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**Statement by Mr. Eric Tistounet, Chief of the Human Rights Council Branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

At the opening of the twenty-third session of

the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

Monday, 22 July 2019, 11 a.m.

Palais des Nations, Salle XX

M. Le Vice-président du Conseil des droits de l’homme,

Mme. La Présidente du Comité consultatif,

Distingués membres du Comité,

Excellences,

Mesdames, Messieurs,

J’ai l’honneur et le plaisir de vous accueillir ici aujourd'hui à l’ouverture de cette vingt-troisième session du Comité consultatif du Conseil des droits de l’homme.

Le Vice-président du Conseil vient de vous donner un aperçu des activités du Conseil des droits de l’homme. Je vais de mon côté, conformément à notre pratique établie, vous faire part de certains développements récents dans le travail du Haut-Commissariat aux droits de l’homme (HCDH), et aussi généralement au sein des Nations Unies; développements ayant une pertinence particulière pour les activités et priorités de votre Comité.

Distinguished Members of the Advisory Committee,

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This anniversary creates a momentum for the international community to step up its efforts to make children thrive, and to renew their commitment to protect and promote all their human rights. While notable progress has been achieved in the past three decades, significant challenges remain, in particular for girls, children with disabilities and children in disadvantaged and vulnerable situations. Allow me to highlight that the Office is organizing a three-day commemorative conference in Geneva on 18 November and an event at the UN headquarters in New York on 20 November.

[Past mandates]

Distinguished Members,

Allow me now to continue with some of the other topics your Committee has worked on previously, starting with **corruption**. The High Commissioner presented to the Council in June a summary report of the expert workshop on good practices of United Nations-system support to States in preventing and fighting against corruption, with a focus on human rights. The report noted that combating corruption requires a coherent, holistic approach that seeks to prevent and suppress corrupt behavior. International human rights law and international anti-corruption law share the same principles of integrity, transparency, accountability and participation, which are also key principles of good governance.

Moreover, in relation to another previous study by your Committee, the Office of the High Commissioner submitted a report to the Council on the **implementation and enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights**. The report reflected that the universal periodic review is considered as a key entry point for integrating human rights into development efforts while enhancing cooperative endeavors at the national level by Member States, the United Nations and the wider international community on the implementation of recommendations from all human rights mechanisms. The report concluded that the resulting compact between Governments, the United Nations system and the international community on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with human rights at their core, is crucial to the success of the prevention agenda of the Secretary-General and of the Sustainable Development Goals.

[Current mandates]

Turning now to the current mandates, namely on **national policies and human rights,** in which your Committee has been working in the past year, the Office of the High Commissioner prepared a report on practices and experience from around the world in mainstreaming human rights into national policies based on international human rights norms and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. There are examples of progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, however, much more needs to be done. Many countries are still far from achieving the goal of gender equality, which is also a driver for other Sustainable Development Goals, as women’s inequality remains powerfully entrenched as an obstacle to political empowerment, economic opportunity, physical safety, equal pay and individual freedom of choice. The meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which was concluded last week in New York, represent an important milestone that requires immediate, accelerated action, including stronger partnerships between stakeholders at all levels, to further the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

[New mandates]

Distinguished Members,

Let me now refer to the new mandate of the Advisory Committee relating to **new and emerging digital technologies and human rights**, which your Committee will begin discussing this week. Technology offers the world unprecedented opportunities. It is driving widespread social change and may provide solutions to environmental stress. However, if human rights are not considered as innovations are rolled out, they will bring new and potentially grave human rights challenges. Unequal access to technologies and increasingly powerful algorithms contribute significantly to discrimination and inequality. The digital space raises many difficult issues, in relation to privacy, freedom of expression, hate speech, discrimination, violence and exploitation (including against children), and sexual violence. The rise of powerful technology companies challenges the capacity of States and requires new strategies to ensure human rights protection.

The Office has made significant progress in this regard. For instance, in a report submitted to the Council in 2018, the Office developed a guidance on privacy protection in the context of government surveillance and against privacy invasion by private sector actors. It highlighted human rights-based responses to threats emanating from data-driven technologies and provides a set of minimum standards for adequate data privacy legislation.

The Office organized and participated in several regional and international public events that helped to clarify ways to address threats to the digital civic space, such as privacy violations, hate speech, disinformation, content moderation by online platforms and non-transparent, automated decision-making. For instance, the High Commissioner conducted a mission to the Silicon Valley in April, where she pressed tech companies and interlocutors to employ human rights as a fundamental guide to the development of tech products and policies. She also stressed the importance of cross-sector collaboration between the human rights and technology communities.

Furthermore, the Council mandated your Committee to prepare a report on the current levels of **representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms** and to include good practices by States in nominating, electing and appointing candidates to ensure balanced gender representation. On this regard, the underrepresentation of women in international human rights mechanisms affects the quality, impact, and legitimacy of these instruments. The limited participation of women in these spaces serves as another stark example of the exclusion of women from positions of authority, and affects their right to equality for all.

Distinguished Members,

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity and join the Vice-President in expressing gratitude to **Ms. Hananía De Varela**, **Mr. Lebedev**, **Mr. Obata**, and **Mr. Ziegler** for their invaluable contributions and dedicated service to this Committee. I hope that we will have other opportunities to continue our cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights and would like to wish you all the best for your future endeavors.

Let me conclude here by assuring you the full support of the Secretariat for your activities. I wish you very fruitful deliberations at the present session.

Thank you.