

## Statement delivered at Organisational Session – December 6<sup>th</sup> 2021

As observers of the Human Rights Council, we [have consistently raised our concerns](#) that the PRSTs of [2019](#) and [2020](#), coupled with COVID-19 measures, have heavily restricted civil society participation.

We remain deeply concerned about the renewal of these measures. We also regret the lack of broad and effective consultation with civil society in this process.

The drive for expediency leading to the renewal of ‘efficiency’ measures obstructs broad and diverse participation. The chronic underfunding of the Secretariat increases this exclusion. The HRC must prioritise human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, accountability, participation, accessibility and access to information, rather than “efficiency”.

We reiterate our calls on the HRC to:

1. Reinstate General Debates in all June sessions.
2. Remove the de facto cap on video participation during General Debates.
3. Maintain the possibility for NGOs to engage remotely with the Council even after easing COVID-19 related measures. This is critical to ensure the HRC is accessible and informed by rights holders and defenders at the national level.

We urge the HRC President and Bureau to prioritise safeguarding civil society participation and in this regard ask: **how does the incoming HRC President and Bureau plan to address civil society’s concerns next year?**

Madame President Khan,

We appreciate your commitment to civil society participation at the Council. We regret, however, the increase in the incidence and severity of cases of **reprisals and intimidation**. This is the primary responsibility of States but the President and Bureau also have a role and duties in this regard. We call on the President to actively follow up on allegations, maintain a publicly accessible register of cases on the extranet, including allegation letters if victims consent, and documentation of any other actions taken, , and present a summary of cases – including action taken and the status of the case – at every session. When the response of the State concerned is insufficient, we request that the case be brought formally to the Council’s attention for action.

ISHR appreciates the Council’s work to address issues of systemic racism. Madam President, we urge you to appoint the three independent experts on racial justice and law enforcement pursuant to HRC Resolution 47/21 before the end of your term.

As you finish your mandate, ISHR thanks you for your leadership, commitment and accessibility, ensuring the Council continued its vital work during the COVID-19 pandemic.