**Annual thematic discussion on technical cooperation**

**in the promotion and protection of human rights**

**Theme: A decade of technical cooperation and capacity-building**

**in the Human Rights Council: challenges and the way forward**

*(pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 33/28)*

20 June 2017, 3 - 6 p.m.

Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva

**Background**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in collaboration with States, has organized the annual thematic discussion on technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights during the sessions of the Human Rights Council since 2011. This panel discussion is organized in accordance with Council resolution 33/28 adopted on 30 September 2016. The report of the OHCHR A/HRC/35/20 entitled *“Progress and challenges encountered in the main activities aimed at enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building undertaken since the establishment of the Human Rights Council”*, mandated by the same resolution, serves as a basis for this panel discussion.

**Rationale**

When the Human Rights Council was established in 2006, technical cooperation and capacity-building, to be provided in consultation with, and with the consent of, Member States concerned, were recognized by Member States as an important part of the vision to promote and protect human rights. General Assembly resolution 60/251 emphasizes the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue, and states that the universal periodic review (UPR) should be a cooperative mechanism with consideration given to the capacity-building needs of the State concerned. Moreover, technical cooperation should be based on the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity and avoid politicization. Subsequently, Council resolution 5/1 on institution-building of the Human Rights Council further underlines these principles and creates a distinct agenda item (item 10) for technical assistance and capacity-building.

Notable progress has been made over the past decade. There is now a need to be forward-looking by building on past success and addressing challenges. Within the Council, concerns over the politicization and potential “misuse” of item 10 to highlight country-specific human rights situations should be addressed by facilitating genuine and constructive dialogue and actions within the Council’s current institutional framework. On the ground, technical assistance should take on a more systemic and long-term approach, with proper follow-up, effective cross-agencies coordination within the United Nations system, and due attention given to the priorities of the State concerned. Innovative South-South cooperation should also be promoted.

Against this backdrop and following the tenth anniversary of the Council in 2016, the theme of this year’s panel discussion is **“A decade of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the Human Rights Council: challenges and the way forward”.** It offers a timely opportunity to reflect on the progress and challenges in this area, and to deliberate on ways that the Council and all relevant stakeholders can enhance a constructive dialogue and foster more effective technical cooperation and capacity-building going forward.

**Objectives**

The panel discussion aims to facilitate an exchange of views on the Council’s role, progress, challenges and future direction – as well as the crucial roles of the States, the OHCHR and other United Nations agencies and stakeholders – in promoting technical cooperation and capacity-building. Specifically, the panel will address the following key questions:

1. How should the Council enhance its actions and deliberation under agenda item 10 in order to facilitate a genuine and constructive dialogue, build trust, avoid politicization, and achieve a more effective outcome in strengthening the capacities of States, as envisaged by the United Nations Member States over a decade ago and as reflected in the principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 60/251 and the Council’s institutional-building package?
2. What are the progress made and challenges encountered in activities aimed at enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building undertaken since the establishment of the Council? What are the key lessons learned, based on the practical experiences of States, the OHCHR, other United Nations agencies and stakeholders? Looking ahead, how should technical cooperation activities, including South-South cooperation, be improved in order to bring even more concrete changes on the ground and better respond to the needs and requests of the States concerned in the implementation of their international human rights obligations and recommendations of human rights mechanisms, such as the universal periodic review, treaty bodies and special procedures?

Expert panellists and participants are invited to present their views and experiences relating to these questions, and comment on the findings of the report produced by OHCHR. The OHCHR identifies a number of experiences and lessons learned which could serve to animate the debate. The latest report presented to the Council by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (A/HRC/34/74) facilitated a systematic information-gathering for the preparation of the OHCHR report. The OHCHR report underlines the following components of effective technical cooperation:

1. Building and strengthening national frameworks and institutions for the protection of human rights;
2. Supporting national development goals and human rights commitments and obligations;
3. Formulating and implementing technical cooperation programmes in consultation with the broadest possible participation;
4. Support to follow-up of recommendations of human rights mechanisms;
5. Cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes and regional organizations.

**Programme**

**Chair**

**H.E. Mr. Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli**

President of the Human Rights Council

**Opening statement**

**Mr. Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein**

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Moderator**

**H.E. Mr. Sek Wannamethee**

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva

**Presentations by panellists**

***The Human Rights Council and agenda item 10: reflections and a vision for realizing the Council’s full potential***

**H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow**

Ambassador of Thailand to France, former President of the Human Rights Council (2010-2011) and initial champion of the first HRC resolution on the enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights (resolution 18/18)

***Creating greater impact on the ground: challenges, lessons learned and the way forward***

**Ms. Maria Luisa Silva**

Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Office in Geneva

**Mr. Hassane Boukili**

Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Morocco in Geneva

**Ms. Claire Hubert**

Project Manager at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Norway

***Building on past success and dealing with the challenges: ideas for strengthening technical cooperation in the Human Rights Council***

**Mr. Marc Limon**

Executive Director of the Universal Rights Group (URG)

**Format**

After the OHCHR opening statement, the moderator will introduce panellists who will speak in two slots. The initial presentations by the first two panellists will be followed by the first round of an interactive discussion with comments and questions from the floor. The remaining three panellists will then make their initial presentations, to be followed by the second round of comments and questions from the floor. The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list. States and observers, including representatives of civil society, take the floor for a 2-minute intervention each, followed by responses and closing remarks from panellists and the moderator.

**Expected outcomes**

The panel discussion will enable States and relevant stakeholders to:

* reflect on the achievements and challenges of the Council’s actions and deliberation under agenda item 10 over the past decade, based on the principles and expectations set forth when the Council was established;
* consider the future direction of technical cooperation and share their visions for the way forward;
* learn from shared practical experiences and good practices undertaken by States and the OHCHR on how to take a systematic and holistic approach to technical cooperation activities and reflect on the main components of effective technical cooperation that engender more concrete results on the ground;
* understand the important role of technical cooperation in assisting States in the implementation of their human rights obligations and recommendations of human rights mechanisms, such as the universal periodic review and special procedures;
* reflect on the cooperation among States to implement their human rights obligations and recommendations of human rights mechanisms, as well as the roles of the OHCHR and United Nations agencies in matching and supporting the capacity-building needs of the States;
* better understand how the OHCHR and other United Nations agencies can constitute useful bridge builders between government and civil society through technical cooperation and OHCHR and other United Nations entities to learn how to strengthen further their respective work;
* deepen their understanding on the importance of carrying out technical cooperation in the framework of the High Commissioner’s comprehensive and global mandate, in consultation with and with the consent of the States concerned, and taking into account their needs and priorities;
* develop a more complete understanding of why sustainable technical cooperation activities require long-term commitments;
* reflect on the role of technical cooperation in supporting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Background documents**

1. [Human Rights Council resolution 33/28](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/33/28) of 30 September 2016 on enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights and previous resolutions of the same title
2. OHCHR report [A/HRC/35/20](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/35/20) on progress and challenges encountered in the main activities aimed at enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building undertaken since the establishment of the Human Rights Council
3. Reports of the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights to the Human Rights Council (most recent report being [A/HRC/34/74](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/74))
4. [General Assembly resolution 60/251](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/60/251) of 15 March 2006 on the Human Rights Council
5. [Human Rights Council resolution 5/1](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/5/1) of 18 June 2007 on institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council

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