Human Rights Council elects Federico Villegas of Argentina as its president for 2022

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The Human Rights Council today elected Ambassador Federico Villegas, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations Office at Geneva, to serve as its President for a one-year term beginning on 1 January 2022.

The Council also elected Ambassadors Katharina Stasch of Germany, Tamim Baiou of Libya and Ulugbek Lapasov of Uzbekistan to serve as three of its four vice presidents next year. Ambassador Lapasov will serve as Rapporteur of the Geneva-based body. The final member of the five-person Bureau, a vice president from the Eastern European group of States, is expected to be elected in January.

After congratulating Ambassador Villegas on his election, current Council President Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan of Fiji statedthat "2021 has been a year of both significant challenges and of important achievements, and 2022 promises much of the same". Citing COVID-19 among the biggest global challenges throughout the year, she added: "Undoubtedly, we are a resilient Council. We thrived in 2021, and we should continue to thrive in 2022, and onwards". Ambassador Khan noted that this was the first year that a small island developing state and Pacific Island State has had the opportunity to lead the work of the United Nations’ premier human rights body, adding that "this year's presidency is a testament to multilateral institutions and bodies for small states, and to the value and weight of their voices in the shaping of the decisions and direction of global diplomacy".

Commenting on his appointment as President for next year, Ambassador Villegas first paid tribute to Ambassador Khan for her leadership of the Human Rights Council this year, “during an unprecedented pandemic”, throughout which “more than 175 resolutions were adopted without cancelling or postponing sessions". He noted among the continuing challenges for the Council was to ensure international law was upheld and to avoid politicisation which "could lead to a polarization that would deteriorate and paralyze its work". Looking to next year, Ambassador Villegas proposed a series of actions including ensuring the Human Rights Council was a "stable platform to increase dialogue and deepen understanding about commonalities and differences about human rights", and to "learn more about the multiple roles placed by civil society organisations in improving human rights at the global and national levels". Additionally, the President-elect proposed more concerted action by the Council "in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction" and in further strengthening coordination within the United Nations system in advancing human rights.

On 14 October, the General Assembly [elected](https://www.un.org/en/ga/76/meetings/elections/hrc.shtml) 18 States to serve as members of the 47-member body filling the vacancies to be left at the end of this year.

Prior to the Bureau elections, the Council heard an update from Kira Kruglikova, Director of the Division of Conference Management at the United Nations Office at Geneva, on the actual and envisaged resources for conference services provided to the Council.

At today's meeting, the Council also adopted a [President’s statement](https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/OrganizationalSessions/OrganizationalSessionForThe16thCycleoftheHRC6December2021/Documents/L.1%20as%20received.docx) on the Council's long-term efficiency process aimed at enhancing the organization's working methods. Through this action, the Council extended for one year the measures contained in an earlier [President’s statement of 2019](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/PRST/OS/13/1) designed to streamline the work of the 47-member body given its expanding agenda, while preserving its essential mandate to promote and protect human rights throughout the world.

Also related to the Council's efficiency process, launched in 2015, meeting participants heard from current Council Vice President Ambassador Yuri Borissov Sterk of Bulgaria who provided an update on consultations and activities related to the voluntary rationalisation of Council initiatives. The Council then heard from Council Vice President Ambassador Paul Bekkers of the Netherlands who apprised States of consultations related to the strengthening and optimization of the Universal Periodic Review, and finally from Ambassador Umej Singh Bhatia of Singapore, who, on behalf of focal points, updated today's meeting participants on efforts to address challenges faced by delegations of small island developing States and the least developed countries from participating in the Council and the implementation of measures on the use of modern technology.

The Council also heard an update from Ambassador Keva Lorraine Bain of the Bahamas, Council Vice President and coordinator of the task force on accessibility for persons with disabilities, who presented an oral report of the task force entitled “Equality and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities and the right of persons with disabilities to access to justice”. Her statement was followed by one from Ambassador Margarida Rosa Da Silva Izata of Angola presenting an update on her activities as the Council's Gender Focal Point this year.

At today's meeting, Council members also approved the theme for the 2022 high-level panel discussion, to take place in February 2022, as follows: *“The contribution of universal participation to the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Voluntary Trust Fund to support the participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council”*.

During today's meeting, the following States took the floor: Brazil, India, Nepal, Bolivia (the Plurinational State of), Bangladesh, Peru, Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of), the Philippines, Uruguay, Mexico, Libya, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Switzerland, Pakistan, Cuba, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Chile and the European Union. The following non-governmental organisations also delivered statements: The International Lesbian and Gay Association, the International Service for Human Rights, Action Canada for Population and Development, CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation and the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

The Council will meet on 14 December to hear oral updates by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, on the human rights situations in Afghanistan and Nicaragua, and on 15 December to hear the presentation of a report by the High Commissioner on the human rights situation in Ukraine, as mandated by the 47-member body.