SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES
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Dear Members of the Consultative Group,

On behalf of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, I am writing to you in connection with the selection of new mandate holders at the 63rd session of the Human Rights Council in September. As you have just commenced this important task, I would like to assure you of the full support of the Committee. As with your predecessors, the Committee would be happy to meet with you at a mutually convenient time to exchange views on good practices for the identification of a broad range of suitable candidates for mandates, and the selection process itself.

The high quality and integrity of mandate holders are crucial to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of the system of special procedures. I recently invited the relevant outgoing mandate holders and Chairs of Working Groups to provide information on the skills they consider essential for the new mandate holders to discharge the mandate. I sought their views in line with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, paragraph 51, which says that "the Consultative Group should take into account, as appropriate, the views of stakeholders, including the current or outgoing mandate-holders, in determining the necessary expertise, experience, skills, and other relevant requirements for each mandate".

I am therefore pleased to share with you the contributions received from the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (Annex I), the Working Group on arbitrary detention (Annex II) and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation (Annex III).

I trust that you will find these suggestions useful as you undertake the selection process. I am at your disposal to discuss this matter further if you have additional questions or require additional feedback. This letter will also be posted on the public website of special procedures. I wish you success in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours,



George Katrougalos
Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures

cc: H.E. Mr. Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro
President of the Human Rights Council

Annex I

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In the spirit of Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, we are honoured, as the current mandate holders of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, to share with the Consultative Group what we consider as essential requirements for the Working Group's membership. Our suggestions are based on our experience of working as a group in the past years, going beyond the general requirements of deep knowledge of and expertise in international human rights law, as it relates to women's and girls' human rights, and familiarity with the role of international mechanisms for serving as independent human rights experts within the UN system.

A fundamental first requirement would be an unwavering track record of commitment to women's and girls' right to gender equality combined with a proven track record of success in advancing these rights, and practical experience in applying international human rights law specifically to issues of women's and girls' human rights, particularly with respect to addressing structural discrimination against women and girls as a human rights violation in multiple spheres and in different parts of the world. To effectively tackle the escalating global backlash against gender equality, the successor should be able to navigate the complexity of the international legal and multilateral systems in a constructive, strategic and coordinated manner. Their connections to the various realities of women and girls in all their diversity and in different parts of the world will be crucial to ensuring progress on gender equality.

As distinct from individual mandate holders, the effective functioning of the Working Group requires a combination of skills and competencies, including a collaborative spirit, an inclusive approach, a conciliatory attitude, diplomacy and strong negotiation skills. Members should be from diverse backgrounds (possibly as jurists, activists, sociologists, etc.), with the ability to communicate in a common language to enable the group to work as a team, including when there is no official interpretation. Each member should demonstrate excellent analytical, writing and advocacy skills, as well as exceptional eloquence and a strategic approach.

The experience of the Working Group since its inception has shown that strong connections by the experts to networks of academia, civil society organizations, and other independent institutions are most valuable, in terms of the mandate's outreach as well as its ability to build partnerships and collaborate with key partners recognizing the limited resources available to the mandate. Our experience also indicates that a progressive and innovative mindset and strong dedication to the cause of gender equality from an intersectional perspective is critical to combatting the persistent and pervasive discrimination against women and girls, in all their diversity, worldwide. The selected successor should be ready to devote a considerable amount of their time to the fulfilment of this mandate.

The Working Group is a central mandate within the Special Procedures system covering the human rights of half of the world's population. It operates at a time of deeply entrenched structural discrimination that is becoming even more pervasive due to rising inequalities. Given its unique responsibility to bring about gender mainstreaming and to identify good practices, we sincerely hope that the upcoming member of the Working Group will be highly talented, resourceful, courageous and progressive to duly address the persistent challenges to achieving gender equality.

Annex II

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) considers that the following skills and expertise should be taken into account in the process of selection of the members:

1. The execution of the mandate of the WGAD, especially consideration of cases of deprivation of liberty, involves legal matters requiring expertise in international human rights law. For these reasons, it is essential that the new members of the WGAD are lawyers (or have a high degree of legal knowledge and experience) with extensive relevant expertise in international human rights law.

2. As the members of the WGAD are required to draft opinions with legal arguments based on relevant applicable international human rights instruments in cases assigned to them, the candidates must possess the necessary legal drafting skills. In this respect, the WGAD differs from some other international courts and treaty bodies. As the WGAD adopts up to 90 opinions annually, each member is expected to draft around 22 to 25 opinions each year, and also to engage with and comment on the opinions drafted by other members.

3. The tasks of the WGAD also include up to two strenuous field missions each year (10 working days and travel time) in possibly difficult conditions, involving visits to prisons and other detention facilities and interviews of the detainees.

4. Carrying out of the duties of the WGAD entails a significant time commitment (at minimum, participation in three sessions per year in Geneva, preparation of opinions, participation in country visits, and contributing to thematic studies). As such, the new members must have sufficient availability and capacity to maintain these commitments.

5. The WGAD works in three official languages of the UN (English, French and Spanish). It would be important to maintain this capacity within the group, as well as knowledge of different legal systems. Knowledge of French will be particularly relevant for the member from the African region and knowledge of Spanish for the member from Latin America.

Annex III

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

From my perspective, the person appointed as Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation must embrace the challenge of building bridges of dialogue between the United Nations (particularly the Human Rights Council) and social movements and organizations, paying special attention to those rights holders who are denied access to these rights and are often criminalized for demanding them, frequently with women at the forefront. These rights holders and the organizations that genuinely represent them are, in fact, the most committed allies the United Nations can have when working towards goals such as achieving SDG 6. Therefore, I believe it would be crucial to assess the willingness and capacity for dialogue with these social organizations.

I believe that working towards the development and effective fulfillment of these human rights requires social and environmental sensitivity. Developing a human rights-based approach to water governance and drinking water and sanitation services demands focusing attention on those living in the poorest and most vulnerable conditions, and, on the other hand, on the challenge of restoring the good condition and sustainability of the aquatic ecosystems upon which their daily lives depend.

I also believe it is important for candidates to be able to foster interdisciplinary dialogue, as water management requires working with social, environmental, cultural, and ethical values, while also understanding biological, legal, technical, and economic-financial dimensions.

Finally, a good candidate should demonstrate interest and proven experience in water and sanitation issues as human rights, as well as demonstrated knowledge of the sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems in the context of climate change.