

Chairs of UN treaty bodies

Cc

Michele Bachelet, UN High  
Commissioner for Human Rights

Geneva, 11 February 2019

**Re. a call for vision, ambition and innovation to strengthen the treaty bodies**

Dear chairs,

ISHR welcomes your upcoming meeting in Copenhagen to discuss follow-up to GA resolution 68/268. ISHR has consistently underlined the importance of ownership and leadership by treaty body members and chairs in the strengthening process, including in a recent joint NGO letter to the UN Secretary General<sup>1</sup>, and in a report on the political strategy of the strengthening process<sup>2</sup>. We have also repeatedly underlined that any and all measures aimed at strengthening the treaty bodies must be based on good practices, avoid least common denominators, and ultimately contribute to enhance human rights protection and state compliance with the treaties<sup>3</sup>.

As the 2020 review envisaged in resolution 68/268 is fast approaching, a number of actors, including civil society and states, are turning to treaty body members and chairs on what your proposals are to enhance the functioning of the system as a whole.

In our daily interactions with human rights defenders and users of the system, we see a critical need to address:

- The widespread lack of timely reporting compliance by states parties, and the related unpredictability in reviews.
- The multiplication of working methods across the treaty bodies which considerably complicates and hampers civil society engagement with the treaty bodies, particularly for organisations which engage with several treaty bodies.
- The limited transparency, visibility and accessibility of the system, which also considerably limits engagement by non-insiders.

Against this background, ISHR is of the view that a form of sequencing or clustering reviews is desirable. The details of such a process should be discussed amongst relevant stakeholders, including users and members of the system, as well as OHCHR and states parties. We hope that the upcoming meeting will identify areas of consensus amongst yourselves, and that you will be in a position to propose

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<sup>1</sup> <https://goo.gl/owSgy6>

<sup>2</sup> Report available at <https://goo.gl/8sB3Mo>. See section on treaty body members, p. 7

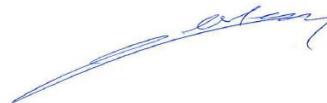
<sup>3</sup> « Seven building blocks of treaty body strengthening » p. 2. Report mentioned supra.

innovative, ambitious and visionary proposals to address the fundamental challenges mentioned above, which have been identified and documented for over three decades now. The 2020 review provides a rare opportunity to bring solutions where previous processes have failed to address the core of the issue. Proposals made as part of the recent and previous strengthening processes ought to be road tested so that practical implications and impact could be empirically assessed rather than assumed.

ISHR counts on you and we remain available to continue working with you and engaging with you as part of the strengthening process, in the interest of users and victims.

We look forward to reading about your proposals and ideas in preparation for the 2020 review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vincent Ploton', with a long, sweeping underline.

Vincent Ploton

Director of treaty body advocacy