**Joint Statement on Equal Participation in Political and Public Affairs**

Human Rights Council 51st session

Item 3 General Debate (20 September 2022)

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of 63 countries. [[1]](#footnote-1)

The undersigned States wish to express their views on the issue of equal participation in political and public affairs.

Throughout the years, the Council has dedicated increasing attention to the topic. To date, six resolutions on the subject have been adopted, all of them by consensus. Simultaneously, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights continues to provide useful guidance and assistance on the effective implementation of the right to participate. States and NGOs in their statements frequently highlight the critical importance of equal and effective participation, both online and offline, for democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion, economic development and advancing gender equality. As stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations “the key to reinvigorated and reimagined governance lies with truly meaningful participation of people and civil society in the decisions that affect their lives”.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Yet, for many, the equal opportunity to have a meaningful say in public affairs is still but a distant ideal. It is concerning that many obstacles and challenges to the effective implementation of the right to participate remain and some of them may have even increased.

Earlier this year, the OHCHR published a report on good practices and challenges faced by States in using guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs[[3]](#footnote-3). The report, which is a follow-up to the consensual resolution 39/11 of this Council, contains a useful overview of measures aimed at increasing participation in public affairs taken by States but also describes weak points and barriers restricting the full implementation of the right to participate. It also includes a number of recommendations to better ensure the effective exercise of the right to participate.

We thank the OHCHR for this inspirational report. It is encouraging to see that many countries recognize and protect the right to participate in their national constitutions and legal frameworks. Several countries take further concrete measures to implement the right, aiming at ensuring inclusiveness in the exercise of the right to participate, strengthening the representation and equal participation of women and encouraging participation of groups that have been historically excluded. Promising projects are being developed on youth participation, awareness raising or use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

Nonetheless, despite many positive steps taken, numerous obstacles persist. Several of them were triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and measures adopted to fight it, including limitations on freedoms of movement and assembly. Other long term challenges result from humanitarian crises and conflicts, lack of access to information, digital divide, persistent discrimination and exclusion, restrictions on civil society, lack of capacity and resources. Women and girls, persons belonging to marginalized groups or minorities, persons in vulnerable situations and civil society representatives are particularly affected by many of these challenges.

Mr. President,

Meaningful and inclusive participation in public affairs is an enabler right that paves the way for the realization of all human rights. More efforts are needed to ensure the effective implementation of the right to participate. As highlighted by the OHCHR, political will remains the most important factor in creating a supportive environment that fosters participation. On behalf of the countries joining this statement, let me express our strong will and commitment to work towards the full enjoyment of the right to participate in public affairs by everyone, in accordance with international law and standards.

I thank you.

1. Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073742 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A/HRC/49/42 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)