

Human Rights Council – 41st session

Item 3 General Debate

1 July 2019

Joint Statement on behalf of Mountains Group - Funding for the OHCHR

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has a crucial role in supporting and promoting “all human rights for all”. In this regard, it is critical that the Office of the High Commissioner has independence in order to carry out its functions. An important element of independence is the receipt of clear and sufficient core funding for the mandated functions of the Office.

In this regard we wish to convey our concern regarding the funding situation affecting the Office and the UN’s human rights mechanisms. The combination of: delays in payments of UN member states’ assessed contributions to the regular budget; the 25% cut to travel of UN representatives, including treaty body experts and Special Procedure mandate holders; and other budget cuts, is likely to adversely impact on the capacity of the Office and various human rights mechanisms to carry out their mandates effectively.

In April, the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies were informed that, due to the financial situation, a number of planned sessions of treaty bodies might need to be cancelled. While we understand that situation has been avoided for 2019, the ongoing financial situation of the UN means arrangements for 2020 remain in doubt.

We understand that other independent expert mechanisms such as the Special Procedures, and other mechanisms created by the Human Rights Council, including fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry, may also be hampered in carrying out their mandates to monitor and investigate human rights violations.

Against the worrying background of a global pushback against the promotion and protection of human rights, we urge all UN member states to:

- Pay any outstanding assessed contributions without further delay in order to assure the functioning of the UN's human rights mechanisms.
- Prioritise securing adequate funding for the UN's human rights pillar, with the promotion and protection of human rights being indispensable to development, peace and security.
- Initiate, ahead of the 2020-2021 budget negotiations, discussions on how to reverse the trend of reduced regular budgets for OHCHR and ensure that the UN's human rights mechanisms are not disproportionately affected by overall cuts to the UN budget.

373 Words