



General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 September 2020

English only

Human Rights Council

Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-11591(E)



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COVID-19: Proposals for Response and Recovery

On 1 July 2020, the United Nations (UN) Security Council adopted a resolution calling for a global COVID-19 ceasefire, as the Secretary-General had urged months earlier. Their appeal has fallen flat. Council members should use their next period downtime to look at how it might still do some good progress.

Resolution 2532 does offer Guterres a platform, requesting that he “provide updates to the Security Council on the UN efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic in countries in situations of armed conflict or affected by humanitarian crises”. This matter is partly technical: The Secretary-General will need to keep the Council up to date on how peacekeeping operations, political missions and other actors are adapting to the virus. But with a bit of creativity, he can also interpret this mandate as permitting him to talk far more generally with Council members about how the pandemic is affecting the international security landscape.

The International Organization For Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) still optimistic that such appropriate measures and arrangements still come out of the Secretary-General’s call or out of Resolution 2532. Especially if the Human Rights Council and other United Nations bodies will mobilize their efforts to support the implementation of the Secretary-General’s call and of Resolution 2532.

We suggest that another resolution should be issued by the Human Rights Council, and should be more procedural, noting that it could create a formal framework for the member states and the United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations to support, monitor and update the Security Council resolution on ceasefire implementation in which the Human Rights Council could use its human rights enforcement power to compel states or not state actors to honour COVID-19 ceasefires.

After all, the coronavirus is not merely a pathogen causing a health crisis but also is a catalyst for economic shocks that can lead to political crises and disorder. It is not clear how the disease will play out region by region – and so far it has not been quite as destructive in some weak countries as seemed likely in March, but it would bet that the health, economic and social fallout from COVID-19 will not lead to more political instability.

However, any resolution be may be adopted by the Council should be based on the information that could be offered by the Secretary-General as a platform to report on where conflict parties were taking real steps to contain the virus and where others were failing to do so.

The concerned United Nations Special Rapporteurs should take an expansive view of his mandates to report on COVID-19 to the Council offering Council members early warnings of potential virus-related crises and conflicts based on UN economic and humanitarian analysis as well political reporting.

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs should focus also on the impact of impacts of the global COVID-19 and present to the Human Rights Council policy proposals for response and recovery, including the impact of COVID-19 on the least developed countries (LDCs), with low levels of income, limited budget resources, weak health systems and high vulnerability to disasters and shocks, are especially vulnerable to the health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Understanding the extent of this impact and the related risks and strengthening the resilience of LDCs, including those approaching graduation, is critical.

The International Organization For Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) is deeply concerned about the possible negative impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on LDCs. The Committee is also anxious that Covid-19 may negatively impact the preparations of LDCs that are graduating and those to be considered for graduation at the next triennial review. The objective of this note is to inform stakeholders on how the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) intends to address these impacts of Covid-19 in its work on LDCs.

Covid-19 threatens to have devastating effects on the least developed countries (LDC). Their public health systems are often underdeveloped and unable to cope with widespread pandemic. Lockdowns and social distancing measures to stop the spread are more difficult to

implement and can have particularly debilitating impacts on livelihoods. Moreover, LDC economies have little resilience to shocks such as the collapse of global demand, exacerbating the socio-economic consequences of the crisis.

The next triennial review of the list of LDCs is scheduled to take place from 22-26 February 2021, in accordance with the mandate of the CDP. The intention is to undertake the review at this date unless Covid-19 related disruptions would make it impossible. At the triennial review, the CDP will, as usual, consider the scores - based on the established LDC criteria (i.e., gross national income per capita, human assets index and economic and environmental vulnerability index) - for all United Nations Member States in developing regions. The LDC criteria for the 2021 triennial review will be calculated on basis of the most recent data available at the end of 2020 and will include data up to 2019. Hence, the LDC criteria scores will not show the impact of Covid-19.

This material will include information on Covid-19 and its impacts. In obtaining and reviewing this information, the CDP will also consult with the countries concerned. In case any of these countries are recommended for graduation, the CDP will also draw on this information, inter alia, for suggesting priorities and support needs required to ensure a smooth transition from the LDC category.

At the 2021 triennial review, the CDP will also identify countries that meet the criteria for graduation for the first time. The LDC indicators will not reflect the impact of Covid-19 in 2021. However, the CDP will start reviewing information on Covid-19 and its country-specific impacts after countries that meet the graduation criteria for the first time have been identified. The relevant information will also be reflected in the additional material to be considered at the subsequent triennial review scheduled for 2024.
