

## **The right to privacy in the digital age**

*The Human Rights Council,*

*Guided* by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

*Reaffirming* the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

*Recalling* the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Reaffirming* the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

*Recalling* Council resolution 5/1 on institution-building of the Human Rights Council, and resolution 5/2 on the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate Holders of the Council, of 18 June 2007, and stressing that the mandate holder shall discharge his/her duties in accordance with those resolutions and the annexes thereto,

*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions 68/167 of 18 December 2013 and 69/166 of 18 December 2014 on the right to privacy in the digital age, and Human Rights Council decision 25/117 on the panel on the right to privacy in the digital age,

*Recalling* further Human Rights Council resolutions 20/8 of 5 July 2012 and 26/13 of 26 June 2014 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the internet,

*Welcoming* also the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to privacy in the digital age, noting with interest its report on the subject, and recalling the panel discussion on the right to privacy in the digital age held during the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council,

*Noting* the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism<sup>6</sup> and the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Council on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression,

*Noting with appreciation* General Comment No. 16 of the Human Rights Committee on the right to respect of privacy, family, home and correspondence, and protection of honour and reputation, while also noting the vast technological leaps that have taken place since its adoption,

*Recalling* that General Assembly resolution 69/166 encourages the Human Rights Council to remain actively seized of the debate on the right to privacy in the digital age, with the purpose of identifying and clarifying principles, standards and best practices regarding the promotion and protection of the right to privacy, and to consider the possibility of establishing a special procedure to that end,

*Recognizing* the need to further discuss and analyze, based on international human rights law, issues relating to the promotion and protection of the right to privacy in the digital age,

procedural safeguards, effective domestic oversight and remedies, the impact of surveillance on the right to privacy and other human rights, as well as the need to examine the principles of non-arbitrariness and lawfulness, and the relevance of necessity and proportionality assessments in relation to surveillance practices,

*Reaffirming* the human right to privacy, according to which no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, and the right to the protection of the law against such interference, and recognizing that the exercise of the right to privacy is important for the realization of the right to freedom of expression and to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and is one of the foundations of a democratic society,

*Noting* also that the rapid pace of technological development enables individuals all over the world to use new information and communication technologies and at the same time enhances the capacity of governments, companies and individuals to undertake surveillance, interception and data collection, which may violate or abuse human rights, in particular the right to privacy, as set out in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and is therefore an issue of increasing concern,

*Noting* that while metadata can provide benefits, certain types of metadata, when aggregated, can reveal personal information and can give an insight into an individual's behaviour, social relationships, private preferences and identity,

*Emphasizing* that States must respect international human rights obligations regarding the right to privacy when they intercept digital communications of individuals and/or collect personal data and when they require disclosure of personal data from third parties, including private companies,

*Recalling* that business enterprises have a responsibility to respect human rights as set out in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework,

*Deeply concerned* at the negative impact that surveillance and/or interception of communications, including extraterritorial surveillance and/or interception of communications, as well as the collection of personal data, in particular when carried out on a mass scale, may have on the exercise and enjoyment of human rights,

*Noting with deep concern* that, in many countries, persons and organizations engaged in promoting and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms frequently face threats and harassment and suffer insecurity as well as unlawful or arbitrary interference with their right to privacy as a result of their activities,

*Noting* that while concerns about public security may justify the gathering and protection of certain sensitive information, States must ensure full compliance with their obligations under international human rights law,

*Noting in that respect* that the prevention and suppression of terrorism is a public interest of great importance, while *reaffirming* that States must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism are in compliance with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law,

1. *Reaffirms* the right to privacy, according to which no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, and the right to the protection of the law against such interference, as set out in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
2. *Recognizes* the global and open nature of the Internet and the rapid advancement in information and communications technologies as a driving force in accelerating progress towards development in its various forms;
3. *Affirms* that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including the right to privacy;
4. *Decides to appoint*, for a period of three years, a special rapporteur on the right to privacy, whose tasks will include:
  - a. To gather relevant information, including on international and national frameworks, national practices and experience, and to study trends, developments and challenges in relation to the right to privacy and to make recommendations to ensure its promotion and protection, including in connection with the challenges arising from new technologies;
  - b. To seek, receive and respond to information, while avoiding duplication, from States, the United Nations and its agencies, programmes and funds, regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, including business enterprises, and any other relevant stakeholder or parties;
  - c. To identify possible obstacles to the promotion and protection of the right to privacy and identify, exchange and promote principles and best practices at the national, regional and international levels, and to submit proposals and recommendations to the Human Rights Council in that regard, including with a view to particular challenges arising in the digital age;
  - d. To participate in and contribute to relevant international conferences and events with the aim of promoting a systematic and coherent approach on issues pertaining to the mandate,
  - e. To raise awareness concerning the importance of promoting and protecting the right to privacy, including with a view to particular challenges arising in the digital age, as well as concerning the importance of providing individuals whose right to privacy has been violated with access to effective remedy, consistent with international human rights obligations;
  - f. To integrate a gender perspective throughout the work of the mandate;
  - g. To report on alleged violations, wherever they may occur, of the right to privacy, as set out in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

including in connection with the challenges arising from new technologies, and to draw the attention of the Council and the High Commissioner to situations of particular serious concern;

- h. To submit an annual report to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, starting in the 31<sup>st</sup> session and 71<sup>st</sup> session respectively;
5. *Invites* the Special Rapporteur to include in the first report considerations that the mandate holder finds relevant to address the right to privacy in the digital age;
6. *Calls upon* all States to cooperate fully with and assist the Special Rapporteur in the performance of his/her mandate, including by providing all necessary information requested by him or her to respond promptly to his or her urgent appeals and other communications, and to consider favourably to his/her requests to visit their countries and to consider implementing the recommendations made by the mandate-holder in his/her reports;
7. *Encourages* all relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations and its agencies, programmes and funds, regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, civil society and the private sector to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur to enable the mandate holder to fulfil his/her mandate;
8. *Requests* the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide the Special Rapporteur with all the human and financial resources necessary for the effective fulfilment of his/her mandate,
9. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the matter under the same agenda item.