

**European Union**

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

*Intersessional meeting of the HRC - Human rights and the 2030 Agenda: Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*

**Session 2**

**Geneva, 16th of January 2019**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Human Rights and sustainable and inclusive development lie at the core of the common values and objectives of the EU, as set out in its Treaties. We warmly welcome this intersessional meeting that provides a space for dialogue on ways to operationalize the synergies between these two frameworks. The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as tackling extreme poverty and hunger constitute the basis for achieving equality, peace and sustainable development.

The EU was instrumental in shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, together with its Member States, has committed to being a frontrunner also in its implementation, both within the EU and by supporting implementation efforts in other countries, in particular those most in need, through its external policies.

In the past five years, the EU as a whole has made progress towards almost all SDGs. Both in our internal and external action we remain strongly attached to the principle that sustainable development cannot be reached while side-lining human rights*.* The 2030 Agenda is a transformative political roadmap for ensuring inclusive and sustainable development for all, without exclusion of any kind. As recognized in the Agenda itself, national and international efforts to meet these ambitious goals and targets must be designed and implemented in a manner consistent with states´ international obligations and commitments, including those outlined in international human rights law. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birth right of all human beings and the lack of development cannot be invoked to justify the violation of these rights.

The human rights treaties are particularly relevant to the principle of ensuring that no one is left behind and the commitment of the international community to reach those furthest behind first. The UN core human rights treaties all set out a range of protections from discrimination and abuse and underline measures to promote equality and human dignity. Addressing gender inequality, ensuring the rights of those marginalized and in vulnerable situations and promoting the rights of the child are prerequisites for the successful implementation of the SDGs.

The EU´s Foreign and Security Policy outlines a strong commitment to a rule-based international order for the promotion of peace, security, sustainable development and human rights. The legally binding norms and standards in the human rights treaties and the guidance offered by their follow-up mechanisms helps build complementarity for the practical implementation of the SDGs.

In May 2017, the Council adopted a new European Consensus on Development "Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future”. The document which defines a collective development policy for the EU reaffirms that the EU and its Member States remain committed to a rights-based approach to development encompassing all human rights.

This approach entails promoting the human rights dimension of the SDGs, while also promoting inclusion and participation, non-discrimination, equality, equity, transparency and accountability as crosscutting principles in their implementation.

To the EU the application of human rights standards and principles throughout the development programming cycle helps improve the design of development projects and programs. For us the added value of mirroring the ambition of the legally binding human rights standards in the implementation of the SDGs is the shift in focus to identifying and addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and injustice, rather than just treating their symptoms.

Our own experience is that our tools, guidance and training on HRBA have resulted in a deeper context analysis and stronger risk assessments, including pre-screening of unintended negative consequences for human rights enjoyment of stakeholders. The HRB- approach helps further specify actions under targets and indicators, by trying to mirror the ambition of the legally binding standards. The strong focus on participation also builds stronger ownership of different stakeholders and highlights accountability throughout operations.

Strong civil society participation, including that of human rights defenders, is a priority for the EU also in multilateral fora. As stated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the 20th anniversary celebration of the declaration of human rights defenders *'The work of human rights defenders benefits states, by shaping policies that are responsive to real needs and contribute to better development outcomes*.' In our view, the High-Level Political Forum could be further strengthened by the best practice of the Human Rights Council to widely engage with civil society, including posting their contributions online.

Ensuring policy coherence and operationalizing the mutually reinforcing potential of the 2030 Agenda and the legally binding human rights framework requires political will and commitment to a whole-of-government and multisectoral approach. Within the UN, strengthening the centrality of the human rights pillar across the UN system is essential, not least in light of ongoing reforms.

The analysis and recommendations generated by the Treaty Bodies, the Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) are a useful tool when striving to ensure synergies and policy coherence between SDGs and human rights. While we look forward to the exchange on best practices and challenges in session three, we would welcome the panellists views on how the human rights mechanisms´ recommendations and concluding observations could be reflected in the HLPF review process to ensure these synergies are maximized also in discussions at the UN.

Thank you.