



## Building Back Better: Integrating Human Rights in Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

### Background

The Human Rights Council's third intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was held virtually on 14 January 2021 (A/HRC/RES/43/19). The theme of the meeting was 'Building back better: Integrating human rights in sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic', with a focus on SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and gender mainstreaming in all 2030 Agenda implementation.

The discussion highlighted the importance of human rights-based recovery measures that address historic, systemic and institutional discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity, among others. The participants called for a whole of society approach and good governance in responding to the pandemic, including access to information, effective public services and transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions. The meeting highlighted that COVID-19 represents a historic opportunity for States to build a 'new social contract', based on human rights and equal opportunities for all. This will require renewed commitment to realizing economic and social rights, shifting away from underinvestment in fundamental public services such as health and social protection and departing from economic policies that exacerbate inequalities within and between States. There was general agreement that the international human rights framework provides the strongest guidance for rebuilding the social contract, addressing the widening socio-economic inequalities at global, regional, national and local levels and achieving the 2030 Agenda. The full report<sup>1</sup> of the meeting constitutes an official input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development for its 2021 session.

Participants included representatives from member states, United Nations and international human rights mechanisms, National Human Rights Institutions, academia and non-governmental organizations, including over 1100 online viewers. Opening remarks were delivered by the Chair of the meeting, H.E. Sek Wannamethee, together with the Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, H.E. Keva Bain and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris. The Minister of Health and Social Welfare of Kerala State, India, Ms. K. K. Shailaja, gave the keynote statement. The thematic session included the following panellists: Ms. Carolina Ferreira, Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation; Ms. Dominique Day, UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent; Mr. Tauriq Jenkins and Ms. Francina Nkosi, South African civil society organisation C19 People's Coalition and Ms. Francoise Jacob, Resident Coordinator of the UN Country Team in Serbia.

### Thematic focus of the discussion



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/ThirdSession/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_48.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/ThirdSession/A_HRC_46_48.docx)





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### Conclusions and key messages emerging from the discussions:

1. States' delivery on their human rights obligations is paramount to recovering better from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving the 2030 Agenda.
2. COVID-19 represents a historic opportunity for States to build a 'new social contract', based on human rights.
3. Any restrictions on human rights must be necessary, proportionate, temporary, non-discriminatory and in compliance with State's obligations under international law.
4. State should allocate the maximum resources available to progressively realize economic, social and cultural rights, prioritising the most marginalised.
5. States should step up human rights based budgeting, curb inequalities and achieve greater alignment of economic and fiscal policies with human rights obligations.
6. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to recovery; inequalities between States should be taken into consideration, including issues of debt sustainability and international trade.
7. Equitable non-discriminatory distribution of vaccines within and between States is crucial for effective recovery.
8. Increase investment in human rights monitoring and in disaggregated data collection and analyses to make the invisible visible and to ensure that no one is left behind in COVID-19 response and recovery.
9. Strengthen national statistical offices (NSO) and adopt a human rights-based approach to data collection and analysis by fostering cooperation between NSOs and NHRIs in the design and monitoring of COVID-19 recovery strategies.
10. Recovery strategies must be gender responsive, non-discriminatory and seek to end all forms of violence against women and girls.
11. Revoke policies that perpetuate racial disparities and exclude people of African descent.
12. For a whole of society approach to recovery, it is important to include grassroots groups, community based and women's organisations, NHRIs, private sector and media, among others.
13. Measures are needed to widen civic space for meaningful engagement of civil society in political, economic and social life.
14. Ensure access to information, build transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions and effective public services.
15. The UN development system reform and the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights should be maximized for COVID-19 recovery in support of a 'new social contract'.
16. The UN Human Rights Council should continue to leverage synergies between human rights and the 2030 Agenda, including in the context of COVID-19 and with regular engagement with the HLPF and ECOSOC. HLPF discussions and processes should engage the UN Independent Experts and integrate recommendations issued by the UN human rights mechanisms.

