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Promotion and protection of human rights

Implementation of human rights instruments

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their thirty-third annual meeting, held from 7 to 11 June 2021, pursuant to Assembly resolution [57/202](#). The meeting was held online owing to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

* [A/76/150](#).



Report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their thirty-third annual meeting

Summary

The present report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their thirty-third annual meeting, held online from 7 to 11 June 2021, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [57/202](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit the reports of the Chairs of the treaty bodies on their periodic meetings, convened annually pursuant to Assembly resolution [49/178](#). The meeting was held online owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which prevented the Chairs from holding an in-person meeting. The Chairs discussed the most pressing agenda items only, owing to the challenges posed by online meetings, which included limited meeting time with simultaneous interpretation. They focused their discussions on the review by the Assembly of the human rights treaty body system in 2020, and working methods and tools in relation to COVID-19.

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I. Introduction

1. The thirty-third annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies was held online from 7 to 11 June 2021, with limited simultaneous interpretation provided for two hours a day at the Palais des Nations, in room XVI. The Chairs held five formal meetings, one of which was public and four of which were private. The public meeting was webcast on the United Nations Web TV website. The meeting was convened online owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which prevented the Chairs from holding an in-person meeting. Owing to the limited online meeting time during which simultaneous interpretation was available, the Chairs will re-convene online in the coming months to deal with the agenda items that there was no time to consider.
2. The meetings of the Chairs are convened annually pursuant to General Assembly resolution [49/178](#).
3. In paragraph 38 of its resolution [68/268](#), the General Assembly encouraged the human rights treaty bodies, with a view to accelerating the harmonization of the treaty body system, to continue to enhance the role of their Chairs in relation to procedural matters, including with respect to formulating conclusions on issues related to working methods and procedural matters, promptly generalizing good practices and methodologies among all treaty bodies, ensuring coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods.
4. The annual meeting of the Chairs is a forum for the exchange of information, including the maintenance of communications and dialogue among the Chairs on common issues and challenges.¹
5. The following documents served as background to the meeting:
 - (a) Provisional agenda and annotations ([HRI/MC/2021/1](#));
 - (b) Note by the Secretariat on mapping the practices of treaty bodies on intimidation and reprisals and identifying issues that need further action by the Chairs ([HRI/MC/2021/2](#) and [HRI/MC/2021/2/Corr.1](#));
 - (c) Note by the Secretariat on compliance by States parties with their reporting obligations to international human rights treaty bodies (see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/AnnualMeeting/Pages/MeetingChairpersons.aspx);
 - (d) Report of the informal working group on COVID-19 (annex II).

II. Organization of the meeting

6. The meeting was attended by the following Chairs of human rights treaty bodies: Gladys Acosta Vargas, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Mohammed Ayat, Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances; Claude Heller, Acting Chair of the Committee against Torture; Suzanne Jabbour, Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Rosemary Kayess, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Mikiko Otani, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; Photini Pazartzis, Chair of the Human Rights Committee; Can Ünver, Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All

¹ The meeting of the Chairs of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies was first called for by the General Assembly in its resolution [38/117](#). The Assembly, in its resolution [57/202](#), requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly the reports of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their periodic meetings.

Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; Yanduan Li, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and Renato Zerbini Ribeiro Leão, Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

7. Ms. Kayess was elected by acclamation the Chair of the thirty-third annual meeting, and Mr. Ünver was elected Vice-Chair on the basis of the established principle of rotation.

8. The Chair expressed her gratitude to the Chairs for their trust and her sincere appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Mr. Pedernera Reyna, for his commitment and leadership during an extraordinary year and for his warm-hearted support.

9. In his opening remarks, the Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) congratulated the new Chair, Ms. Kayess, the new Vice-Chair, Mr. Ünver, and the six new Chairs on their election. He thanked Mr. Pedernera Reyna, Chair of the thirty-second meeting, for his leadership and commitment. He expressed his appreciation to the Committees for their extraordinary work, resilience, flexibility and efficiency in delivering the Committees' mandates to the largest extent possible, while always keeping rights holders at the top of the priorities.

10. The Director acknowledged the technical and operational challenges faced by the treaty bodies in discharging their mandates remotely, which included time differences, Internet connectivity problems, the absence of honorarium or compensation for time spent working online, the limited availability of simultaneous interpretation, and the lack of full accessibility of online platforms and reasonable accommodation for experts with disabilities. Referring to the growing backlog, he stated that it was essential to resume in person-meetings of treaty bodies as soon as possible in order to review States parties whose reviews had been postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to resume the visits of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture as soon as possible. The Director highlighted that the thirty-third meeting provided a timely and crucial opportunity to discuss the strategies following the 2020 review of the treaty body system, which was a priority for the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

11. The Director also acknowledged the positive leadership role of the Chairs concerning the issues to be discussed during the meeting, namely: (a) a predictable calendar of review cycles that is coherent, maximizes synergies, ensures complementarity among treaty bodies and avoids unnecessary repetition, including the proposal to replace every second review with a focused review to ensure that full reporting compliance is achievable; (b) the introduction of more rationalized, harmonized and modern working methods; and (c) increasing the efficiency, transparency and accessibility of the system through new technological developments.

12. In her opening remarks, the Chair highlighted that, against the backdrop of the 2020 treaty body review, the treaty body system was evolving at a particularly difficult time owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had made discharging the respective mandates of the treaty bodies very difficult despite the best efforts and the tireless work of the experts and the secretariat. She encouraged the Chairs to consider collectively how to build back better a stronger treaty body system once the pandemic was over. She recalled that the objective of the meeting, as agreed at the informal preparatory meeting of the Chairs on 11 May 2021, was to articulate a detailed plan of action and translate into specific modalities the Chairs' position agreed on 28 June 2019 at the thirty-first meeting of the Chairs and their written contribution to the co-facilitators on the 2020 review, agreed on 30 July 2020 at the thirty-second meeting of the Chairs. She recalled that, at their preparatory meeting, the Chairs had

established a drafting group² tasked with proposing models and elements for the predictable review calendar, harmonized working methods and digital tools. She highlighted that the drafting group was not a decision-making body and the opinions of the experts in the non-paper were expressed in their personal capacity, as the proposals had not been discussed within the respective treaty bodies.

13. The Chair acknowledged that the Chairs had received a joint letter from 46 States dated 2 June 2021 and a letter from the Group of African States dated 8 June 2021. The Chair also acknowledged the joint letter from 54 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dated 3 June 2021.

14. The Chair also reminded the Chairs that, at their preparatory meeting, they had agreed to discuss the current state of play, including the financial situation of treaty bodies, and the resumption of in-person meetings as soon as travel restrictions eased. She stated that she looked forward to the interaction with the rapporteur of the informal working group on COVID-19 established by the Chairs at the thirty-second meeting (para. 30, [A/75/346](#)).

15. In preliminary remarks, the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child recalled that the common position of the Chairs adopted at the thirty-first meeting in 2019 ([A/74/256](#), annex III) was based on wider consultations with all treaty body members, conducted through a questionnaire and facilitated by the focal points for the 2020 review in each of the 10 treaty bodies. She referred to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented treaty body members from being fully informed of the status of the 2020 review, and its significant impact on the future of treaty body functioning. She highlighted that any outcomes of the thirty-third meeting should provide the basis for continuing discussion and consultation with treaty body members and other stakeholders, including the pilot project on focused reviews prepared by civil society organizations.

16. The Chairs adopted the provisional agenda and the programme of work of the meeting (see annex I).

III. Summary of the discussions

A. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020

Exchanges with non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders

17. At the opening of the meeting, representatives of NGOs and other stakeholders made statements on the main focus of the meeting, namely, the General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.

18. Representatives of TB-Net, the Centre for Civil and Political Rights, the International Service for Human Rights, Amnesty International, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (Geneva Academy) and the

² The drafting group met on three occasions, on 26 May, 31 May and 3 June 2021 for up to one and a half hours in each case. The drafting group, in which each member participated in his or her personal capacity, agreed to prepare proposals on the way forward for the Chairs to consider, not only in response to the current pandemic context but also bearing in mind the long-term sustainability of treaty bodies and shaping the future of treaty bodies. The drafting group was composed of Mr. Ayat, who attended the first meeting and was then replaced by Mr. de Frouville (Committee on Enforced Disappearances), Ms. Otani (Committee on the Rights of the Child), Ms. Pazartzis (Human Rights Committee), Ms. Sveaass (Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture), Ms. Gbedemah (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) and Ms. Kayess (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Mr. Botero Navarro (Committee on Migrant Workers) was not able to attend the three meetings.

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights made statements. They focused on the challenges of ensuring wider civil society participation in online meetings, including the lack of predictability in the programme and modalities. Several representatives highlighted the need to have advance information or standard guidelines on civil society participation in Chairs' meetings, including a concrete indication as to how such participation contributed to the objectives or outcomes of the meeting. More generally, several representatives raised the need to share adequate and timely information about the modalities of forthcoming sessions to ensure full, meaningful and safe civil society engagement, with flexibility and inclusivity, and to ensure transparency and predictability in the process.

19. Several representatives of NGOs encouraged the Chairs to adopt a fixed and coordinated calendar of reviews by all Committees, in accordance with the joint proposals developed after a series of consultations with civil society organizations at the national, regional and international levels, in connection with the co-facilitation process on the 2020 review. It was highlighted that TB-Net and the Geneva Academy were planning to pilot focused reviews with States in 2021.

20. An NGO representative highlighted that, while the use of online reviews by treaty bodies to avoid a protection gap during COVID-19 was a welcome development, there needed to be a balanced regional approach for those States undergoing online reviews.

21. The Chair thanked the NGOs and other stakeholders for their contributions and assured them that all their proposals and recommendations were carefully considered. She stated that the meeting was part of the ongoing consultation process.

Update on the financial situation

22. The Acting Chief of Programme Support and Management Services of OHCHR, updated the Chairs on the financial situation and the budgetary outlook for 2022.

23. The Chair listed the main challenges faced by treaty body experts over the past year, when in-person meetings could not take place. They included the lack of honorarium for performing online work, the challenges of working from different time zones, limited accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to the online platforms, the cost to members with disabilities of employing personal assistants, and interpretation that was limited to two hours per day. She also addressed adequate financing of the treaty body system, the need to prepare for the resumption of in-person meetings and in situ visits of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, and the increasing backlogs in both State party reviews and individual communications.

24. The Acting Chief of Programme Support and Management Services provided an update on the regular budget allocation of OHCHR for treaty bodies. He stated that, in 2021, OHCHR had received 100 per cent of the approved allocation, whereas in 2020, it had only received 90 per cent of the approved budget. He noted that, owing to the lack of in-person meetings of treaty bodies, there was low or no expenditure in terms of travel and daily subsistence allowance. He underlined that the challenge was to plan how to spend the funds for the rest of the year.

25. In relation to reasonable accommodation for experts with disabilities, he recalled that experts were entitled to a daily subsistence allowance only when they travelled. OHCHR had requested practical guidance from colleagues in New York to determine how to make disbursements for reasonable accommodation costs incurred by experts. He highlighted that there was no practical guidance and methodology on how to pay for the time and work of personal assistants of experts with disabilities working remotely. He confirmed that OHCHR had put in place a procedure whereby

the cost of employing personal assistants could be reimbursed subject to the provision of proof of payment or the submission of receipts.

26. As to the resumption of in-person meetings, he stressed that OHCHR had funding for the resumption of in-person meetings and in situ visits of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, which were subject to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

27. Several Chairs expressed their appreciation for the information provided and asked for detailed information on budget allocation, including on the prospects for redeploying unused parts of the 2021 budget relating to treaty body travel and daily subsistence allowance to identified priorities, such as the development of online tools, improved webpages and financial compensation of experts.

28. In relation to budget allocation and redeployment, the Acting Chief of Programme Support and Management Services clarified that regular budget resources were allocated on an annual basis. Any unspent budget was returned, to be used in the following year. There was no method for using such so-called savings for purposes other than those set out in the approved budget. In 2020, OHCHR had spent the budget received in full (\$105 million received of \$114.5 million budgeted), with no savings.

29. Regarding the honorarium for the online work carried out by experts, the Acting Chief of Programme Support and Management Services clarified that the current rules and regulations provided that treaty body experts were entitled to a daily subsistence allowance only when they travelled. The rules did not provide for any honorarium as part of the engagement in their capacity as members of treaty bodies and any change to the current entitlements would need to be made in New York.

30. The Acting Chief of Programme Support and Management Services clarified that the issue of honorarium fell within the competence of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Further, he stated that the rules applicable to consultants and participants in meetings did not apply to treaty body experts, as the latter were governed by different rules. He explained that OHCHR had approached the Controller in 2020, which had resulted in a one-off payment on an exceptional basis that had been paid at the end of 2020 from the regular budget. The General Assembly would ultimately be the body approving any changes to the current rules.

31. Regarding reallocation between different budget lines, he underlined that OHCHR could not move resources between staff and non-staff budget lines. He confirmed that the concept note on digitalization of the work of OHCHR and the specific needs of treaty bodies would be presented to Member States as a fundraising proposal. Regarding the lack of human resources to support treaty body work, he confirmed that the budget ceiling was subject to a zero-growth limit, while OHCHR had been continuously asked to support the approved mandates. OHCHR had requested 14 posts to support treaty body work in the 2021 proposed programme budget, but had received 4, which were subject to a 50 per cent vacancy rate.

32. The Chairs shared their experiences of working online and explained how it had hampered the delivery of their mandates. They also underlined that, while the treaty bodies had carried out many activities online during the COVID-19 period, some mandated activities could not be pursued remotely. The Chairs also stressed the need for timely information as to when in-person meetings could resume.

33. The secretariat clarified that it was necessary to assess whether COVID-19 restrictions permitted the holding of in-person meetings and that decisions as to whether in-person meetings could take place were taken two months prior to the beginning of the sessions. For that reason, it was not possible to inform all treaty body experts at the same time, as assessment and decision-making was an ongoing process, and the COVID-19 pandemic was unpredictable. However, information would be

shared on a regular basis as it became available, including through the weekly update sent to all treaty body experts.

34. The Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch of OHCHR clarified that budgetary needs should be assessed following the discussion of the Chairs on the three issues: a predictable schedule of reviews, harmonized working methods and digital tools post-COVID-19.

Exchanges on the issues of a predictable schedule of reviews, harmonized working methods and digital tools post-COVID-19

35. The Chair facilitated the Chairs' discussion of the General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020, based on a background non-paper prepared by the drafting group with the aim of summarizing, on a non-exhaustive and non-binding basis, the exchanges within the drafting group on the issues of the predictable calendar, working methods and digital shift.

36. The Chair presented the non-paper. She stated that each member of the drafting group had participated in his or her personal capacity and agreed to prepare proposals on the way forward for the Chairs to consider, not only in response to the current pandemic but also with respect to the long-term sustainability of the treaty bodies and shaping the future of treaty bodies.

37. She recalled that the drafting group was not a decision-making body and, while it built on proposals that had been discussed previously, the non-paper had not been the subject of prior consultations with the wider Committee membership. The non-paper was used as background for further discussion by the Chairs.

38. In introductory remarks, the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child recalled the mandate and objective of the drafting group, according to which it would provide the Chairs with a detailed plan of action and prepare proposals in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted however that the drafting group's framework proposal included mere parameters without a detailed plan or a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, while such parameters required a wider discussion with Committee members and the necessary budgetary measures. She therefore suggested that Chairs focused their discussions on the detailed action plan such as the process and timeline for the wider consultation, leaving the elements of the non-paper for further consultation.

39. Concerns regarding the budgetary situation were echoed by other Chairs, and the Chair proposed to address the short-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic under agenda item and the longer-term vision for the treaty body system under agenda item 3.

A predictable schedule of reviews

40. The Chairs agreed that it was preferable to have one schedule of reviews for all treaty bodies and a predictable review periodicity (while taking into account the respective mandates of the Covenant Committees and the Convention Committees, in particular the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture). States and other stakeholders had been requesting and were strongly expecting enhanced harmonization, efficiency and predictability.

41. With reference to the proposal concerning the five-year predictable review cycle, a number of Chairs recalled the existing four-year or five-year reporting cycle of several Committees and suggested that those cycles should not be changed. The Chair of the Committee against Torture highlighted the importance of having a periodic calendar of treaty bodies that would take into account the activities of the Human Rights Council and special procedure mandate holders. The Chair of the

Human Rights Committee recalled that that Committee had already adopted an eight-year cycle with a follow-up procedure in the middle of the cycle, which did not, however, take place in situ. While appreciating the clarification from the Chair on the common five-year review cycle rationale, including the fact that one year was needed for the preparation of the actual review and translation of the report, it was the view of the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child that adding one more year for that reason would mean a six-year review cycle for the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as the reporting cycle was five years. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child referred to the joint submission of TB-Net, in which the civil society organization had strongly recommended a predictable cycle of four years, in line with the Chairs' common position, adopted in 2019, that "the Convention Committees will review countries on a four-year cycle, unless the provisions of a particular Convention provide otherwise". It was therefore suggested that further discussion was needed if Chairs wished to depart from the Chairs' original proposal. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child suggested looking at the necessity or feasibility of the common five-year review cycle for all Convention Committees, in light of the different reporting cycles of four-year and five-year periodicity under the relevant Conventions.

42. The Chair proposed a five-year cycle as a common departure point for the predictable schedule of reviews. She clarified that there was a need to distinguish between the review cycle and reporting periods. The reporting periods would not change by scheduling reviews of States parties at regular intervals. She acknowledged the commitment of the Human Rights Committee to an eight-year review cycle, but she also noted that that commitment had not been implemented in practice owing to the pandemic. In summary, the proposal put forward in the non-paper was to alternate full and focused reviews over a five-year cycle. While acknowledging the initial complexity of putting together a common schedule, she noted that that would be outweighed by the added value of synergies and complementarity.

43. Several Chairs underlined the importance of a sustainable budget proposal, which included the necessary human resources for the secretariat supporting the treaty bodies in order to ensure that the predictable schedule of reviews was realistic. In this connection, several Chairs proposed including the language on a predictable, adequate and sustainable budget for treaty bodies to carry out any model proposed by the Chairs, including sufficient human resources at the secretariat, as such reflection was lacking in the non-paper of the drafting group.

44. The Chair supported the inclusion of the language on adequate and sustainable budgeting for implementation of any of the parameters set out in the final recommendations or proposal. She further highlighted the need for a more concrete framework of predictability of cycles supported by enhanced working methods and procedures, as that would enable OHCHR to forecast any necessary financial and human resources. She noted that, by acting in good faith and in a cooperative manner with the States supportive of the treaty body strengthening process, the Chairs had a unique opportunity to put forward a proposal that could be costed as a way forward. She noted that the proposal would not prescribe a particular level of discussion within the respective treaty bodies; however, she highlighted that it was the role and within the power of the Chairs to make a proposal on the issue of alternating between full and focused reviews for further consideration and wider consultation, including with all relevant stakeholders.

45. The Chairs of the Committee against Torture and the Committee on Migrant Workers stressed that, in addition to the budgetary implications, the issue of the backlog in State party reviews and individual communications should be addressed as part of the discussion on the predictable review cycle. The Chair of the Committee on Migrant Workers commented on the wording "maximizing synergies" in the

non-paper of the drafting group, and suggested that treaty bodies work in chambers, have more country rapporteurs, work more closely with the secretariat during the intersessional period and concentrate on the most urgent issues. He also referred to the wording “reducing the reporting burden” and emphasized that it was necessary to harmonize the work and engage with other Chairs and treaty body experts.

46. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child recalled the process the Chairs had followed in the run-up to the 2020 review, whereby focal points in each Committee had been appointed to provide input and liaise with the Chairs. She argued that the outcome of the thirty-second meeting lacked that type of consultative and participatory process, relayed concerns expressed by some members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child about the outcome of the thirty-third meeting, and made reference to paragraph 17 of the Poznan Statement.

47. In the view of the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, some aspects of the proposal to alternate between full and focused reviews were unclear, including the possibility and practicality of in-person and in situ visits for focused reviews conducted by two to three treaty body members, and the timing of such visits within sessions or intersessionally. She also underlined the complexity of scheduling the reviews and the visits, in particular whether the same members should visit more than one State and whether reviews would take place at the United Nations regional centres by grouping some States in the region. She queried the availability of financial and human resources, the unclear modalities of such reviews, the alternative options if in situ visits were not authorized by the State party, and whether recommendations needed to be adopted in plenary.

48. The Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances noted that, in the specific case of his Committee, the provisions covered an initial report only, with no periodic reporting. He noted that the relevant Convention provided for the possibility of asking the State party for additional information, a procedure that seemed to be in line with the non-paper proposal regarding a focused review aimed at addressing specific themes and priorities, with the caveat that the non-paper referred to in situ visits. However, he queried whether replacing every second review with a focused review would actually increase States’ reporting compliance. In this connection, he noted the need for resources, and provided concrete examples of the increase in the Committee’s workload, in particular in relation to urgent action requests, which were not accompanied by adequate supplementary human resources. He invited States to further support the work of the treaty bodies and strengthen their capacities.

49. The Chair of the Human Rights Committee expressed a view on full and focused reviews, the latter being proposed in person and in situ. She considered that the focused review might be a strategic, longer-term goal for the treaty body strengthening process, and that the extent, content, modalities and adequate costing and resources of a focused review required further discussion. She also recalled that paragraph 53 of the co-facilitator’s report stated that the focused review “may” consist of an in situ visit, but that was not expressed as a requirement. In addition, she recalled the “roving Committee” proposal, whereby dialogues with States parties would be conducted at a regional level (A/74/256, annex III), and queried why that proposal had been changed to in situ visits by a handful of experts.

50. The Chair of the Committee against Torture further noted that that Committee could conduct in situ visits in cases of individual communications and enquiries, which in practice were limited, as they required financial resources. The view expressed was that there was no need to discuss in situ visits in respect of the focused reviews, as those could easily take place in Geneva. He pointed out that the Committee against Torture would be undertaking a focused review on selected issues

at its forthcoming online session. He highlighted that meetings taking place in the regions would merit further attention.

51. The Chair explained that the principle of focused reviews being held in situ and in person was aimed at bringing the treaty bodies closer to the local context and to national stakeholders. Should the State party not consent to an in situ visit, the focused review would take place at a United Nations regional office. She underlined the benefit of in situ visits and their greater accessibility for civil society and other national actors who were unable to travel to Geneva to engage face-to-face with experts under normal circumstances. In this context, she highlighted the additional challenges faced by persons with disabilities, who needed to fund themselves and their support personnel and find reasonably priced accessible accommodation, which was not always possible in Geneva or New York. She referred to the benefits of treaty body practice when conducting in-country enquiries, visits and State party reviews, such as the recent review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of three Pacific States in Samoa. She stated that she was therefore in favour of in situ reviews or alternatively in-person reviews at regional United Nations offices in order to improve engagement with States parties, provide a greater understanding of context and prepare better targeted concluding observations that could be accepted and implemented by States parties.

52. The Chairs discussed the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating follow-up procedures into the focused reviews. While noting that follow-up procedures were currently not specifically budgeted for, several Chairs commented that they were a good practice, and should be differentiated from the focused review, as they served to encourage, monitor or urge States parties to implement their obligations on pressing issues.

53. The Chair of the Human Rights Committee referred to one Committee's 20 years of experience with the follow-up procedure and suggested that it be continued. She noted that the follow-up procedure might effectively be the same in substance as a focused review, since targeted questions on important topics required States parties to provide specific answers, with the difference that the follow-up procedure took place in Geneva and between Committee sessions. The Chairs of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances seconded this observation and noted the established practice for follow-up procedures within their respective Committees, which focused on identifying priority or urgent issues to be implemented within one or two years.

54. The Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture pointed out that the Subcommittee's regular in situ visits did not require the specific consent of the State party, which was not the case for in situ focused reviews. In addition, she drew attention to the Subcommittee's experience that scarce resources negatively affected the implementation of its mandate and warned that the focused review model could encounter similar challenges if proper financial recourses were not in place from the outset. She saw a need for a better understanding of the difference between the follow-up procedure and the focused review and proposed that detailed guidelines be developed on both features for further consideration.

55. The Chair acknowledged the important work the Committees carried out through the follow-up procedures, which enabled them to deal with complex issues and engage with States in a meaningful way. She stressed that there was a need to assess whether focused reviews might provide a greater advantage in terms of treaty body strengthening compared with the current follow-up procedures. She added that she did not consider focused reviews and follow-up procedures as mutually exclusive. Rather, she suggested integrating part of the follow-up procedures in the focused

reviews for costing and budgeting purposes. She therefore proposed seizing the opportunity to change the situation through focused reviews, which could bring the benefits of an in-depth analysis of problem areas in a far more sustainable way than the current follow-up procedures, which were not properly budgeted for. She also recognized the need to maintain the follow-up procedure on some occasions, where the urgency of the matter required a request for additional information from a State party. In this connection, she referred to the example of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and its specificity, and agreed that such procedures should not be suppressed to the detriment of the victims.

56. Several Chairs highlighted that further discussions were needed on the relationship between focused reviews and follow-up procedures within the proposed predictable review cycle.

Harmonized working methods

57. The Chairs were of the view that the post-2020 review process, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, provided an opportunity to review the work of the treaty bodies and make it more concrete, selective and thematic rather than lengthy and generic. They agreed that further coordination and harmonization of overlapping issues among the Committees was necessary.

58. Regarding the simplified reporting procedure as a default option for periodic reports, the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women shared her Committee's experience of the simplified reporting procedure and noted that constructing the list of issues prior to reporting represented a significant burden of work for experts, as it required in-depth and specific desk research.

59. Several Chairs also agreed that a more harmonized and coordinated approach among Committees was necessary to avoid duplication, while acknowledging the necessity of reinforcing the complementarity and interdependence of human rights. Several Chairs further discussed the need to carry out targeted, specific and selective reviews by listing urgent and emerging thematic or topical issues during the focused review to reinforce the complementarity and interdependence of rights.

60. The Chair of the Committee on Migrant Workers proposed that focused reviews should be conducted in chambers or smaller groups of experts. Issues such as the composition of the country task force, the selection of the rapporteur for the focused review and whether the recommendations drafted by a limited number of experts should be adopted in plenary during official meetings or intersessionally needed further discussion.

61. The Chair underlined that the sustainability of the treaty body system could not be achieved without relevant structural changes. She further highlighted that States expected the Chairs to move forward concerning the harmonization and modernization of the treaty body system with a view to strengthening it and she saw an opportunity to move forward and design such a framework. She stressed the benefit of inserting a focused review in the regular review procedure in line with the reporting obligations of the States parties, formulating the list of issues prior to reporting, engaging in constructive dialogue, and preparing the recommendations using a thematic/topical approach. In relation to the modalities of the focused review, she was of the view that, in principle, two to three members, supported by a secretariat staff member from Geneva or the regional United Nations office, could carry out the focused review in situ. The logistics and costings required further elaboration of details on the conduct of such a review. In her opinion, concluding observations could be adopted by the plenary virtually, through digital document-sharing.

Digital tools post-COVID-19

62. The Executive Director of the Geneva Human Rights Platform at the Geneva Academy presented to the Chairs a proposal for a “treaty body members platform 2.0”, which would create a community of practice to enhance communication, exchanges and knowledge-sharing among treaty body members. He explained the challenges related to security, data privacy and accessibility, as well as translation, of the platforms tested. He underlined the advantages of the platform, which could facilitate enhanced communication, coordination, informal exchanges and knowledge-sharing among treaty body members, and enable them to create internal groups for thematic discussions. He highlighted the complementary and informal nature of the proposed platform, which was not designed for any official discussions among treaty body members during official meetings. He also suggested the possibility of transferring the content of the proposed platform to the OHCHR system once the platform was in place and tested. He encouraged the Chairs to communicate their feedback, comments and preferences on the presented model.

63. The Chairs thanked the Executive Director for his presentation. The Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women suggested that the primary responsibility for providing a properly functional and accessible platform for treaty body experts was with OHCHR. The Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture reiterated the particularity of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and their methods on conducting visits, follow-up and engagement with the national preventive mechanisms, and highlighted as a good practice the use of the existing online platforms already provided by OHCHR, which were in use even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

64. The Chairs agreed that the development of online tools, such as online portals for petitions, improved web pages and online reporting platforms, was a priority; however, digital tools could not replace in-person meetings for constructive dialogues with States parties. Rather, these tools would represent an additional instrument to enhance and enable the treaty bodies to fulfil their respective mandates efficiently, taking into account the constant need to develop their working methods. The Chairs stated that digital tools needed to be properly budgeted.

65. The Chair of the meeting highlighted that the digital shift would not be a replacement of in-person meetings, as agreed by the Chairs at their preparatory meeting in May and during the present discussion. However, she underlined that the move towards remote and virtual work needed to be recognized as part of the core mandate of treaty bodies. In her opinion, it would be an enhancement and an additional tool that would enable the treaty bodies to fulfil their respective mandates, taking into account the constant need to develop their working methods. She also referred to good practices from regional webinars organized by the informal working group on COVID-19 in 2021 that demonstrated the value of outreach to the regions. As such, she suggested that time spent in general discussion was an area that could be shifted to a digital platform. Individual communications were another example of a significant amount of work that could be shifted online. In addition, engagement and joint work undertaken by the Committees could be supported by the digital platforms.

66. As to the monetary recognition of experts’ online work, several Chairs stated the importance of defining parameters with regard to financial compensation of the experts’ online work. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child requested clarification regarding the work for which the compensation was being considered – intersessional online work, or participation in official online sessions – as these were two different issues. She suggested that if the proposal was to compensate members for online work conducted intersessionally, the system of honorariums used in the

past should be considered (see [A/53/643](#)). Or, as an alternative, she proposed that a new policy be introduced, such as the equivalent of 20 per cent of daily subsistence allowance for participation in online sessions, which would not be linked to travel.

67. The Chair of the meeting commented that the digital process would need to include resources to remunerate experts for their online work as a principal recognition rather than as compensation.

68. Several Chairs underlined the importance of advancing the work on the online portal for petitions and improving web pages and reporting platforms, as well as the existing extranet online tool, to make work more effective, provide easy access to documents and facilitate interaction between the treaty body experts. They also raised concerns about the limitations of platforms currently used and tested by the Office of the United Nations at Geneva during 2020 and 2021. They underlined that treaty body members should be involved in any discussion on digital shifts and online platforms, and asked for an opportunity to comment on the Office's concept note on the digital transformation of the human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies.

69. The Chair of the meeting highlighted the need for modernized and enhanced platforms, such as the one presented by the Geneva Academy, that enable videoconferencing and webcasting, with accessible features and sustainability across the digital divide. She acknowledged that the implementation of these platforms would require significant engagement with treaty body members to ensure they could be customized to meet the needs of all treaty bodies.

70. At the end of the meeting, the Chair of the meeting, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and with support from that Committee, expressed the view that a predictable, adequate and sustainable budget that ensures that treaty bodies can fulfil their mandate and protect rights holders was a prerequisite for the treaty body system.

71. She expressed support for a predictable schedule of reviews based on a five-year review cycle, factoring in the dates of the universal periodic review. She stated that the legal requirement for the submission of periodic reports would not be affected, as it was the dates of reviews that would be harmonized in a predictable manner. She explained that this review cycle would consist of a full review of State obligations, followed by a focused review of a maximum of three or four issues. This meant that every second review would be a focused review, with a full review being conducted every alternate five years.

72. She stated that the review cycle would need to recognize the mandates of the treaty bodies that do not have periodic State party reviews: the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. Those treaty bodies would establish regular and predictable schedules based on current practice and with the benefit of more sustainable budgeting for visits of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and urgent actions of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

73. She explained that a five-year review cycle should be distinguished from the reporting cycle as, on average, it took 12 months from the time a report was received by OHCHR until it was translated, prepared and reviewed by the treaty body. This meant that, in practice, the reporting time frame was four years and the review cycle was five years.

74. She stated that a predictable schedule of reviews was an opportunity to address the existing backlog in State reporting and reviews. The introduction of the predictable schedule of reviews would address this backlog by applying the same review calendar to all States, regardless of whether they had or had not submitted reports. This would aim at increasing the reporting compliance of States parties to its greatest extent and, along with other proposals, decrease the reporting burden on

States parties because they could plan ahead and the focused review would be more streamlined. All States parties would thus be able to engage constructively in meeting their obligations, which is fundamental to the principle within the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties – *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept).

75. She acknowledged that the adoption of a predictable schedule of reviews would increase the number of reviews to be undertaken each year by treaty bodies. This would require innovative and harmonized working methods, adequate resourcing and advanced, integrated online platforms to maximize synergies and reduce duplication. She noted that many States had encouraged this innovation and indicated their willingness to support it.

76. She stated that a predictable schedule of reviews gave the treaty body system the strength it needed to fulfil the core elements of its mandate. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for States to build back better meant that this development was particularly relevant and pertinent.

B. Working methods and tools in relation to COVID-19 and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19

77. The rapporteur of the informal working group on COVID-19 and Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child presented the activities of the working group since October 2020 (see annex II). The working group held a total of 10 meetings, during which the members exchanged views on the logistical, administrative and technical challenges facing the treaty bodies with regard to discharging their mandates remotely, and the initiative to organize webinars on the issue of the impact of COVID-19 on mental health. She raised the issue of interaction between the Chairs and the working group, and underlined that they were not sufficiently connected and that there was a lack of synergy between the Chairs and the working group. She put forward a personal suggestion that all treaty body experts should receive updated information on the resumption of in-person meetings of treaty bodies through the weekly update circulated to all treaty body experts and that the working group should assess the lessons learned on the webinars organized, and asked whether treaty body work could be supported by OHCHR regional offices and presences in the field.

78. Several Chairs underlined the necessity of coordination between the Chairs and the informal working group on COVID-19 in order to avoid a perceived duplication of work and lack of synchronization and coordination between them. Some Chairs called for a more regular channel of communication, in particular reliable information on the resumption of in-person meetings as of September 2021. It was noted that at the preparatory meeting of the Chairs, the Chairs agreed that hybrid sessions would be discriminatory.

79. Several Chairs asked about the future work of the informal working group on COVID-19 and coordination with the treaty body Chairs. Chairs sought clarification regarding the online meetings hosted by the regional offices of OHCHR, for which there appeared to be no budget allocations. They discussed the difficulties of adapting the treaty body system to the COVID-19 pandemic era. Several Chairs addressed the issue of vulnerability, the precariousness of human resources and the financial challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. A Chair advocated for adapting to the “new normal” and improving communication channels to enable reliable information-sharing.

80. The Chairs discussed the possibility of holding hybrid meetings. Several Chairs reiterated that their respective Committees were not in favour of hybrid meetings owing to the discrimination and unequal treatment of experts. However, some Chairs

noted that the Committees could exceptionally meet without all its members physically present even in normal circumstances, provided the requirement for a quorum was met. Some Chairs proposed a uniform approach, as it would not be desirable to have some Committees meeting in hybrid mode while other Committees met online if in-person meetings were not possible. The rapporteur of the informal working group on COVID-19 and Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child recalled that it had been pointed out in the working group that it was unclear whether discussion on this issue had taken place in all Committees, and that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had not discussed it.

IV. Decisions and recommendations

81. At their thirty-third meeting, the Chairs adopted the following decisions and recommendations and entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the report.

A. Working methods and tools in relation to COVID-19 and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19

82. The Chairs recognized with appreciation the substantial contribution made by the informal working group on COVID-19 and called for further coordination with the treaty body Chairs. They agreed that the informal working group on COVID-19 should continue its work until the resumption of in-person meetings, study the challenges, good practices and lessons learned from the online operating environment in terms of both procedure and substance, and make recommendations to the Chairs.

83. The Chairs highlighted that the regional webinars on the impact of COVID-19 on the right to mental health were a positive initiative that avoided a protection gap, and highlighted the importance of a debriefing on the regional webinars in order to collect examples of good practices, and how that could feed into the treaty body toolkit of jurisprudence on COVID-19.

84. It was proposed that, when considering future webinars, the working group should focus on the impact of the pandemic on human rights and substantive issues that are covered by all treaty bodies. The Chairs encouraged the working group to make recommendations to the Chairs on this and other future activities.

B. Modalities and organization of future meetings of Chairs and other intersessional activities

85. The Chairs recommended that it reconvene online in the coming months to assess the current situation in relation to COVID-19, and outstanding agenda items.

Annex I

Provisional agenda and programme of work

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.
8. Working methods and tools in relation to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19.
11. Adoption of the report on the thirty-third meeting.

Programme of work

Monday, 7 June 2021

12.30–2.30 p.m. (public)

1. Election of officers, and opening remarks by a senior United Nations official.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
 - Exchange with non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

Tuesday, 8 June 2021

2.30–4.30 p.m. (private)

3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.
 - Presentation on the current state of play, including on the financial situation, and the role of treaty body Chairs.
 - Predictable schedule of reviews: discussion on Chairs' suggested models based on the elements of the drafting group of the Chairs.

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

12.30–2.30 p.m. (private)

3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.
 - Harmonized working methods: discussion on Chairs' suggested models based on the elements of the drafting group of the Chairs.

Thursday, 10 June 2021

1.30–3.30 p.m. (private)

3. General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020.
 - Digital tools post-COVID-19: discussion on Chairs' suggested models based on the elements of the drafting group of the Chairs.
8. Working methods and tools in relation to COVID-19 and the substantive input of treaty bodies in relation to COVID-19.
 - Presentation and discussion by the facilitator and/or rapporteur of the informal working group on COVID-19.

Friday, 11 June 2021

12.30–2.30 p.m. (private)

11. Adoption of the report on the thirty-third meeting.
 - Conclusions and recommendations.

Annex II

Report of the informal working group on COVID-19

1. Introduction

1. The informal working group on COVID-19 was formally established by the decision taken at the thirty-second meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, held online from 27 to 30 July 2020, with the mandate to address the procedural aspects of the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the work of the treaty bodies and the substantive aspects of COVID-19 and human rights. The working group is composed of 19 members of 10 treaty bodies, who are appointed by their respective Committees. The working group has so far held 10 online meetings, on 14 October 2020, 30 October 2020, 17 November 2020, 25 November 2020, 11 December 2020, 5 February 2021, 19 March 2021, 9 April 2021, 7 May 2021 and 4 June 2021, with the support of the secretariat. The working group, at its 6th meeting on 5 February 2021, decided to meet regularly once a month.

2. Activities on procedural aspects of the impact of COVID-19 on the work of treaty bodies

2. As a continuation of the activities of the informal working group on COVID-19, which held three meetings in July 2020, the working group shared information on the activities of their treaty bodies that was carried out online or remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and the modalities used, received information from the relevant officers of the secretariat and discussed measures to address the challenges for online work that were identified by the informal working group, namely, different time zones, online platforms, connectivity, the lack of interpretation and costs for online work.

Online States parties review

3. Based on the information gained regarding the holding of an online dialogue with Iraq by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances on 5 October 2020; the decisions of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to review States parties online as a pilot programme in their upcoming sessions in 2021; the joint statement of more than 500 civil society organizations on 2 October 2020 urging the treaty bodies to schedule the review of States parties no later than 2021; and information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of the postponement of in-person sessions of the treaty bodies through February 2021, the working group considered it important for the treaty bodies to take a common approach on the issue of the review of States parties' reports, and made recommendations to the Chairs of the treaty bodies for their endorsement.

Measures to address challenges in online work

Lack of interpretation

4. The working group met with Anna Banchieri, Chief of the Meetings Management Section at the United Nations Office at Geneva, during its 7th meeting on 19 March 2021 to receive information on the availability of meeting times with interpretation and on online platforms. It was explained that available meeting times with interpretation were limited to four hours per day for reasons that included the unavailability of rooms equipped for online meetings at the Palais Wilson, ongoing renovations at the Palais de Nations, limitations on access to interpretation booths

owing to sanitary requirements and a lack of authority to use freelance remote interpreters. Based on the information received, the working group decided to request the Division of Conference Management to prepare a calendar of meetings of treaty bodies in order to adapt and plan treaty body sessions in 2021.

Online platforms

5. The working group received a briefing from Anthony O'Mullane, Director of the Operations Support Division of the Office of Information and Communications Technology, and Sergey Kochetkov, Chief of the Interpretation Service in the Meetings and Publishing Division. The Director of the Operations Support Division informed the working group that the outcome of the review on Zoom was yet to be completed, and in the meantime the Division had allowed flexibility to those Committees that had requested to use Zoom on an exceptional basis. To avoid a situation in which each treaty body sent a letter urgently requesting approval to use Zoom for its upcoming session, the working group decided to request the secretariat to send a letter requesting a general approval for all treaty bodies for their upcoming sessions. The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights sent such a letter on 4 March 2021 and the Office of Information and Communications Technology, on 3 May 2021, approved the use of Zoom on an exceptional basis for the treaty bodies' sessions through the end of June and, on 24 May 2021, authorized the exceptional use of Zoom for the treaty bodies' sessions through 17 September 2021.

6. Currently, Interpretify and Zoom (on an exceptional basis) are two platforms that have interpretation available for sessions of treaty bodies. Treaty bodies have a choice to use either of those platforms depending on the type of meeting and their preference. While progress has been made with the exceptional authorization of the use of Zoom, limitations on access to online work by members with disabilities remain, owing to the need for personal assistance.

Hybrid format

7. The working group received information from the secretariat on how the seventy-second session of the International Law Commission, a body established by the General Assembly and composed of 34 individual experts, was held from 26 April to 4 June in a hybrid format. The working group was informed that the exemption from travel restrictions was given by authorities in Switzerland based on a request from United Nations Headquarters in New York. Working group members shared that some treaty bodies discussed the possibility of a hybrid format but did not support it. However, it was unclear whether the discussion took place in all treaty bodies, and no common position has been adopted, especially with regard to sessions to be held in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Costs for online work

8. On 7 December 2020, treaty body members were informed that the Controller had approved an exceptional one-time ex gratia payment of \$1,000 to each treaty body member related to the treaty bodies' online activities in 2020, and received such payment unless they declined to receive it. However, no measures have been taken to address the lack of financial support for the online work of treaty body members, such as a payment of 20 per cent of the daily subsistence allowance, or for personal assistance necessary for the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to participate in online work.

Different time zone and connectivity

9. No measures have been taken and the same challenges remain.

Future use of online work

10. While increased accessibility for civil society organizations has been observed as an advantage of the use of online methods, it is emphasized that in-person meetings are preferred owing to challenges that include different time zones and limitations to connectivity.

3. Activities on the substantive aspects of COVID-19 and human rights

11. The working group discussed and decided to propose the organization of joint webinars on common thematic issues at a regional or subregional level, inviting treaty body members, special procedure mandate holders, United Nations entities, other experts from regional human rights mechanisms, representatives of civil society, academics and representatives of Governments in an effort to avoid a protection gap and enhance the visibility of the treaty bodies during the pandemic. The proposal was developed with the support of the OHCHR treaty body capacity-building programme as a unique initiative in the languages common in the regions. The working group decided that the theme for the first series of webinars would be the impact of COVID-19 on the right to mental health, and discussed and adopted the concept notes prepared by OHCHR. The webinars were scheduled to take place from the first quarter of 2021 to the end of the year and all interested treaty body members were invited to register their interest to take part as speakers.¹

4. Points for consideration by the meeting of the Chairs

12. The following points were suggested by some members of the working group for presentation at the meeting of the Chairs for their consideration:

- Given the mandate to address the procedural aspects of the impact of COVID-19 on the work of treaty bodies, and the fact that it meets on a monthly basis, the working group should be regularly updated on the possibilities of holding in-person sessions in the third and fourth quarters of 2021 or, as an alternative, be able to weigh the pros and cons of having hybrid sessions instead of fully online sessions.
- The predictability of treaty body work needs to be secured. To properly plan and prepare for incoming sessions, more advance information is needed. Treaty bodies should be able to learn from the experience of the International Law Commission, which started to prepare its in-person session far in advance.
- Holding in-person sessions in New York should be considered as an option in the light of the possible opening of United Nations Headquarters for in-person meetings.
- A common communication tool/platform for all treaty body members needs to be established so that important information on working methods related to COVID-19 can be shared immediately with all 172 treaty body members, and the relevant information can be freely shared among them.
- Regional webinars on COVID-19 and mental health should be highlighted, as the efforts to avoid a protection gap and new initiatives involve several treaties

¹ For summaries of the webinars, see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/COVID-19-and-TreatyBodies.aspx.

and OHCHR regional offices. There needs to be an assessment of regional webinars to take away lessons learned.

- The meeting of the Chairs should review the mandate and activities of the working group, clarify its expectations of the working group and strengthen synergy between the activities of the Chairs and the working group in order to benefit from the regular and frequent meetings of the working group, which is composed of members representing 10 treaty bodies.
 - The meeting of the Chairs should look into financial matters, such as the status of the unspent regular budget allocated to treaty body sessions in 2021 and the possibility of the reallocation of the unspent budget allocation to compensate treaty body members for costs incurred for online work, including with regard to personal assistance for members with disabilities, time spent and connectivity, as a necessary and legitimate adjustment of the budget as a result of the change in working methods owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.
-