

Delegation from the Russian Federation Position Paper for the Human Rights Council

The issues before the Human Rights Council are: Combatting Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance; and Business and Human Rights. As an elected member of the Human Rights Council, the Russian Federation supports the general fight against any kind of Human Rights violation and accordingly to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lavrov, Russia wants to ensure “that Human Rights are regarded as factor bringing states together instead of dividing them”.

I. Combatting Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance

The Russian Federation is deeply concerned about the latest lack of progress that has been made in the fight against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. According to the *Office of the High Commissioner of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations*, due to Covid-19, the spread of conspiracy theories has increased up to 30% on all major social media platforms, stirring up racial prejudices, for example by making indigenous or religious minorities responsible for the spreading of the Virus. Due to its geographical position and the specific features of the historic development, the Russian Federation is rich in cultural and ethnic diversity and accordingly bears a special responsibility. Therefore, as the Russian Federation has recently confirmed to the *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* in the framework of the *combined twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth periodic reports* (CERD/C/R/25-26), the “equality of all citizens, irrespective of sex, race, ethnic background, language, origin, property, official status, place of residence, attitude to religion, opinions, or membership of voluntary associations or any other social group” defines the core values of the government of the Russian Federation and judicial system at all stages. On top of that, the observance of Human Rights is constantly monitored by the federal *Commissioner for Human Rights* of the Russian Federation. To leave no doubt about the Russian determination towards the fight against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, President Vladimir Putin signed a *presidential decree No. 1666* on the 19th December 2012, establishing the *State Nationalities Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation* for the period up to 2025, which defines basic guidelines to hold up „equal human and civil rights and freedoms“.

Paragraph 3 of this strategy points out that the nationalities policy is based on the rules and principles of international law and international treaties of international organizations to which the Russian Federation is a party. As a result of this, the Russian Federation fully supports not only resolution A/RES/71/181 on concrete action regarding intolerances adopted by the General Assembly (GA) but also more recent resolutions on *combating glorification of Nazism, Neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fueling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance* (A/RES/75/169) adopted by the GA on December 16 in 2020. Additionally, Russia refers to the already mentioned *periodic report* to the *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (CERD/C/R/25-26) to describe all the measures taken to give effect to the international *Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* in the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation suggests, as a reaction to the latest development regarding the rising number of conspiracy theories, published in the social media and spreading racial prejudices, an effective, state-controlled monitoring of all media activity as a possible short-term action. Based on our own domestic experience we can assure, that the partial monitoring of the media prevents the publication of materials which incite racist or xenophobic hatred and gives a realistic view on the situation regarding Human Rights, racial discrimination and civic freedoms. As a long-term strategy, the Russian Federation suggests to establish a consultative involvement of civil society organizations in the political process. The approach of interdisciplinary knowledge share and a strong cooperation between government bodies, voluntary associations and academic organizations can be an successful way to go and the Russian Federation believes establishing such a mechanism not only on national level but also on international level is part of the solution. Furthermore, we suggest a well-organized management system, clearly distributed responsibilities and binding laws that make condemnation of Human Rights violations possible. The Russian Federation emphasizes that this approach also includes a list of duties every member state must fulfil and spells out legal consequences for failure to perform these duties. In this case, the Russian judiciary system can serve as a role model. Already in 2013, *Federal Act No. 284-FZ* was adopted, which defines

the powers and responsibilities public and regional authorities in the area of inter-ethnic relations and racial discrimination. Russia would be proud to export this concept to other member states, helping to fight united against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

II. Business and Human Rights

The huge negative impact Covid-19 has had on working conditions, especially with respect to the connection between Business and Human Rights, is worrying. According to Russian Federal Minister Mr. Lavrov, „Covid 19 has caused substantial social and economic damage and has exacerbated social vulnerabilities“. Additionally, at the ninth session of the *Forum on Business and Human Rights* the *High Commissioner of Human Rights* Mrs. Bachelet expressed concerns about “unprincipled business practices, which continued to generate preventable and unacceptable human suffering during the time of Covid-19“. The Russian Federation shares these concerns, especially with respect to workers and indigenous people. Furthermore, the Russian Federation is upset that some member states disrespect the appeals of the *Human Rights Commission* and the *Secretary General* to suspend unilateral sanctions on medicine, food and necessary monetary transfers in order to fight the virus. Some western governments create artificial barriers disregarding the harmful impact on Human Rights, ignoring that the pandemic should not be used to punish other states.

The Russian Federation supports the mandate of the *working group on business and Human Rights*, established by resolution *A/HRC/RES/17/4* in 2011 and all the subsequent resolutions up to the resolution *A/HRC/RES/44/15* on *Business and Human Rights* from 2020, arguing that their latest report *47/50 on the issue of Human Rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises* helps to assess the pandemic impact on Business and Human Rights conscientiously. But said documents aren't sufficient to improve the situation effectively, rapidly and create a sustainable recovery. Therefore, the Russian Federation also supports the general approach of *United Nations Global Compact*. The *UN Global Compact* aims to mobilize a global movement of sustainable companies and stakeholders to do business responsibly by aligning their strategies and operations with principles on Human Rights and labor rights and take strategic actions to advance broader societal goals, such as the SDGs, with an emphasis on collaboration and innovation. In addition to that, the Russian Federation supports the *Agenda 2030* of the United Nations, in the case of Business and Human Rights especially with respect to the *Sustainable Development Goal 8.8*, referring to the guarantee of labor rights and promote safe and secure working environment for all workers, including migrant workers and those in precarious situations. Furthermore, the Russian Federation implemented several national laws to protect indigenous groups from both violations of their labor and Human Rights and possible negative impact of any kind of inconsiderate business activity against them. With reference to general guidelines in the framework of sanctions related to the endangerment of Human Rights, the Russian Federation refers, inter alia, to the *Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993* that urges states not to deploy unilateral policies that impede trade relations between countries and deprive communities of their essential Human Rights.

As already mentioned, the Russian Federation is convinced of the general approach of the United Nations Global Compact. Assuming that the pandemic can be overcome in 2022, now comes an opportunity to invest in building a more equal, integrated and sustainable economy in which its companies have a positive impact on the Human Rights goals. This can be done by not only motivating businesses to welcome International Human Rights criteria, but also to integrate them into the internal policies and strategies of the companies and showing them, that, from now on, Human Rights are business standards of entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, the *UN Global Compact Local Network in Russia* will give methodological recommendations on how to implement Human Rights standards in the best possible way in the context of Human Rights for business, experts and authorities. Russia would like to support and accompany such projects not only at home, but also abroad, and accordingly offers its assistance. Finally, Russia wants to propose a so called “Green Corridor“, free from trade wars and sanctions, primarily for essential goods like food, medicine as well as necessary financial transfers to fight the pandemic. This would prevent unemployment from growing in long-term and consequently improve the living conditions of many. According to president Vladimir Putin „this is indeed a most acute global social problem, so the politics has a mission now to pave the way for trade, joint projects and fair competition, rather than tie the hands of business and discourage business initiative.“