**Programme of Work**

**THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER**

**10:00-10:30 (local time in Geneva) Item 1: Opening Meeting**

1. Statement by the President of the Human Rights Council, **H.E Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger**
2. Statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, **H.E. Ms. Michelle Bachelet**
3. Statement by the Acting Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, **Ms. Pramila Patten**
4. Statement by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, **Mr. Fernand de Varennes**
5. Remarks by the Chair of the Forum, **Ms. Natalie Alkiviadou**

**10:30-13:00 (local time in Geneva) Item 2: Causes, scale and impact of hate speech targeting minorities in social media**

Worldwide on social media, minorities are the target of most of the incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, and other forms of intolerance and racist expressions that constitute hate speech. Blaming and scapegoating of minorities is at times exploited for political reasons, or it is present owing to longstanding and entrenched stigmatization and marginalization. Hate speech is thus often a manifestation of deep-rooted bias, racism, intolerance and discrimination. Hateful messages may fall on particularly fertile ground where there are wider social, economic or political problems or divisions in society, and they can be an early warning sign of possible aggravation in the form of incitement to violence against minorities and other marginalized groups. Therefore, the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred may become the principal tools and early warning signs of organized and systematic violence, which may even contribute to conflicts and instability, as well as to enabling and perpetrating atrocity crimes against minorities.

Participants will be invited to describe the extent to which hate speech on social media targets minorities in particular, and the causes for the apparent overwhelming targeting of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. They should also consider how misinformation and disinformation can serve to create conditions conducive to the spread of racism, intolerance and discrimination.

Participants will offer recommendations on how to address the root causes and prevent the possible escalations of the scourge of hate speech on social media, and on how to better identify and acknowledge the disproportionate extent it affects minorities. Recommendations will also be made as to what initiatives could be put forward in order to focus on efforts to protect the main victims of hate speech, namely minorities.

Participants will also discuss the ways to address the consequences of hate speech, bearing in mind a gender perspective, as minority women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, which sometimes makes them more vulnerable to hate speech and its consequences. This is particularly true in situations of conflict, where minority women are at high risk of violence and abuse.

* **Mr. Iulius Rostas,** Visiting Professor at the National School of Political Science and Administration in Bucharest and Central European University
* **Ms. Beena J Pallical,** General Secretary of the Economic and Educational rights wing within National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)
* **Ms. Lecia Brooks,** Chief of Staff, Southern Poverty Law Centre

**Interactive Dialogue**

**13:00-15:00 Lunch break**

**15:00-18:00 (local time in Geneva) Item 3: International legal and institutional framework**

Although there is no international legal definition of hate speech, international law prohibits advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes an incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence. In the absence of such a definition, the term “hate speech” may risk being abused to impose uniformity of views, curtailing dissent and shrinking civic space. It is thus essential to also ensure the protection of the right to freedom of expression when addressing hate speech. Freedom of expression is only subject to a very small number of strict permissible restrictions under international law.

Participants will discuss the relevant international human rights obligations, in particular the importance of ensuring the complementarity between articles 19 (freedom of expression) and 20 (prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and articles 4 (prohibition of incitement to racial discrimination and hatred) and 5 (the right of everyone to enjoy, inter alia, the freedom of opinion and expression) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

They will discuss how legislative, human rights and institutional frameworks can address impunity and ensure accountability for hate crimes against minorities that are triggered by online hate speech. Participants will offer possible effective solutions, inter alia, within the context of implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is aimed at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; providing access to justice for all; and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

In order to further clarify the international norms, participants will consider:

(a) Human Rights Committee general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression (CCPR/C/GC/34);

(b) Human Rights Committee general recommendation No. 35 (2013) on combating racist hate speech (CERD/C/GC/35);

(c) Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence ([A/HRC/22/17/Add.4](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/22/17/Add.4), appendix);

(d) Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights and its 18 commitments (A/HRC/40/58, annexes I and II).

* **Mr. Tarlach McGonagle,** Professor of law at the Universities of Leiden and Amsterdam
* **Mr. Sangyun Kim,** Professor of law at the Graduate School of Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan
* **Ms. Agustina Del Campo,** Director, Center for Studies on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (CELE), Universidad de Palermo, Buenos Aires

**Interactive Dialogue**

**FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER**

**10:00-13:00 (local time in Geneva) Item 4: Regulation of online hate speech: the role and responsibility of intergovernmental organizations, States, internet companies and social media platforms**

Some progress has been made by States and by Internet companies and social media platforms in addressing hate speech on social media, although more is needed in light of the scale and specific targeting, and therefore vulnerability, of minorities. Addressing hate speech implies keeping the scourge of hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence against minorities.

Participants will convey examples of best practices by States to address online hate speech against minorities through both prevention and redress strategies, and to balance it with their obligation to protect the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The role of States, Internet companies and social media platforms is also important in the current circumstances of hate speech on social media against minorities in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as pointed out by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues in a press release in March 2020. A [United Nations guidance note on addressing and countering COVID-19-related hate speech](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Guidance%20on%20COVID-19%20related%20Hate%20Speech.pdf), issued on 11 May 2020, included recommendations that social media and tech companies should ensure that their hate speech policies involved an evaluation of the social and political context, the status and intent of the speaker, the content and extent of dissemination and the likelihood of harm to users and the public, reflecting the six-part threshold test contained in the Rabat Plan of Action.

Participants will discuss the role played by intergovernmental organizations, States, Internet companies and social media platforms, and will also discuss the responsibilities of those actors in addressing online hate speech and ensuring that their business operations are in full conformity with international human rights norms and standards, including the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework. Participants will also bring examples of effective solutions put in place by Internet companies and social media platforms.

* **Mr. Sajjad Hassan,** Convenor, The South Asia Collective
* **Mr. Gerald Tapuka,** Senior Correspondent and Deputy Director for Africa at The Organisation for World Peace
* **Ms Sejal Parmar,** Lecturer at School of Law at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

**Interactive Dialogue**

**13:00-15:00 Lunch break**

**15:00-17:45 (local time in Geneva) Item 5: Towards a safer space for minorities: positive initiatives to address online hate speech: the role of national human rights institutions, human rights organizations, civil society and other stakeholders**

Hate speech against minorities on social media often occurs within a larger context, including the propagation of fake news, misinformation and disinformation, and it may be used to serve certain political and/or ideological goals and interests. This can contribute to a climate of fear among minority communities, as it may create or contribute to growing racism, intolerance and discrimination, undermining the respect of human dignity and the protection of the human rights of minorities. Therefore, it is often necessary to focus on the role of influencers and leaders, including at international, regional and national levels, in order to find possible pathways to engage them in the fight against hate speech targeting minorities on social media.

International and regional organizations, national human rights institutions and civil society can also play an important role in supporting minorities affected by hate speech, including a preventive role, through gathering knowledge and information and ensuring effective action, including through facilitating or fulfilling the critical need of data collection on the degree to which minorities are targeted on social media by hate speech, including through research and advocacy for combating impunity and calling for accountability.

Participants will further discuss the role of international cooperation and the sharing of best practices in the effective implementation of international and regional instruments on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities. In addition, participants will address the important role of a new generation of young digital citizens and of new tools and platforms, as well as the need to empower minorities to stand up to hate speech.

Participants will also discuss the role of other stakeholders, including religious leaders and faith actors. In this context, participants will consider the [Beirut Declaration](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/21451/18CommitmentsonFaithforRights.pdf) on Faith for Rights and its [18 commitments](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/21451/18CommitmentsonFaithforRights.pdf) as well as the #Faith4Rights toolkit.

* **Mr. Thomas Hughes,** Director, Facebook Oversight Board Administration
* **Mr. Andre Oboler,** Social media and online public diplomacy expert and Managing Director, Online Hate Prevention Institute
* **Mr. Jerald Joseph,** Commissioner of Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

**Interactive Dialogue**

**17:45-18:00 (local time in Geneva) Item 6: Concluding remarks**

Concluding remarks by **Mr. Fernand de Varennes**, Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Concluding remarks by **Ms. Natalie Alkiviadou,** Chairperson of the Forum on Minority Issues

***Session closes***