



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

Nineteenth session

Agenda item 1

### Organizational and procedural matters

#### Decision adopted by the Human Rights Council\*\*

**19/119**

#### **Task force on secretariat services, accessibility for persons with disabilities and use of information technology**

At its 52nd meeting, on 22 March 2012, the Human Rights Council decided to adopt the following text:

*“The Human Rights Council,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 65/281 of 29 June 2011 on the review of the Human Rights Council,

*Recalling also* Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 of 25 March 2011 on the review of the work and functioning of the Human Rights Council, in particular paragraph 61 of the annex thereto, in which the Council decided to establish a task force to study the issues of secretariat services, accessibility for persons with disabilities and use of information technology, as envisaged in paragraphs 57, 58, 59 and 60 of the annex,

*Recalling further* that, in resolution 16/21, the Human Rights Council requested the task force to submit concrete recommendations to the Council at its nineteenth session,

*Reaffirming* that compliance with the applicable rules of procedure of the Council shall be ensured,

1. *Welcomes* the report submitted by the task force, annexed to the present decision;
2. *Endorses* the report of the task force, including its recommendations with the modalities made therein in the report;
3. *Invites* all concerned stakeholders to follow up adequately on the recommendations with the modalities described made by the task force in its report, and to immediately commence implementing those without financial implications and those which may be implemented from within existing resources;

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 24 May 2012.

\*\* The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council will be contained in the report of the Council on its nineteenth session (A/HRC/19/2), chap. I.

4. *Decides* to consider, at its twenty-first session, the task force recommendations with the modalities described in the report that cannot be implemented from within existing resources, in the context of the preparations for the 2014-2015 regular budget biennium, and to transmit thereafter the task force recommendations together with relevant programme budget implications to the General Assembly for its consideration;

5. *Invites* the Human Rights Council to review the status of implementation of the task force recommendations contained in its report at its twenty-second session.”

[Adopted without a vote.]

## Annex

### **Report of the Human Rights Council task force on secretariat services, accessibility for persons with disabilities and use of information technology**

#### **I. Mandate**

1. The task force was established pursuant to paragraph 61 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 of 25 March 2011. In that resolution, the Council mandated the task force to study the issues contained in paragraphs 57 to 60 of the annex to resolution 16/21 relating to the improvement of secretariat services for the Council and its mechanisms, accessibility to the work of the Council for persons with disabilities, and the feasibility of the use of information technology. In paragraph 61 of the annex to resolution 16/21, the Council specified that the task force should submit concrete recommendations to the Council at its nineteenth session.

#### **II. Composition of the task force**

2. The task force was composed of the Human Rights Council Bureau and representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Office at Geneva. Representatives of Member States and other stakeholders also contributed to the work of the task force.

#### **III. Methods of work**

3. The task force discussed issues relating to the challenges facing Human Rights Council conference services, the use of videoconferencing and video-messaging to enhance access and participation by non-resident delegations (including States, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations), as well as paper-smart measures aimed at reducing the consumption of paper by the Council. With regard to the enhancement of accessibility for persons with disabilities, the task force discussed options to enhance accessibility in terms of physical access to meeting rooms and of access to information and documentation.

4. From July 2011 to January 2012, the task force held seven meetings with a view to submitting recommendations to the Human Rights Council at its nineteenth session.

#### **IV. Human Rights Council secretariat services**

##### **A. General remarks**

5. According to paragraph 57 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, the secretariat service to the Council and its mechanisms should continue to be improved to enhance the efficiency of the work of the Council.

6. The issue of resources available for the provision of adequate conference services to the Human Rights Council, and in particular to the universal periodic review, was thoroughly discussed by the task force. While expressing appreciation for the efforts made by the United Nations Office at Geneva and Office of the High Commissioner to provide the Council with the best support possible, in particular within the context of overall reduction of the regular budget of the Secretariat, the task force nonetheless referred to the

insufficient translating and editing capacity of United Nations Office at Geneva for the processing of Council-related documentation. Efforts were therefore made by the President and other members of the Bureau to engage with the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and to request the redeployment of vacant posts in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in Headquarters to the Division of Conference Management in Geneva, in order to strengthen the translating and editing capacity of the Office at Geneva with regard to Council-related documentation. While the transfer of posts was not considered, the Fifth Committee decided to request the Secretary-General to designate capacity to support the universal periodic review and to report thereon in the context of the performance report.<sup>a</sup> In addition, the General Assembly also approved the resources requested by the Council in its decision 17/119 (with timetable attached) to support the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review as a result of the extension of the review by 30 minutes for each State under review during the second universal periodic review cycle. The United Nations Office at Geneva, however, underlined the fact that the General Assembly, in its resolution 66/246, had only approved \$54,000 per biennium for the additional 30 minutes of meetings, and not for the overall costs relating to the servicing of the three annual regular sessions of the Working Group. The Office will be required to report on its needs to the Secretary-General in 2012, as requested by the Assembly in resolution 66/246.

7. With regard to the processing of Human Rights Council-related documentation, the task force strongly emphasized the need for the secretariat to do its utmost to ensure the timely submission (Office of the High Commissioner), processing and publication (United Nations Office at Geneva) of all Council-related documentation, in accordance with existing relevant General Assembly rules. In this regard, several concrete measures were discussed, such as online posting of advance edited Council pre-session documents, whenever available; avoiding the scheduling of back-to-back regular sessions of the Council and those of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review; and the provision of information on the status of Council pre-session documents, in particular in the event of delay. In exceptional circumstances, the task force also referred to the possibility of workload sharing between various duty stations of the United Nations for the processing of documents.

8. With regard to the webcasts of the sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, the task force underlined its added value to the work of the Council and in making contact with non-resident stakeholders. The task force expressed its concern, however, at the current arrangement between the Department of Public Information and the Office of the High Commissioner for the provision of webcast facilities, which are funded exclusively by the extrabudgetary resources of the Office. The task force was of the view that measures should be taken to ensure the sustainable webcasting of Council meetings. In this regard, it was suggested that, should it not be possible to obtain regular budget resources specifically to support these activities, the Department of Public Information should redeploy resources from Headquarters to Geneva. In addition, financial resources could also be requested from the regular budget to broaden the scope of the webcast, for instance to include captioning for persons with disabilities or to cover other meetings, including treaty bodies.

## **B. Recommendations**

9. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Fifth Committee and the United Nations Controller are encouraged to take the measures necessary to strengthen the

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<sup>a</sup> General Assembly resolution 66/246, para. 62.

documentation processing capacity of the United Nations Office at Geneva, in particular its translating and editing capacity.

10. When preparing annual calendars in the future, measures aiming at avoiding back-to-back sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review should be taken.

11. Measures should be taken by the Secretariat to ensure the timely submission (Office of the High Commissioner), processing and publication (United Nations Office at Geneva) of Human Rights Council pre-session documents. In the event of delay, the Secretariat should, to the greatest extent possible, provide information on the expected date of public release of delayed documents.

12. The Office of the High Commissioner should post advance edited Human Rights Council pre-session documents on the website of the Office as early as possible, in order to facilitate their consideration by the Council or its working groups and other subsidiary bodies.

13. In exceptional circumstances, workload sharing should be considered by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management between various duty stations for the processing of documents, whenever the United Nations Office at Geneva does not have sufficient capacity to process all documents in a timely manner, ahead of Human Rights Council-related meetings.

14. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Fifth Committee are encouraged to take the measures necessary to meet the demands of sustainable webcast coverage of the sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, including by strengthening the capacity of the Department of Public Information in Geneva. In future, webcast coverage of other Council meetings could be considered.

## **V. Accessibility for persons with disabilities**

### **A. General remarks**

15. According to paragraph 58 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, there is a need to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities to the Council and the work of its mechanisms, including its information and communication technology, Internet resources and documents, in accordance with international standards on accessibility for persons with disabilities.

16. Over the past two decades, the General Assembly has adopted a series of resolutions on persons with disabilities. In its resolution 65/186 of 21 December 2010, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve accessibility and full inclusion of persons with disabilities. In this context, an interdepartmental task force was established at Headquarters, under the chairmanship of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, to develop Secretariat-wide policies and standards to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the work of the United Nations. In the same vein, specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations are also taking steps to improve accessibility to their work (including accessibility of information and communication technologies, physical facilities and human resources policies).

17. Since its creation, the Human Rights Council has requested, in its annual resolutions on persons with disabilities, that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner continue the progressive implementation of standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services of the United Nations system, also taking into account relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and underlined that

the Council, including its Internet resources, should be fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

18. The task force thoroughly discussed measures to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities to the Human Rights Council and the work of its mechanisms. It received contributions from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Office at Geneva, as well as from organizations representing persons with disabilities. On the basis of these discussions and contributions, the task force identified two main areas of improvement to guarantee full inclusion and equal participation without discrimination to the work of the Council for persons with disabilities: (a) accessibility of information and communication; and (b) physical accessibility to Council meetings in the Palais des Nations, especially around building E and in room XX.

19. Taking into account the limited resources available in the budget of the United Nations Office at Geneva for the current biennium (2012-2013), the task force identified certain priority measures that should be taken as soon as possible in order to enhance accessibility to the work of the Human Rights Council. The task force was of the view that, in future, more resources should be allocated for accessibility in the regular budget of United Nations Office at Geneva in order to enable the implementation of necessary improvements, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 65/186. In addition, the task force was of the view that accessibility criteria must be built into all procurement processes in order that that no resources are spent creating new barriers for persons with disabilities.

20. To achieve improvements in accessibility to the Human Rights Council and the work of its mechanisms, the task force was of the view that an accessibility plan should be elaborated by the United Nations Office at Geneva, in coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner, and that the appointment of a focal point in the United Nations Office at Geneva would facilitate coordination on accessibility issues and implementation of an accessibility plan.

21. With regard to accessibility of information and communication, the task force was of the view that Human Rights Council-related documentation should be made progressively available in an accessible electronic format. For example, the main webpages describing the work and functioning of the Council and its mechanisms should be available in easy-read versions and, as a further step, in video format with captioning. Like the documents distributed during Council sessions, it should be possible to obtain, upon request, copies printed in Braille from Conference Services. For the time being, only a limited number of documents can be provided owing to the financial implications involved.

22. The task force was of the view that, in future, the sessions of the Human Rights Council should be captioned. Sign language interpretation was also considered to be important. Taking into account the costs of such measures and the number of Council meetings and sessions, the task force was of the view that captioning could be initially provided for certain meetings and agenda items, subject to the availability of resources. It would be easier to provide and less costly than sign language interpretation, especially for English and Spanish. Because of technical considerations, however, only two languages may be captioned on the screen in room XX. With regard to sign language interpretation, it was noted that a decision should first be taken by the General Assembly on which sign language (or languages) should be used in the United Nations system. The Secretariat should identify, in consultation with organizations representing persons with disabilities, the number of sessions (a session is a slot of three hours) that would require video-captioning and/or sign languages, and in which languages.

23. The provision of captioning and sign language in webcasts was also identified as a high priority to significantly enhance accessibility to the work of the Human Rights Council. It was noted that this would be subject to the provision of adequate and sufficient funding for webcasts, which currently rely on extrabudgetary contributions.

24. With regard to the provision of documents in Braille, simultaneous captioning and sign language interpretation, during both Human Rights Council meetings and webcasts, the Council should provide a legislative mandate supported by a statement of programme budget implications. Currently, the United Nations Office at Geneva has a mandate and funds to provide such services only for the annual panel discussion of the Council on persons with disabilities and the sessions of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

25. With regard to physical accessibility, the task force was informed that the Strategic Heritage Plan would ensure full accessibility throughout the Palais des Nations, including its conference rooms. The project will not commence, however, before the completion of the Capital Master Plan at Headquarters. The task force observed that certain urgent measures to ensure equal participation of persons with disabilities to the work of the Human Rights Council could not wait for the completion of the Capital Master Plan, scheduled to last eight years, and should therefore be taken as soon as possible, especially with regard to accessibility around building E and in room XX. Room XX and all conference rooms should progressively become accessible, be equipped in compliance with the principle of universal design, as defined in article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and assessed through the involvement of persons with disabilities and the organizations representing them.

26. With regard to conference planning, the task force was of the view that the United Nations Office at Geneva should fully integrate the needs of persons with disabilities into its planning, and disseminate widely all information on existing accessibility measures at the Palais des Nations, including on relevant websites (of the Office at Geneva and the Human Rights Council). Since the Office has not yet adopted accessible conference planning guidelines, the task force suggested that, in the meantime, information be collected in advance on the attendance of persons with disabilities at Council sessions through a partially revised conference registration form.

27. Lastly, the task force was of the view that training of all staff members on disability issues, in particular of staff members dealing with accreditation and interacting with conference participants, should be developed and organized. A mandatory training session for all United Nations staff members would ensure that they are acquainted with measures that need to be taken to ensure the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the work of the United Nations.

28. On the basis of the above, the task force identified the measures below, which should be regarded as a matter of priority.

## **B. Recommendations**

29. The Office of the High Commissioner should consider:

(a) Ensuring that its website and that of the Human Rights Council are made fully accessible, in conformity with international standards on accessibility for persons with disabilities;

(b) Proposing adjustments to the seating arrangements in room XX to allow all participants, including wheelchair users and personal assistants of persons with disabilities, to take part in the work of the Human Rights Council on an equal basis with others;

(c) Ensuring that participants are provided with practical information on the session of the Human Rights Council in accessible formats (for example, visual directories, programme of work and orders of the day).

30. The United Nations Office at Geneva should consider:

(a) Disseminating information on all existing accessibility measures for persons with disabilities at the Palais des Nations, including through the creation of a page on accessibility on the Office website;

(b) Developing an accessibility plan, in coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner and persons with disabilities or their representative organizations;

(c) Appointing a focal point at the United Nations Office at Geneva with overall responsibility for enhancing accessibility of United Nations premises, meetings and documentation;

(d) Adopting accessible conference planning guidelines for the provision of appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities attending meetings at the Palais des Nations;

(e) Organizing disability awareness seminars for staff members of the United Nations Office at Geneva and of the Office of the High Commissioner involved in the work of the Human Rights Council, and ensuring that staff turnover is covered.

31. With regard to security matters, the United Nations Office at Geneva should consider:

(a) Amending the conference registration form in such a way that persons with disabilities are able to indicate their specific mobility/accessibility requirements, thus allowing for better planning for their participation and security;

(b) Facilitating access to the Palais des Nations for vehicles to allow persons with disabilities to be transported to the entrances of the buildings; facilitating access of personal assistants of persons with disabilities; and providing assistance to persons with disabilities with the registration and accreditation procedures for participation in meetings.

32. With regard to building management issues, the United Nations Office at Geneva should consider:

(a) Ensuring that, when acquiring new equipment and furniture, the principle of universal design, as defined in article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, is applied;

(b) Guaranteeing a minimum level of accessibility to the Palais des Nations and room XX, which should include an automatic entrance at door 40, accessible toilet facilities in proximity to room XX, and an accessible and clearly identified lift to reach room XX;

(c) Developing a practical accessibility guide to the Palais des Nations in an accessible format, including practical information on accessible facilities and services, such as the location of toilet facilities and lifts, as well as directions to the cafeteria, bank and other relevant offices;

(d) Ensuring that the Strategic Heritage Plan ensures full accessibility of the Palais des Nations and that persons with disabilities are involved in the assessment of furniture and facilities.

33. With regard to conference management issues, the United Nations Office at Geneva should consider:

(a) Ensuring that parliamentary documents are available in an accessible format through the electronic document distribution system, and making providing documents available in Braille, upon request, during sessions of the Human Rights Council, subject to the availability of resources;

(b) Increasing progressively the availability of captioning and sign language interpretation at sessions of the Human Rights Council.

### C. Follow-up

34. The task force suggests that, on the basis of the above, plans of action be prepared as soon as possible by relevant United Nations actors, comprising their potential financial implications to be considered for inclusion in the regular budget for the biennium 2014-2015. The task force could reconvene in January 2013 to review the implementation of accessibility measures and to consider the measures to be financed by the regular budget for the period 2014-2015. In addition, following consultations with States, the President of the Human Rights Council could seek the assistance of States and other stakeholders in providing financial, technical or in-kind contributions, as appropriate.

35. The task force suggests that the above-mentioned plans of action be drawn up in close cooperation with United Nations-wide efforts on accessibility, such as the United Nations Interdepartmental Task Force on Accessibility and the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## VI. Use of information technology

### A. Use of video-conferencing/messaging by non-resident State delegations, specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

#### (1) General remarks

36. According to the provisions of paragraph 59 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, the Council is to explore the feasibility of the use of information technology, such as videoconferencing or video messaging, in order to enhance access and participation by non-resident State delegations, specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and national human rights institutions consistent with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/134 (the Paris Principles), as well as by non-governmental organizations in consultative status, bearing in mind the need to ensure full compliance of such participation with its rules of procedure and rules concerning accreditation.

37. While the task force recalled its clear preference for the direct interaction of the Human Rights Council with individuals physically present in Geneva, it nevertheless underlined the added value of videoconferencing and video messaging in enhancing participation and effective access to the Council by non-resident State delegations, specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, and national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations compliant with the Paris Principles and in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

38. It was acknowledged that such technology may ease the financial burden on these entities, in particular for those from developing countries.

39. Taking into account the fact that not all stakeholders might have access to modern information technologies, the task force referred to the potential role of United Nations country teams, field offices of the Office of the High Commissioner and information centres of the Department of Public Information in facilitating the participation of the above-mentioned non-resident delegations and stakeholders in the work of the Human Rights Council, in particular for the provision of technical and logistical facilities.

40. It was emphasized that compliance with the rules of procedure of the Human Rights Council and rules concerning accreditation also had to be strictly enforced for remote participation.

41. As such, a letter of request would need to be addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council, with the following requirements:

- (a) Letter submitted on official letterhead;
- (b) Indication of the session of the Human Rights Council concerned, agenda item and specific segment of the programme of work in which the oral statement through video messaging is to be made;
- (c) Indication of full name (surname, first name) and functional title of the person delivering the statement (the person's name must appear exactly as it appears in the person's passport or formal identity document) as a designated representative;
- (d) Colour copy of the person's passport or formal identity document;
- (e) Letter to be signed by the head of the delegation/organization authorized to designate a representative to make an oral statement on behalf of the delegation/organization:
  - (i) For non-resident States: Minister for Foreign Affairs or head of delegation (such as the Permanent Representative in New York or Chargé d'affaires a.i.);
  - (ii) United Nations specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations: Head of agency/organization (for example the Director General or Secretary-General);
  - (iii) National human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles; Head of the institution (for example, Commissioner) or Secretary-General;
  - (iv) Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: President, Chief Executive Officer or Main Representative of the United Nations Office at Geneva (if the person is authorized to accredit representatives to the United Nations Office at Geneva).

42. The task force emphasized its preference for the use of videoconferencing, given its interactive nature, over video messaging.

43. The task force was informed that, owing to current technical limitations and financial implications, videoconferencing would not be feasible in the near future. The secretariat was nonetheless examining ways and means to effectively address these limitations and implications. Meanwhile, the task force acknowledged that the Human Rights Council may have to rely on video messaging for the time being until videoconferencing became feasible.

44. It was stressed that interventions by video messaging would not in any way change the rules of procedure of the Human Rights Council or the practices relating to the participation of Member and observer States in the work of the Council. The secretariat recalled that, in fact, only the method of delivery of statements would change.

45. The task force thoroughly discussed the procedure for the use of video messaging by national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations compliant with the Paris Principles and in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. It was emphasized again that their contributions, as observers, should fully comply with the rules of procedure of the Human Rights Council and rules concerning accreditation. As such, the task force considered the practical steps described below.

(2) *Recommendations*

46. In the case of national human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles:

- (a) Video messages may be pre-recorded in order to enhance participation in the plenary debates of the Human Rights Council, in particular in accordance with the provisions described in the annex to Council resolution 16/21, paragraph 13 (national

human rights institution of the State under review) and paragraph 28 (national human rights institution of the State concerned);

(b) Only the Head, Secretary-General or designated representative in possession of a written authorization may deliver a video message;

(c) The credentials of the institution and the identity of individuals delivering the video message will be duly verified by the Office of the High Commissioner, which maintains a list of national human rights institutions and their current accreditation status;

(d) Whenever a point of order is raised during the projection of a video message of an institution, the President of the Human Rights Council will pause the intervention and address the issue in accordance with the rules of procedure and practices of the Council. The President will then continue with the projection of the video message, unless a second point of order is raised or the President considers that the message infringes the rules of procedure and practices of the Council, in which case the President may interrupt the projection of the video message. As the speaker will not be present in the room, a written communication recalling the applicable rules of procedures and practices of the Council shall then be forwarded to the institution concerned;

(e) The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the secretariat of the Human Rights Council will continue to provide all national human rights institutions with robust advice and support so that they may contribute constructively and positively to the work of the Council.

47. In the case of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

(a) To test the feasibility of video messages in terms of time available during the sessions of the Human Rights Council, a limited number of may pre-record video messages in the framework of the general segment of the Council plenary session (held in March), interactive dialogues with special procedures relating to reports on country missions (in particular for organizations that have contributed to the mission to that country), plenary adoption of universal periodic review outcomes (in particular for organizations involved in the national process or having sent contributions for the summary of stakeholder information prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner) and panels/annual discussions, in order to enhance the participation of local stakeholders in plenary meetings;

(b) Accreditation of organizations will be duly verified by the secretariat of the Human Rights Council;

(c) The identity of individuals delivering the video message, and whether they are duly authorized to represent the non-governmental organizations in question, will be duly verified by the secretariat of the Human Rights Council upon receipt of a written authorization by the President or Chief Executive Officer of the organization and a colour copy of the individual's passport or formal identity document, together with a photograph of the individual delivering the statement (as mentioned above);

(d) Whenever a point of order is raised during the projection of a video message, the President of the Human Rights Council will pause the intervention and address the issue in accordance with the rules of procedure and practices of the Council. The President will then resume the projection of the video message unless a second point of order is raised or the President considers that the message infringes Council the rules of procedure or practices, in which case the President may interrupt the projection of the video message. As the speaker will not be present in the room, a written communication recalling the applicable rules of procedures and practices of the Council shall then be forwarded to the organization concerned.

(e) The secretariat of the Human Rights Council will continue to provide all non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council with robust advice and support so that they may contribute constructively and positively to the work of the Human Rights Council.

48. The task force recommends a number of practical steps for videoconferencing and video messaging, as described below.

49. Taking into account the interactive nature of videoconferencing, all efforts should be made by the secretariat to render its use feasible within the context of the work of the Human Rights Council. In the meantime, video messaging should be used to enhance the participation of non-resident State delegations, specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and national human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

50. Video messaging may be used in full compliance with the rules of procedure of the Human Rights Council and the rules concerning accreditation. In particular:

(a) National human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles may pre-record video messages in one of the six official languages of the United Nations, to be delivered to enhance their participation in the plenary debates of the Human Rights Council, in accordance with the provisions contained in the annex to Council resolution 16/21, paragraph 13 (national human rights institution of the State under review) and paragraph 28 (national human rights institution from the country concerned);

(b) A limited number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council may pre-record video messages in one of the six official languages of the United Nations, to be delivered, as a test, in the framework of the general segment of the plenary session of the Human Rights Council (held in March), interactive dialogues with special procedures relating to the reports on country missions (for organizations that have contributed to the mission to that country), plenary adoption of universal periodic review outcomes (in particular for organizations involved in the national process or having sent contributions for the summary of stakeholder information prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner) and panels/annual discussions, in order to enhance the participation of local stakeholders in plenary meetings.

## **B. Paper-smart measures**

### *(1) General remarks*

51. According to paragraph 60 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, the use of modern information technology, such as the electronic circulation of copies, is encouraged in order to reduce the circulation of paper.

52. The task force acknowledged the urgent need to reduce the consumption of paper and thereby encouraged both the secretariat and all delegations, whenever possible, to resort to modern information technology in the framework of the work of the Human Rights Council. The task force was informed of and welcomed effective paper-smart measures already taken by the United Nations Office at Geneva, such as the reduction of the number of copies of parliamentary documents sent to Permanent Missions, the e-version of the *Permanent Missions to the United Nations* ("Blue Book") replacing hard copies and other measures to encourage all Missions and observers to increasingly rely on electronic distribution of documents. In this regard, the United Nations Office at Geneva provided information on the use of UNOG mailing accounts: as at 30 January 2012, only 17 Permanent Missions had opted to receive electronic versions of official documents, 72 had accessed their accounts and made adjustments, and 92 had not had access to their accounts at all.

53. The United Nations Office at Geneva also recalled that, with regard to the official distribution of documents, in its resolution 66/233, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all six official languages be strictly respected with regard to both the distribution of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations website, in keeping with section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222.

54. While expressing support for the efforts already made by the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Office of the High Commissioner to reduce paper consumption, the task force emphasized the need to continue to develop various electronic tools that would allow users to have access to documents relating to the Human Rights Council online. In this regard, the United Nations Office at Geneva informed the task force that it was looking into possible initiatives, such as an e-pigeonhole, a portal-like website that would host relevant documents, and rationalizing information technology applications to enhance internal efficiencies.

55. The task force, however, pointed to the need to ensure that Members and observers of the Human Rights Council wishing to receive hard copies of Council-related documentation may continue to do so.

(2) *Recommendations*

56. All Members and observers of the Human Rights Council are encouraged to access their UNOG mailing accounts and to opt not to receive hard copies of Council-related documentation, but rather receive e-copies thereof. Members and observers may also wish to subscribe to the United Nations e-Subscription service (available from [www.undocs.org](http://www.undocs.org)), which provides links to newly published documents as soon as they become available.

57. During regular sessions of the Human Rights Council, efforts should be made to ensure that the written statements of special procedures mandate holders, independent experts and panellists are made available on the Council extranet approximately 30 minutes before their delivery before the Council plenary.

58. Continued efforts should be made by the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Office of the High Commissioner to develop various electronic tools enabling users to have access to documents online in an increasing manner.

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