

May XX, 2020

UPR Secretariat

Human Rights Council

United Nations

Geneva, Switzerland

Dear XXX,

The undersigned civil society organizations request an opportunity to provide supplements to submissions made to the 36th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group, tentatively scheduled for November 2 to 13, 2020. In order for civil society contributions to meaningfully support the work of the Human Rights Council, we also request that the supplemental submissions be summarized and published by the UPR Secretariat and shared as an addendum to the summary of stakeholders' information.

On March 20, 2020, the Bureau of the Human Rights Council decided to postpone the 36th session of the Working Group, which was scheduled to take place May 4 to 15, 2020. The decision was made because “of the spread of COVID-19 and the emergency measures that have been taken by affected countries worldwide, including the host country, Switzerland.”

As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic is having a catastrophic impact on millions of people around the world, especially the most vulnerable in our societies, who are suffering the worst of and will undoubtedly be the last to recover from this global health and economic crisis. Too many will not even survive the pandemic. We strongly believe, and we have no doubt you agree, that the international human rights system should continue to vigorously monitor, document and report on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on marginalized populations, and encourage Governments and other stake-holders to take all necessary measures to protect everyone’s human rights without discrimination or distinction of any kind - an imperative in times of global crisis.

The upcoming UPR Working Group session will have profound significance as the first session to examine Member States’ human rights records in the wake of COVID-19. It is critical that this November session ensures that government responses to the current pandemic, including recovery and relief measures, protect basic human rights and are compatible with international human rights commitments and obligations. The objectives of identifying effective state practices, and highlighting gaps in human rights protections that result from COVID-19, are key to strengthening compliance with international standards, and articulating the necessary conditions for transformative and lasting change.

Civil society submissions to the 36th session were made in October 2019, more than a year before the review is scheduled to occur. Further, given the severe and far-reaching impact of COVID-19 on human rights, some of the information that was provided to the Human Rights Council is insufficient. Allowing civil society groups to formally supplement their submissions is critical to ensuring a more reliable and accurate assessment of governments' compliance with their international human rights obligations, especially since the outset of the COVID-19 crisis.

We thank you in advance for providing sufficient notice with regard to your decision, including timelines for submission of supplemental materials, and any scheduling changes for the upcoming review cycles so that we can effectively contribute to this critical process.

Sincerely,