lecturing hall rather than a debating house. We plead that the Council spare to individuals speaking from the floor the indignity of a time-limit of less than two minutes. If time is still insufficient after the completion of the efficiency reviews, something else should be made to give, lest participation, dialogue and the desired cooperation become the flotsam and jetsam of Council sessions.

With regard to the second track, we align ourselves once again with the recommendations made in the zero draft PRST as these proposals will enable the Council to benefit from long-term efficiency gains and increased rationalization of resolutions and initiatives. Our group of NGOs particularly welcomes point 12 that underlines that the process of rationalisation should “*apply to all resolutions as appropriate*” as this would enable all parties to exercise self-restraint in regards to the tabling and adoption of resolutions whether country- or thematic-specific.

Lastly, concerning the third track, our group of NGOs reminds the Council that the proposal to “*ensure the possibility of online room reservation for side events, informal consultations and meetings of groups*” will be harmful to small- and medium-sized NGOs as they do not have the resources and the capacity of larger stakeholders to make their reservations a long time in advance. They will therefore find all rooms are already booked by major stakeholders when they become in a position, to make their own request and to commit the necessary resources. We accordingly reiterate our objections included in our joint position paper presented during the previous consultation session of 15 November and prefer to maintain the system as it currently operates.

However, if the Human Rights Council decides to proceed with the online room reservation system on a trial basis as foreseen in Annex III, we propose that in case of insufficiency of rooms and meeting facilities, there should be a fair rotation/distribution between stakeholders, with equitable representation of smaller- and medium-sized NGOs. This task should be carried out through close coordination between the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council and the NGO Liaison Office Unit of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to thank very warmly the President of the Council Mr. Vojislav Šuc for his laudable efforts in organizing the informal consultation sessions on the long-term efficiency of the Human Rights Council that has allowed us to benefit from a constructive and fruitful debate.

Signatories:

- Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue
- African Centre Against Torture