

Ms. Dragana Šćepanović

Deputy Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations in New York

H.E. Ms. Slavica Milačić

Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations in Geneva

29th September, 2021

Your Excellencies,

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

On 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021, Amnesty International and the International Service for Human Rights held an online pledging event for candidate States to the Human Rights Council for the membership term 2022-2024.

This year's event had over 200 online attendees and an overwhelming number of questions posed to candidates, providing an opportunity for candidates to present their visions for membership and to engage with a range of stakeholders on their human rights commitments and pledges.

We thank you for your participation in the event. With the goal of furthering dialogue, as well as improving adherence to Council membership standards and accountability, as articulated in UN General Assembly resolution 60/251, please find below the questions addressed specifically to Montenegro as well as questions for all candidate States.

The questions, as well as your responses, will be shared on ISHR's website. We request that you please send your responses to Maithili Pai at [m.pai@ishr.ch](mailto:m.pai@ishr.ch) by 8th October 2021.

#### **Questions posed to all candidate States:**

1. *Outright International*: The Human Rights Council continues to be a vital resource for LGBTI communities to bring visibility to the human rights violations they face based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. However, questions related to LGBTI persons are also unfortunately highly politicized at the Council. How would the candidates present today ensure that politics does not get in the way of promoting and protecting the human rights of LGBTI persons?
2. *CIVICUS*: What are the steps you will take to ensure full NGO participation in the Council, its mechanisms and resolutions, and to engage with national and international civil society as a Council member?
3. *Human Rights Watch*: NGOs have been banned from UN headquarters since March 2020. Although UN employees, diplomats & media representatives (resident correspondents) can now enter UN headquarters (with restrictions), NGOs remain under a total ban. What will you do to ensure

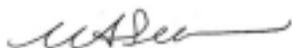
COVID-19 isn't used as a convenient excuse for those who are not fans of civil society to bar NGOs from UN headquarters? Will you support allowing accredited NGO representatives to participate in UN headquarters activities in line with all UN guidelines and restrictions like other UN stakeholders?

4. *Child Rights Connect*: What are your plans to mainstream and advance child rights at the Human Rights Council?
5. *Permanent Mission of the Principality of Liechtenstein to the United Nations*: Ensuring accountability for human rights violations should be a priority for all States, especially Human Rights Council members. The support of the ACT Code of Conduct is an important factor for Liechtenstein's support of a candidature, in addition to its human rights record, pledges and commitments. To what extent are you prioritising strengthening accountability and supporting the ACT Code of Conduct?
6. *Genoveva Sotirova (Twitter user)*: What are your plans in order to improve access to healthcare to low-income individuals?
7. *Genoveva Sotirova (Twitter user)*: What is your plan to promote the right of access to education of Muslim and Roma women refugees?

#### **Questions posed and answered during the event:**

1. *Legal Informational Center for NGOs*: Could you please outline how you engage with independent civil society to formulate your human rights priorities and pledges and how you plan to ensure that the invaluable views of society inform your position at the Human Rights Council, particularly with respect to communities and groups facing discrimination?
2. *Eric Richardson*: What is your position on the participation of civil society in the meetings and informal negotiations of the Council? During COVID, civil society's participation has been severely restricted, more so than at any other time in the Council's history. Links for informal negotiations which take place online are not publicly posted, NGOs are not permitted to enter the plenary room unless they are giving a speech, and during the recent Special Session on Afghanistan, there were time periods where no civil society was present due to the webcast shutting down and the ban on civil society's attendance in person. If elected, would you reverse these trends and maximize the opportunities for civil society to participate in all meetings of the Human Rights Council?
3. *Outright International*: The Human Rights Council continues to be a vital resource for LGBTI communities to bring visibility to the human rights violations they face based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. However, questions related to LGBTI persons are also unfortunately highly politicized at the Council. How would the candidates present today ensure that politics does not get in the way of promoting and protecting the human rights of LGBTI persons?

We look forward to hearing from you.



Madeleine Sinclair

New York Office Director & Legal Counsel

International Service for Human Rights

[m.sinclair@ishr.ch](mailto:m.sinclair@ishr.ch)