

‘New York perspectives on the General Assembly’s 2021-2026 review of the Human Rights Council’s status’

Luncheon on Thursday May 9th

Concept Note

The Permanent Missions of Iceland to the UN in New York and Geneva, together with the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN and the Universal Rights Group (URG NY) will host a luncheon on “‘New York perspectives on the General Assembly’s 2021-2026 review of the Human Rights Council’s status” on Thursday May 9th.

The objective of the luncheon is to create a platform of informal policy dialogue under Chatham House Rules to discuss New York perspectives on the General Assembly’s 2021-2026 review of the Human Rights Council’s status.

The luncheon will follow the larger pre-Glion policy dialogue on the same topic, co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Iceland to the UN in NY and Geneva, and the Universal Rights Group-NYC. This policy dialogue is one of four preceding the sixth Glion Human Rights Dialogue (Glion VI), organized by Switzerland and the Universal Rights Group, which will be held on 27-28 May 2019 and will focus on the topic: *‘Towards 2026: Perspectives on the future of the Human Rights Council.’*

The luncheon will offer an opportunity for a strategic discussion by Member States on the upcoming 2021-2026 Human Rights Council Review, including on preliminary thinking on this topic in New York (and what preparations remain), what contributions would be useful from the Council and Geneva-based stakeholders, and what coordination would be helpful going forward.

The 2021-2026 Review

The Human Rights Council (Council) has secured a number of significant achievements since its establishment in 2006. It has continued much of the important work of the former Commission on Human Rights by, for example, providing a forum for debate, maintaining a system of Special Procedures, and widening the global framework of human rights norms and standards.

At the same time, it has taken further steps to strengthen the relevance and delivery of the UN’s human rights pillar, including by; building a powerful new peer-to-peer review mechanism (*the Universal Periodic Review - UPR*); focusing to a greater degree on supporting, and following-up on, the domestic implementation of States’ human rights obligations and commitments; contributing to the effective prevention of human rights violations and crises; promoting accountability for serious violations through the creation of commissions of inquiry (*COIs*), fact finding missions and an international, impartial and independent mechanism (*IIM*); and forging strengthened links with the UN’s other two pillars – the development pillar and the peace and security pillar. Yet the Council has also faced important challenges to the effective delivery of its mandate as set by the General Assembly (*GA*) in resolution 60/251.

The GA's upcoming review of the Council's status (due to take place between 2021 and 2026) offers a possible opportunity for State delegations and other stakeholders in Geneva to reflect on the Council's achievements and challenges, and consider how the body and its mechanisms might strengthen their effectiveness and impact, both in their own regard and in combination with the other two pillars of the UN.

New York Perspectives

Against this background, on May 9th in New York City, the pre-Glion policy dialogue, and this luncheon, will provide an initial informal space for State delegations to reflect on the institutional evolution of the Council since its creation (including the question of its status), and to think ahead to the review due to take place between 2021 and 2026.

Possible Questions

Preparations for the 2021-2026 review

1. How has the Council evolved since the last review of its status (and its work and functioning) in 2011?
2. When should the GA begin preparations for the next review of the Council's status, due to take place between 2021 and 2026?
3. How should the review be conducted?

Contributions from the Council

4. What kind(s) of contribution(s) from the Council itself, and the wider UN human rights system, might represent a useful and helpful input into the GA's deliberations?
5. What might be the timing of that contribution?

Transatlantic coordination

6. Might the review offer an opportunity for 'Geneva' and 'New York' to also consider efficiency and coherence questions related to the relationship between the Council and the Third Committee/GA?
7. How might 'New York' and 'Geneva' efficiently coordinate their efforts in the context of the 2021-2026 review?