

46th High – Level Segment of the Human Rights Council

Excellencies,

I am honored to address the 46th High Level Segment for the Human Rights Council.

I wish to congratulate Her Excellency Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, Permanent Representative of Fiji, on assuming the Presidency of the Council.

Greece expresses its great appreciation to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet and assures her of our continued support.

Regarding the **Covid 19** pandemic, Greece entirely concurs with the statement by the UN Secretary General that: *“The pandemic is more than a health crisis. It is fundamentally a human crisis that has laid bare severe and systemic inequalities”*.

The pandemic poses a threat not only to public health, but also to the foundations of democracy.

Every measure, aiming at a goal of public safety that restricts human rights, should be necessary, proportionate and applied in a non-discriminatory way.

The Human Rights Council is an organization with the necessary instruments to positively contribute to our universal effort.

The Treaty Bodies, the Special Procedures and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provide State authorities with clear recommendations and check-lists.

Madame President,

The human rights situation in Libya, in Syria and in Myanmar, deserves the constant Human Rights Council's attention.

With regard to **Libya**, we welcome the holding of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Geneva earlier this month and its outcome.

As the acting Special Representative of the Secretary General has mentioned in her statement, we expect the reestablishment of the rule of law throughout the country, by the new transitional Government.

We also expect the repeal of all illegal actions, including the Memoranda signed in violation of international law, the restoration of democracy and the promotion of human rights.

However, political unity and effective human rights' protection cannot be achieved without the effective withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from the country.

As to **Syria**, we condemn the continuous human rights violations and abuses of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict.

Violations that in some cases may amount to war crimes, according to the findings of the Commission of Inquiry.

We call on all involved parties to respect all international human rights law obligations.

Real action is needed to create conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their areas of origin.

Greece expresses its serious concerns about the human rights consequences of the crisis in **Myanmar**.

We believe that the recent military coup in the country will deteriorate the human rights situation.

It will also further perpetuate the abuses against the Rohingyas and other minorities.

Madame President

Greece builds its Human Rights' foreign policy on the philosophy of synergy and collaboration.

We believe that the Human Rights Council is the proper platform to seek synergies, both at international and at regional levels.

In this respect, Greece maintains a standing invitation to all Human Rights Council Special Procedures.

During the recent years, it has received a significant number of relevant official visits, while others are scheduled in the near future.

We are, also, fully involved in the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism. This year, Greece will undergo its third Universal Periodic Review.

On fora such as the Human Rights Council, Greece focuses its work on cross-regional initiatives that aim to tackle important civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

In this respect, we work with more than forty countries from all continents as part of core groups submitting Resolutions to the Council.

We, also, table in the Human Rights Council the biennial Resolution on “Promoting Human Rights through Sport and the Olympic Ideal”, regularly supported by more than one hundred thirty countries.

Furthermore, on a national level, Greece is elaborating or implementing a series of coherent Action Plans.

Plans drafted to the benefit of persons with disabilities, gender equality, women peace and security, rights of the child, combatting of racism and intolerance.

Madame President,

Being one of the gateways to the European continent, Greece during the pandemic had to cope with continuous mixed **migratory flows**.

And we did it successfully, by putting first the most vulnerable of us: unaccompanied minors, older persons, persons with disabilities, women victims of gender-based violence.

And this, despite systematic attempts by State actors to instrumentalize human suffering.

In the same vein, we have pursued our search and rescue operations in the Aegean Sea, saving scores of people in distress, in full respect of human rights.

From 2015 to 2020, the Hellenic Coast Guard has rescued over three hundred nineteen thousand migrants and refugees.

We fully abide by the principle of non-refoulement which, besides being an international obligation, is also embedded in our national legislation.

Allow me also to mention that Greece continues to provide asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with health care, social services, education and housing.

Finally, I would like to touch an issue of particular importance for Greece, which is the full enjoyment of **cultural rights**.

All States bear the duty -regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems- to refrain from altering cultural monuments

Prior consent of concerned communities and prior information of any stakeholder involved, including relevant UN bodies, such as UNESCO, are a *conditio sine qua non*.

I refer, among others, to the conversion of Agia Sofia monument to a mosque, which goes counter to any notion of respect for heritage and cultural rights.

We ask, along with all the relevant institutions and international organizations that have done so, for the reconversion of this monument to its previous status. **Thank you.**