Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives

Maldives Response to the Proposed Measures by the Bureau of the Human Rights Council

(Enclosure 1)

Bureau Proposal: To streamline the duration of each panel discussion to two hours. This would amount to a net gain of seven meetings per year.

Maldives Response:

The Maldives agrees that streamlined panel discussions may be a necessary measure though it is concerned that the outcome of such discussions are then formalized in reports and incorporated into resolutions, even though the discussion will not reflect the full diversity of views in the Human Rights Council as not all nations will be afforded the opportunity to speak.

Bureau Proposal: To streamline the plenary segment of each country’s UPR to 30 minutes, consisting of 10 minutes for the State under review and 20 minutes for NHRIs and NGOs. This would amount to a net gain of 7 more meetings.

Maldives Response:

Streamlining the UPR adoption process to remove State comments changes the nature of the adoption from one of constructive discussion to one that is more adversarial and against the spirit of the Universal Periodic Review. Being a State-led process, the UPR should continue to include the voices of States. (Consistent with paragraph 30 of A/HRC/RES/5/1 – the Institution Building Package for the Council)

Bureau Proposal: To revert to the speaking limits for general debates and interactive dialogues that prevailed before 2017, namely three and two minutes for Members and Observers respectively. The two minutes for all would continue to apply to panels.

Maldives Response:

The emphasis placed on universality and equal participation at the Human Rights Council, being an intergovernmental organ of the United Nations, should necessarily emphasize the role of states over non-state observers. The Maldives recommends that State Members and State Observers of the Council receive speaking limits of three minutes, and that Non-State Observers receive two minutes. The Maldives concurs with continuing the process of allotting two minutes for speakers at panels, reiterating its concerns regarding the inability for all States to be heard at these panels.
Bureau Proposal: To adopt a decision requesting the UNGA to provide the necessary support for up to twenty fully serviced additional meetings to be held by the HRC annually (USD 223,000)

Maldives Response:

The Maldives supports the request for funding for additional meetings of the Human Rights Council.

Permanent Mission of Thailand

Thailand’s observations on the measures proposed by the Bureau of the President of the Human Rights Council

Thailand appreciates the work done by the Bureau to explore ways to reduce the Council’s workload and optimize the use of limited resources available.

Thailand wishes to make the following observations on the proposed measures:

1. Thailand has no objection to the proposal to reduce the duration of the panel discussion to two hours, as long as it will be applied equally to all panel discussions held in the Council and provided that the Council will need further discussion on how to re-structure the panel discussions in order for them to remain focused, efficient and to the most benefits of States.

2. Thailand wishes to retain the current arrangement concerning the adoption of the UPR outcome.

As a strong proponent of the Universal Periodic Review, Thailand is concerned that the proposed measures pertaining to the adoption of the UPR outcome may be inconsistent with the principles and objectives of the UPR outlined in the HRC Resolution 5/1 (Institution-Building Package).

In particular, the HRC Resolution 5/1 emphasizes, in OP3(e) and OP28, that the country under review should be fully involved in the outcome. Moreover, it explicitly states in OP30 that the member and observer States will be given the opportunity to express their views on the outcome of the review before the plenary takes action on it.

Thailand notes with appreciation the contribution of the NHRIs and NGOs in the review, but their participation should not restrict the opportunities for both the State under review and other States to participate in the plenary, before the Council takes
action on the UPR Working Group report. The proposed allocation of 20 minutes for NHRIs and NGOs would prejudge the meeting proceedings and could result in inefficient time management.

3. In principle, the duration of the general debates may be readjusted in order to allocate, where appropriate, adequate time for issue-specific discussion during thematic interactive dialogues. With regard to the proposal to revert the speaking time limits for general debates and interactive dialogues as prevailed before 2017, there is a need for further clarification. For example, if the duration of panel discussion was also reduced to 2 hours, would that mean a significant reduction in the number of speakers?

4. In principle, the General Assembly should provide the necessary financial support for the Council to fulfil its mandate. In this context, Thailand would appreciate it if the Bureau could provide details on the additional twenty meetings planned per year.

**Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China**
As discussed yesterday, China has reservations on Para 2 and Para 4, regarding the proposed measures for consideration from the President of the Human Rights Council.

We hope that further consultation among all Member States could be held to discuss this President’s proposal.

**Permanent Mission of Japan**
Japan expresses its appreciation for the initiatives of the Office of the President and the Bureau as well as for the extensive efforts of the Working Group members on this issue.

Japan will continue to provide its cooperation to promote the effective and efficient management of the Human Rights Council.

We would like to make the following comments.

1. Enclosure 1.2

   In relation to the adoption of universal periodic reviews, as a Member State, Japan requests that some form of opportunity be provided to make comments during the UPR for States about which there are serious concerns.

2. Enclosure 1.4
For the Human Rights Council to carry out its role effectively, Japan understands that there are financial challenges to be addressed and intends to actively participate in the debate concerning how to effectively and efficiently use the available financial resources. From Japan’s perspective, however, at the current time we believe that there has not yet been sufficient discussion on this issue and therefore Japan cannot accept the current proposal.

3. Enclosure 2.1

In connection with the second point above, Japan cannot accept the proposed Human Rights Council draft decision at this time and calls for c

**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore**

We refer to the proposals by the Bureau of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on the report of the Joint Task Force on the work and functioning of the HRC. Singapore’s views are set out below.

· At the outset, we would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Joint Task Force on the Workload of the Human Rights Council for their comprehensive final report of 24 August 2017. The detailed analysis starkly illustrates the resource challenges faced by the HRC.

· Our delegation has studied the report of the Joint Task Force and the HRC Bureau’s recommendations very carefully. Our preliminary view is that while some of the recommendations proposed by the Bureau could be feasible and acceptable to a majority of the delegations, the specific recommendation on streamlining the plenary segment of each country’s UPR to thirty minutes (from the current duration of 60 minutes) could have broader implications, including but not limited to, contravening the spirit and letter of the Institutional Building Package of HRC resolution 5/1.

· Given the potentially broad implications to member states of some of the Bureau’s recommendations, we regret that member states are given just about one week to submit their views. From our perspective, this is insufficient time for states to digest, consult (with their respective regional groups, political groups and capitals) and discuss these proposals.

· In particular, small delegations in Geneva with limited human resources and covering multiple issues beyond the HRC, may need more time to study the report of the Joint Task Force and the Bureau’s proposals, especially if they have been unable follow this issue closely over the last few months. This short reaction time also prejudices delegations and small states that are not represented in Geneva. We
would appeal to the HRC President to allocate more time for delegations to consider the Bureau’s proposals.

For any solution to the HRC’s workload to be durable, our view is that it is critical to secure broad support and trust of HRC members and Observer States. Recommendations, in particular those with broader implications (e.g. the one on the UPR), should not be railroaded without proper consultation with the broader UN membership. It would be extremely regrettable if we succeed in making administrative gains at the cost of negating trust and solidarity. We are prepared to support the work of the HRC Bureau in constructive ways to achieve our common goals for this issue.