

## **39<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**

### **Item 5**

**19 September 2018**

#### **Joint Statement on Intergovernmental Working Groups**

Mr President,

The intergovernmental working groups and other intersessional fora established under the auspices of this Council have a critical role to play in strengthening the protections afforded by international human rights law and ensuring the implementation of existing obligations.

We take this opportunity to recall that intergovernmental working groups and other bodies set up by the Council shall, like the Council itself, and unless decided otherwise by the Council, apply the rules of procedure established for the Main Committees of the General Assembly. By disregarding these rules of procedure we can undermine the very outcomes of the work these intergovernmental groups were tasked to achieve in the first place.

Accordingly, each working group is required to elect a Chairperson, by secret ballot, for a fixed term, and on the basis of experience, personal competence, and equitable geographical distribution. If a Chair is unable to perform his or her functions, a successor must be elected by the membership, using the same criteria. Once elected, the Chair remains, in the exercise of his or her functions, under the authority of the working group. The Chair discharges their functions as an individual, not as a representative of their delegations, and in the best interests of the membership as a whole.

The competence and impartiality of chairpersons, their respect for the applicable rules of procedure, and their efforts to ensure that the views of all Member States are heard

and reflected are essential to ensure that working groups can produce high-quality outcomes able to engender the broadest possible support. While the Council may confer an open-ended mandate, it is the responsibility of each core group to return to the Council for a renewal of its program of work, to ensure that its endeavours and resources reflect, and are accountable to, the democratic will of the members of this Council.

We also stress the importance of ensuring that time and resources are used in the most efficient manner that agendas and papers are circulated in good time and that reports from these working groups fairly reflect the balance of views.

Taking into account that most chairpersons discharge these functions admirably, we recall the need for a strict application of this set of rules and standards by all, to help secure a conducive environment for the constructive engagement of all stakeholders with due respect to rules of procedure set up by the General Assembly and established practice.

Thank you, Mr President.