



CANADA

The Permanent Mission of Canada  
to the United Nations  
at Geneva

La Mission permanente du Canada  
auprès des Nations Unies  
à Genève

## **OEWG on the Review of the Work and Functioning of the Human Rights Council**

### **Agenda Item 4.4: Agenda and framework for Programme of Work, Methods of Work and Rules of Procedure**

**Wednesday, 27 October 2010 /  
Thursday, 28 October 2010**

*Intervention by Canada*

Mr. President,

Consistent with the founding principles of the Council, the Council's Agenda should serve to organize and facilitate its work in an efficient, balanced and non-selective manner. Also, as each agenda item yields a general debate, the Agenda should be as streamlined as possible to promote maximum time efficiency in plenary.

Proposal 1: To enhance efficiency, avoid overlap/duplication/selectivity, and improve flexibility:

- a) Streamline the agenda by combining agenda items:
  - o combine Items 3, 8, 9 – Thematic HR Issues;
  - o combine Items 4, 7, 10 – Country related HR issues;

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The Council's Annual Programme of Work should include a 'main session', and should allow it to 'meet regularly throughout the year'.

Proposal 2: In order to avoid repetition between sessions, provide opportunities for year-long follow-up, and improve the Council's ability to respond to emerging human rights situations of concern:

- a) Establish one, higher-profile main session (March, 4-6 weeks):
  - o general debates on each agenda item;
  - o negotiation and adoption of all recurring resolutions;
- b) Hold HRC 'UPR adoptions sessions' at the end of each UPR WG session, for adoption of UPR reports from the past WG session.
- c) Organize several shorter HRC sessions (3-5 days each) attached to UPR adoption sessions:
  - o focused on emerging/ongoing HR situations, follow-up to issues from the main session, and various cross-cutting thematic issues (e.g. Panels, Joint IADs);
  - o with only one general debate to address all agenda items.

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Special Sessions of the Council shall be held 'when needed' to address important, urgent or emerging human rights situations of concern.

Proposal 3: To enable Special Sessions to be used more flexibly and effectively:

- a) Expand the range of possible formats and outcomes:
- o Formats should include:
    - special 'briefing/information/discussion' sessions (including expert panels),
    - special 'high level' sessions (e.g. to engage with visiting senior government representatives from a particular State)
    - special 'thematic' sessions (e.g. with multiple SP mandate holders)
    - in addition to special 'urgent debate' sessions, to address grave human rights situations of immediate concern
  - o Outcomes should include:
    - resolutions
    - decisions
    - presidential statements
    - summary reports
    - joint statements (e.g. HRC + State concerned)

This review also offers an opportunity to add procedural clarity for the holding of 'Special Sessions' and their equivalent during regular sessions, be they termed urgent debates, special sittings, or otherwise.

- b) Establish a clear process for holding special sessions, urgent debates, special sittings and special briefings during the HRC session:
- o at the request of 1/3 of the membership of the Council;
  - o convened as soon as possible (minimum 24 hours) after submission of request.

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Moreover, the Council's capacity to '**address situations of violations of human rights**' and '**respond promptly to human rights emergencies**' can also be enhanced by empowering the HRC Presidency to convene meetings of the Council based on the advice or request of key UN system stakeholders.

Proposal 4: To strengthen the role of the Presidency in ensuring the Council's capacity to instantly respond to urgent or emerging human rights situations:

- a) The President shall be empowered to convene a meeting of the Human Rights Council:
- i. at any time he deems necessary;
  - ii. at the request of the UNGA or the UNSC;
  - iii. at the request or on the advice of the UN Secretary General or the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;
  - iv. at the request of a member of the Bureau;
  - v. in follow-up to an urgent or emergency response by relevant UN bodies or organizations to situation of concern (e.g. as a result of a non-periodic meeting of the Security Council, under Article 35 or under Article I I (3) of the Charter, or of the General Assembly, or urgent/emergency responses by OCHA or UNHCR).
- b) Such a meeting should be convened as soon as possible (minimum 24 hours) of call or request.

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Proposal 5: To strengthen the HRC Secretariat and better ensure the independence of the OHCHR:

- a) The HRC and its Presidency should be supported by a Secretariat Branch under the auspices of UNOG, rather than the OHCHR.

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Proposal 6: To ensure that the membership of the Council better reflects the universality of human rights as well as the universal engagement of States with the Council and its mechanisms:

- a) The membership of the Council should be made universal, to allow all who wish to do so to participate on an equal basis and fully benefit from the supportive, cooperative and effective forum we wish the Human Rights Council to finally become.

Pending the inception of a universal Human Rights Council:

- b) Clear criteria should be established as to what constitutes 'uphold(ing) the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, and (full cooperation) with the Council'.

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Proposal 7: To enhance accessibility of the Council and its mechanisms:

- a) Undertake an 'accessibility audit' of HRC, to identify challenges and possible solutions, including by exploring the feasibility of such options as captioning, sign language for meetings, and webcasting of WGs and other subsidiary bodies;
- b) Institute an 'Accessibility Task Force' consisting of high-level representatives of States, UNOG, OHCHR and civil society organizations (in particular those of persons with disabilities) to champion and move forward accessibility issues in the Council;
- c) Adopt IT solutions to enhance access of non-resident States and NHRIs, such as videoconferencing or video messaging.

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Proposal 8: To ensure effective budgetary processes and adequate and timely resourcing for HRC mandated activities:

- a) Request UNGA 5<sup>th</sup> Committee to consider the feasibility of meeting within a month after each session of the HRC to consider and approve budget allocations resulting from the adoption of HRC resolutions.

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Proposal 9: To promote an environmentally friendly and cost-conscious HRC:

- a) Develop a system for daily electronic distribution of all HRC (and other HR) related documentation, as an alternative to paper copies circulated to all missions.

Canada will also be pleased to consider constructive proposals of other delegations under this agenda item, and looks forward to working with all partners.

I thank you.