In response to the call for inputs of ISHR, Lithuania would like to provide the following information:

**Questions from Human Rights Council Elections Pledging Event 2021**

**Questions posed to all candidate States:**

**Question No. 1**

Our Vice-Minister Mantas Adomėnas said during Human Rights Council Elections Pledging Event 2021:*“The principle “No one should be left behind, and no human right ignored” is on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Lithuania promotes and protects it in our country (program of government), region (Baltic states, NB8, EU, Council of Europe), and beyond. We continue to cherish the values of human rights and dignity taking into consideration the expectations of every individual and making appropriate decisions.”*

UN Human Rights Council inspires us to work on protecting human rights, identifying vulnerabilities, and addressing them. Lithuania is ready to use its experience and international expertise in the field of human rights and to join the UN Human Rights Council community as a full-fledged member.

**Question No. 2**

The Vice-Minister Mantas Adomėnas had stated in Human Rights Council Elections Pledging Event 2021: *“Strong civil society is of great importance. Lithuania will do everything to ensure a greater inclusion of civil society in Council’s work. Lithuania pledges to cooperate with non-governmental organisations actively on the issues of human rights and to encourage a regular dialogue of governments and the Council with civil society and human rights defenders. Lithuania supports a well-functioning multilateral system, where the voices of civil society, the private sector, social partners and other key stakeholders count.”*

**Question No. 3**

Yes, Lithuania will you support allowing accredited NGO representatives to participate in UN headquarters activities in line with all UN guidelines and restrictions like other UN stakeholders.

**Question No. 4**

Lithuania is a signatory to the ACT CODE of Conduct and takes part in the Steering Group of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points that facilitates the implementation of the responsibility to protect across all three pillars to strengthen atrocity prevention at the national, regional and international level. We believe that the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms have a crucial role to play in the prevention of atrocity crimes and encourage others to use their R2P Focal Point in the UPR process and welcome further exchanges on this matter. Lithuania will team up with all those who support democracy, access to justice and accountability.

**Question No. 5**

Yes, we would reverse these trends and maximize the opportunities for civil society to participate in the meetings of the Human Rights Council. Strong civil society is of great importance. Lithuania will do everything to ensure a greater inclusion of civil society in Council’s work.

**Question No. 6**

We are ready for work with the governments to find common response to the current challenging issues and to improve access to healthcare for low-income individuals.

We will seek to ensure that the Human Rights Council acts more efficiently, addresses relevant thematic rights and country situations effectively and credibly, and ensures synergies with other multilateral human rights fora.We will stand up against any attempt to backtrack on the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

Lithuania will actively respond to new threats arising to human rights in the areas of climate change, global health emergencies, migration and others. We will engage with other states in looking for joint solutions to overcome these challenges. Natural disasters caused by climate change, poverty that still exists, social, economic and other kind of exclusion that we witness in different parts of the world, creates a ground for social and political tensions. The pandemic has also badly affected our lives. All these challenges cannot serve as an excuse for overlooking severe violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and threats to democracy.

**Question No. 7**

We will continue to engage constructively on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance worldwide in order to ensure full and effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

It is important to secure the freedom of religion and belief as important element of democracy. We are deeply concerned at continuing acts of intolerance and violence based on religion or belief against individuals, including persons belonging to religious communities and religious minorities around the world. States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights, including the human rights of persons belonging to religious minorities, including their right to exercise their religion or belief freely.

**Questions posed and answered during the event**

**Question No. 1**

Lithuania is a state party to major human rights treaties. A lot of attention is given to progress on the implementation of the recommendations addressed to Lithuania during the universal periodic review and other United Nations human rights protection mechanisms.

The principle “No one should be left behind, and no human right ignored” is on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Lithuania promotes and protects it in our country (program of government), region (Baltic states, NB8, EU, Council of Europe), and beyond. We continue to cherish the values of human rights and dignity taking into consideration the expectations of every individual and making appropriate decisions. Legalization of same-sex civil union (also known as a civil partnership) is going to be discussed at the end of this year in the Parliament.

There is no so-called propaganda law & work to advancing LGBTI+ rights in Lithuania. There is the Law on the protection of minors against the detrimental effect of public information. It was adopted in 2002 and amended lately in order to define the criteria for public information that has a negative impact on the mental health, physical, mental or moral development of minors, the rights, duties and responsibilities of journalists and the institutions supervising their activities. For example, information that has a negative impact on minors includes bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation or other similar grounds.

There is a provision in this Law that may rises some doubts: information that has a negative impact on minors includes information that despises family values, promotes a different concept of marriage and family formation than it is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania. But in 2019 Constructional Court decided that the concept of family is gender neutral in Lithuania and of cause our Constitution also prohibits all the grounds of discrimination including sexual orientation. I know that in practice, the mentioned Law provision may raise some questions and there are some complains under the consideration in the courts. We will make necessary measures if necessary to implement the decisions of courts.

**Question No. 2**

Lithuania has paid a particular emphasis on protection of children.

Due to the pandemic, worldwide school closures sent tens of millions of children home. Millions do not have access to digital or broadcast remote learning opportunities, lack food and health services, including access to vaccines against other diseases. In addition, there has been a significant increase in domestic violence against children.

Lithuania pledges to encourage a better implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocols seeking to achieve that the rights of the child should be comprehensively protected and children should be safe in all circumstances of their life and should not experience violence, bullying or abuse.

Currently, during this particularly difficult time, Lithuania is holding the Presidency of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Board. Lithuania's Presidency focuses on protecting children’s rights and well-being, mitigating the negative consequences of COVID-19 on children worldwide, as well as distance learning, the use of new technology and innovations to promote children’s well-being, the prevention of bullying, keeping children safe in cyberspace, and ensuring equal opportunities for girls and children with disabilities.

Lithuania was elected as a member of the UNICEF Executive Board for a three-year term in 2019 and will hold Presidency for one-year term.

**Question No. 3**

Lithuania will pursue to achieve that human rights defenders and all those who defend freedoms and rights could carry out their activities unimpeded. Lithuania pledges to encourage governments to fulfil their international commitments to protect and promote human rights and to defend victims of human rights violations and abuses.

Strong civil society is of great importance. Lithuania will do everything to ensure a greater inclusion of civil society in Council’s work. Lithuania pledges to cooperate with non-governmental organisations actively on the issues of human rights and to encourage a regular dialogue of governments and the Council with civil society and human rights defenders. Lithuania supports a well-functioning multilateral system, where the voices of civil society, the private sector, social partners and other key stakeholders count.

The shrinking civil society, growing number of political prisoners, and persecution of opposition activists and human rights defenders in Russia and Belarus are of great concern for us. Lithuania is supporting civil society in those countries, for example, Lithuania has been supporting Belarusian civil society for a long time and particularly during the current serious political crisis in Belarus. We have given refuge to prosecuted Belarussian activists. Vilnius-based Belarusian opposition figure Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and her team were accredited as the Democratic Representation of Belarus in Lithuania in July this year. Lithuania is a strong advocate of EU-wide sanctions against members of the Lukashenko regime, responsible for systemic serious human rights violations committed by Belarusian authorities in the context of the fraudulent elections of August 2020. In retaliation for the support to the Belarusian people struggling for freedom, and for the EU sanctions now we face the hybrid attack and instrumentalisation of migrants by the Lukashenka regime, aiming to exert political pressure on Lithuania and the European Union.