

Human Rights Council

Panel discussion on human rights and digital technologies: new insights

Concept note as of 27th June 2019

Date and venue: **Wednesday, 3 July 2019, 12 p.m. - 1 p.m.**, Palais des Nations, Room XV, Geneva

Objectives: The panel discussion aims:

- to exchange views with regard to strengthening understanding amongst States, the tech industry, civil society and academia as to how innovations in digital technologies are reframing current conceptual approaches to human rights;
- to identify opportunities for States, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to determine effective strategic approaches to facilitate preparation for the future impacts of emerging digital technologies;
- to provide practical suggestions as to how to expand and accelerate more impactful research on the interaction of digital technologies with human rights, developing the existing discussions currently considering specific themes and technologies;
- to identify and elaborate the role of new tools and methodologies that could potentially assist in the assessment of the human rights impacts of digital technologies.

Moderator: **Ms. Stephanie Borg Psaila**, Interim Director of Diplo Foundation and the Geneva Internet Platform

Panellists:

- **Mr. Yuval Shany**, Vice-Chair of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and Hersch Lauterpacht Chair in Public International Law, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- **Mr. Clément Voule**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association
- **Mr. Jonathan Andrew**, Research Fellow at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights
- **Dr Jovan Kurbalija**, Executive Director, Secretariat of the UN High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation

Outcome: A summary report on the discussions held and recommendations made during the panel discussion will be prepared.

Background: Digital technologies continue to transform almost every facet of our lives: innovations are shaping our democracies through impacts on political participation

and electoral processes; reshaping access to education; reframing employment and notions of the workplace; revolutionising healthcare; stimulating communities within civil society and galvanising greater activism; and fostering new opportunities for economic development. Notwithstanding the many positive effects of such a transformation, the pace of change, rapid advancement and swift implementation of many new technologies has to date highlighted significant concerns as to whether the existing framework at the international level to protect and promote human rights is apt to confront the nascent challenges society must resolve.

The panel discussion constitutes an initiative to generate debate and draw attention to current challenges in the digital sphere. Furthermore, it seeks to foster interest in developing effective strategies and methodologies that may serve to address future issues stemming from digitisation and advancements in tech, and determine how best we can oversee the implementation of digital technologies so that they continue to realise their best possible contribution to the full enjoyment of human rights.

Background documents: Human Rights Council resolutions relating to human rights and new and emerging digital technologies:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 40/12](#) of 21 March 2019
- [Human Rights Council resolution 39/6](#) of 27 September 2018
- [Human Rights Council resolution 38/11](#) of 6 July 2018
- [Human Rights Council resolution 38/5](#) of 5 July 2018
- [Human Rights Council resolution 38/7](#) of 5 July 2018
- [Human Rights Council resolution 34/7](#) of 23 March 2017
- [Human Rights Council resolution 33/2](#) of 29 September 2016
- [Human Rights Council resolution 32/13](#) of 1 July 2016
- [Human Rights Council resolution 28/16](#) of 26 March 2015
- [Human Rights Council resolution 26/13](#) of 26 June 2014
- [Human Rights Council resolution 20/8](#) of 5 July 2012
