**35th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Panel discussion on realizing the right to health
by enhancing capacity-building in public health**

*Draft concept note (as of 1 June 2017)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **8 June 2017, 9 a.m. – noon, Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva** (will be broadcast live and archived on http://webtv.un.org) |
| **Objectives:** | The panel discussion, with the participation of States, relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, academics, experts, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations, has the following objectives:1. To recognize that the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is an important human right, which is also a key goal of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to emphasize the importance of enhancing capacity-building in public health to realize the right to health, to call upon States to take the primary responsibility for strengthening their capacity-building in public health and to reaffirm the necessity of international cooperation in this area.2. To exchange good experiences and successful practises on strengthening national public health capacity of all countries, with the aim of realizing the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and to identify the challenges faced by States and other relevant stakeholders in the above-mentioned endeavours.3. To call upon all States and other relevant stakeholders to put enhancing capacity-building in public health as a priority, in particular to promote capacity-building of public health in developing countries through providing all kinds of assistance and support, so as to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.4. To invite United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to strengthen coordination and further allocate resources to strengthen their efforts to global capacity-building in public health. |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Mr. Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli**, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statement:** | **Ms. Kate Gilmore**,United Nations DeputyHigh Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Keynote speaker:** | **Dr. Margaret Chan**, Director-General of the World Health Organization |
| **Moderator:** | **H.E. Ms. Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko**, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland |
| **Panellists:** | * **Mr. Tolbert Nyenswah**, Deputy Minister of Health of Liberia and Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia
* **Dr. Lorenzo Somarriba López**, National Director of Public Health at the Ministry of Public Health of Cuba
* **Dr. Ren Minghui**, Assistant Director-General for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases, World Health Organization
* **Mr. Gong Xiangguang**, Deputy Director General, Department of Law and Legislation, National Health and Family Planning Commission of China
* **Ms. Ilona Kickbusch**, Director of the Global Health Centre and Adjunct Professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
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| **Outcome:** | The panel discussion will provide an effective platform for States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to exchange experiences and practices on realizing the right to health through enhancing capacity-building in public health.On the basis of the discussion, a summary report of the panel will be prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-sixth session. It will help to build consensus on the importance of the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as enhancing capacity building in public health, to summarize the best practices and main challenges on enhancing capacity building in public health of states and other relevant stakeholders, and to discuss the role of the United Nations mechanisms including Human Rights Council in realizing the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. |
| **Mandate:** | On 1 July 2016, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 32/16 entitled “Promoting the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health through enhancing capacity-building in public health”. In the resolution, the Human Rights Council decided to convene a panel discussion, at its thirty-fifth session, to exchange experiences and practices on promoting the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health by enhancing capacity-building in public health, and that the discussion would be fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The Council requested the High Commissioner to prepare a summary report on the panel discussion for submission at its thirty-sixth session. |
| **Format:**  | Opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by two rounds of an interactive discussion. 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 (45 minutes in total), followed by responses from panellists (15 minutes). A second round of interventions from the floor (45 minutes) will be followed by responses and concluding remarks from the panellists (15 minutes). States, international organizations, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and other observers are encouraged to intervene in an interactive way, through questions, comments and sharing of experiences, good practices and challenges, as well as suggested recommendations, with a view to contributing to a constructive and inclusive debate. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Accessibility** | In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to allow them to participate in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, this panel discussion will be made accessible to persons with disabilities as provided for in the resolution. During the debate, real-time captioning will be provided and webcasted. Physical accessibility will be promoted by making room facilities wheelchair friendly. As per established guidelines, braille printing will be available on demand. Despite the best efforts made by the United Nations office at Geneva (UNOG), it was not possible to secure international sign interpretation for this panel. The *Accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities* is available for further information.[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| **Background:** | The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a fundamental human right indispensable for the exercise of other human rights. Every human being is entitled to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health conducive to living a life in dignity. The right to health is recognized by several international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also highlights in its Goal 3 the importance of ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.Nevertheless, the full enjoyment of the right to health still remains a distant goal throughout the world. It is experiencing the continued deleterious impact of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, tuberculosis, malaria and an increasing number of epidemics and health emergencies, as well as non-communicable diseases. The scale and magnitude of these health conditions place major demands on health resources and capabilities of many countries, in particular developing countries, including the least developed countries, small islands developing states and landlocked developing countries.Enhancing capacity-building in public health is extremely important to realizing the right of everyone to the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Member States should take the primary responsibility for strengthening their capacity-building in public health, to establish and improve public health legal system, implement the International Health Regulations (2005), improve the public health service system, guarantee universal and equal access to services, strengthen health education, improve people’s health awareness and physical fitness, strengthen the efforts to prevent and control infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, schistosomiasis, and provide health services to vulnerable and high-risk groups. Allocation of resources in a fair and reasonable manner, as well as sufficient public health personnel, certified medicines and sufficient hospital equipment supplies, should serve as prerequisites for quality health-care services.Capacity-building in public health must also be pursued through international cooperation, especially through the provision of financial, technical cooperation to strengthen national health systems in developing countries, training of personnel and through access to medicines that are affordable, safe, efficacious and of quality, including generic medicines, biological products and diagnostics. States should fulfil their respective official development assistance commitments on the basis of mutual respect and equality, including the commitments by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance. United Nations agencies, in particular health-related organizations, should in accordance with their respective mandates and as appropriate, continue to actively address public health concerns in the field of development, actively support capacity-building in global public health and provide technical and other relevant assistance to developing countries. |
| **Background documents:** | * [Human Rights Council resolution 32/16](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/32/16) of 1 July 2016 entitled “Promoting the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health through enhancing capacity-building in public health”
* [General Assembly resolution 70/1](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1) of 25 September 2015 entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
* Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comments [No. 14](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f2000%2f4&Lang=en) (2000), [No. 17](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fGC%2f17&Lang=en) (2005), and [No. 22](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fGC%2f22&Lang=en) (2016)
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1. See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/AboutCouncil.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/AboutCouncil.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)