Organizational Meeting on the issue of the number of Human Rights Council meetings

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council presents its compliments to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and has the honour to inform them that an Organizational Meeting will be held on Friday, 20 October at 15:00 in Room XX to consider possible solutions to the issue of the number of Human Rights Council meetings.

The Secretariat has the further honour to recall that on 13 September 2017, the Bureau presented the following four proposed measures to the Human Rights Council for its consideration:

I. To streamline the duration of each panel discussion to two hours (with the expected net gain of seven meetings per year);

II. To streamline the plenary segment of each country’s Universal Periodic Review to thirty minutes, consisting of ten minutes for the State under review and twenty minutes for national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations (with the net gain of seven more meetings per year);

III. To revert to the speaking time 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; and

IV. To adopt a decision requesting the United Nations General Assembly to provide the necessary support for up to twenty fully serviced additional meetings to be held by the Human Rights Council annually (USD 223,000).

Further to the informal consultations held on 25 September and 17 October 2017, and taking into account member States’ views and comments, the Bureau regrets that a consensus could not yet be reached on the proposed measures.

In order to ensure that the 39th Session of the Human Rights Council (September 2018) is able to proceed without interruption due to lack of conference services, the Bureau considers it important to propose that the Council adopt at least a decision seeking additional meetings for 2018 from the General Assembly. Bearing in mind the comments made at the informal consultations, the draft decision has been revised to underline the exceptional nature of this request and the need for the Council to adopt time-saving measures so that this contingent of 20 additional meetings would be utilized in 2018 only and if proved to be absolutely indispensable.

The proposed draft decision of the Council requesting the General Assembly to approve twenty fully serviced additional meetings is attached for the consideration of all Permanent Missions.

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva the assurance of its highest consideration.

18 October 2017