

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 33RD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

Amnesty International would like to express its support to the UN human rights treaty bodies and greatly value the opportunity to engage with the Chairpersons on the occasion of the 33rd annual meeting.

We recognize that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the work of the treaty bodies, leading to postponement, cancellation and/or the scaling-down of activities at nearly all sessions since the start of the pandemic. We appreciate the willingness of the treaty bodies to adjust to new ways of working including to hold online reviews of state party reports, despite multiple logistical challenges. The pandemic is far from over and we hope that both the treaty bodies and the UN system as a whole will be better placed in the time to come, to quickly adapt to such challenges, including through the use of technological solutions to support their work.

We note the many rich issues on the agenda of the chairpersons meeting, but are concerned about the late notice of the meeting to enable wide civil society participation and the lack of publicly available discussion papers that provide background information to the issues on the agenda, and that would ultimately enable us to contribute meaningfully to the discussions. We urge the Chairs and OHCHR to return to previous formats with discussion papers and background notes shared in advance of the meeting.

As we prepare to return, hopefully, to some normality in the fall, we urge the treaty bodies to set out a clear plan and criteria for how to deal with the backlog of reviews that have been accumulated during the pandemic. We hope that treaty body sessions can soon return to its standard format, but also urge the treaty bodies to make continued use of online platforms for inter-sessional meetings and greater cross-committee coordination both on procedural as well as on substantive issues that relate to states' obligations under multiple human rights treaties. Efforts to remove duplication should not hinder mutual reinforcement and the interdependence and indivisibility of rights. We urge the treaty bodies to ensure hybrid formats for NGO engagement going forward, and that these allow for maximum flexibility, inclusivity and accessibility.

Finally we wanted to address a few issues relating to the General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020. We have, together with over 120 NGO partners welcomed the co-facilitator report which contains many important recommendations on how to strengthen the system. It is disappointing to us that the treaty bodies continue to struggle for resources and welcome efforts to re-invest savings back into the system. We are worried that many of the important proposals in the co-facilitators report may otherwise not take off, including that of a case management system for individual communications.

One of the key recommendations from the report is for the treaty bodies to establish predictable calendars. We urge all treaty bodies to do so without further delay and to move forward as a system, while of course respecting the specificities of the treaties. We encourage all treaty bodies to engage on a regular basis with all States parties and to avoid adopting methods of work that would result in long periods of inattention to states' implementation of the treaties.

We have on multiple occasions urged the treaty bodies to align their working methods. We want to stress that it is not a matter of striving towards a lowest common denominator, nor to impose standardized working methods on treaty bodies where the specificity of the treaty requires other procedures, but to simplify and remove non-necessary differences. Small varieties in procedures make engagement unnecessarily complicated. Such alignment would be important not only to facilitate CSO participation but for accessibility and transparency of the system as a whole.

I thank you.