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Chair: Ms. Al-thani (Vice-Chair) (Qatar)
later: Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic)

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In the absence of Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic), Ms. Al-thani (Qatar), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of human rights (continued)

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments (continued) ([A/77/40](#), [A/77/44](#), [A/77/228](#), [A/77/230](#), [A/77/231](#), [A/77/279](#), [A/77/289](#) and [A/77/344](#))

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(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (continued) ([A/77/149](#), [A/77/168](#), [A/77/181](#), [A/77/195](#), [A/77/220](#), [A/77/227](#), [A/77/247](#), [A/77/255](#), [A/77/311](#), [A/77/328](#), [A/77/336](#), [A/77/356](#) and [A/77/525](#))

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (continued) ([A/77/36](#))

1. **Ms. Murungi** (Chair of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia) said that the report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (see [A/77/336](#)) was being presented at a perilous time for Ethiopia. Following a short cessation of hostilities, fighting had resumed in August 2022 and had further intensified in recent weeks, spreading into other regions and forcing hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians to flee their homes, many for a second or third time. There had been reports of an escalation in air strikes and the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas of Tigray. Such indiscriminate attacks were killing innocent people, damaging critical infrastructure and limiting access to vital services. The beleaguered

civilian population of Ethiopia had thus found itself once again mired in the deadly consequences of a war that jeopardized the stability of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.

2. In its report, the Commission had concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that most of the risk factors contained in the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes were present in Ethiopia, most notably the dissemination of hate speech and dehumanizing acts of violence. It was therefore vital for the Commission to be viewed as a tool for prevention and its work as complementary to the efforts of the African Union, which had launched a critical peace process between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and Tigrayan regional authorities. It was fervently to be hoped that the African Union-led process would end the fighting, enable humanitarian assistance to resume and restore peace and security.

3. Like all bodies mandated by the Human Rights Council, the Commission was independent and impartial and had no agenda with regard to any of the parties to the conflict. It had consistently sought to engage with the Federal Government and had held constructive meetings with government representatives and other stakeholders, in Addis Ababa, in July 2022. Regrettably, the Federal Government had not granted the Commission access to areas outside the capital. The Commission was also committed to engaging with Ethiopian domestic mechanisms.

4. Highlighting several key aspects of the Commission's conclusions, she said that for over a year, the Federal Government and its allies had denied some 6 million people access to food, medicine and basic services. Goods and food stores indispensable for the civilian population's survival had been destroyed or looted, livestock killed and crops razed. At the same time, severe restrictions had been placed on humanitarian access. There were reasonable grounds to believe that the widespread denial and obstruction of access to food, medicine and basic services amounted to crimes against humanity and that the Federal Government was using starvation as a method of warfare.

5. Rape and sexual violence had been perpetrated on a staggering scale. Ethiopian and Eritrean forces and regional militias had targeted Tigrayan women and girls with particular violence and brutality; Tigrayan forces had committed rape and sexual violence against Amhara women and girls and Eritrean refugees. Reports also indicated the recruitment and use of child soldiers by all parties to the conflict. There were reasonable grounds to believe that Tigrayan forces had committed serious

human rights abuses amounting to war crimes, including large-scale killings of Amhara civilians, rape and sexual violence, and widespread looting and destruction of civilian property. Ethiopian National Defence Forces had intentionally launched a drone attack on a camp for internally displaced persons, killing around 60 civilians, many of them children, in what amounted to a war crime. Credible reports had also been received of an intensified campaign of drone strikes in Tigray over the past month, one of which had killed scores of internally displaced persons sheltering in a school. Ethiopian National Defence Forces had committed an indiscriminate attack on civilians in Mekele on 28 November 2020 and had subsequently carried out widespread extrajudicial killings, looting, rapes and other forms of sexual violence.

6. To prevent the commission of further atrocity crimes and forestall a catastrophe in Ethiopia and the wider region, Member States should work with the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the parties to bring an end to the conflict and ensure full humanitarian access. The Commission would work diligently towards that endeavour.

7. **Mr. Amde** (Ethiopia) said that the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation were the cornerstones of international cooperation among States on human rights issues. The so-called Commission of Experts had been defying those principles from the outset. Created solely to intensify political pressure on Ethiopia and advance political and geostrategic aims, the Commission was merely an instrument that would later be used to justify intervention and sanctions. Certain actors had even declared that they would create “another Darfur” in Ethiopia. It was worth noting that no African country had voted for the Human Rights Council resolution establishing the Commission. The decision to extend the term of the Commission had passed by a margin of two votes. He expressed the hope that more Council members would realize its true objectives and vote against a further extension of its mandate.

8. The Commission was neither impartial nor objective. Allegations based on media propaganda had been presented as fact, with no proof whatsoever. To produce its incoherent and sketchy report, the Commission had gone to great lengths to ignore the minimum standards of investigation and reporting on human rights. It had rushed to reach conclusions on the basis of a few telephone interviews. The Commission was well aware that the destructive group that Ethiopia was facing had fabricated atrocities and orchestrated

allegations to garner international sympathy. Moreover, some Commission members had, prior to their appointment, made public their hostile positions and actively advanced the need for intervention, while citing contested reports of biased civil society organizations. The report was therefore nothing but a reflection of those premeditated positions.

9. States held the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, hence the principle of constructive international dialogue and cooperation. For that reason, and despite its fundamental opposition to the Commission’s establishment, his Government had offered to cooperate in view of its successful working relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). To its utter surprise, the Commission had refused to cooperate. It had become clear why: cooperation would not be favourable to the hostile narrative that the Commission sought to portray.

10. In comparison with the joint investigation team of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR, which had carried out a two-month-long investigation on the ground and had still called for further investigations, the Commission had conducted a desk-based review from abroad. Nonetheless, it had somehow concluded with certainty that all sorts of international crimes had been committed. The Commission had made a deliberate effort to absolve a terrorist group of its crimes, shifting the scope of the report at will to fit that objective. His delegation refuted the unsubstantiated allegations in the report, which lacked objectivity, professionalism and impartiality, was selective, discriminatory and its conclusions politically motivated.

11. His Government rejected the Commission and its work. Ethiopia would redouble its efforts to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of its people, ensure accountability for all alleged human rights violations and continue its good faith and principled cooperation with OHCHR. It would implement the accepted recommendations contained in the report of the joint investigation team, strengthen its national human rights institution and augment the capacities of its interministerial task force to investigate and prosecute alleged violations. It was unfortunate that the international human rights system was positioned to play a hostile and negative role against those national efforts.

12. **Ms. Jimenez de la Hoz** (Spain), welcoming the renewed mandate of the Commission, said that her Government was concerned by the situation on the ground and the human rights violations and abuses that had occurred since the outbreak of the conflict. It

welcomed the mediation efforts that were under way and called for a permanent ceasefire. It urged the Ethiopian authorities to carry out an independent and rigorous investigation of the attack that had led to the death of a Spanish humanitarian worker in 2021. Given the humanitarian situation, it was vital to ensure access for and protection of humanitarian workers and to restore basic services.

13. **Mr. Restrepo Barman** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland called upon all parties to respect international humanitarian law and human rights, take immediate measures to end violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law and opt for constructive dialogue. His Government welcomed the African Union-led talks that had recently been held and called for the perpetrators of violations and abuses committed by all parties to be held to account. He wished to know what the Commission's main objectives would be in its second term and how it envisaged ensuring constructive cooperation with national mechanisms. Such collaboration would be crucial to ensuring justice, accountability and reparation for victims.

14. **Ms. Hunter** (Australia) said that the resumption of hostilities risked further atrocities and would have an impact on essential humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian agencies must be allowed safe access to reach those in urgent need of food, health care and other essential goods and services. Her Government called upon all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities immediately and unconditionally, work towards a negotiated solution, take appropriate measures to hold perpetrators to account and seize the opportunity of the African Union-proposed talks to create a lasting peace. The Government of Ethiopia must allow the Commission full, unhindered access to continue its investigations. Her delegation would welcome the views of the Chair of the Commission on how best to secure the access necessary for the fulfilment of its mandate.

15. **Ms. White** (United Kingdom) said that her Government was extremely concerned that the escalating conflict could result in further atrocities. It welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the Commission and supported its work, which was crucial in documenting atrocities and supporting future accountability processes. The United Kingdom had repeatedly called for all parties to the conflict to reinstate the truce and begin peace talks. Its Minister for Development had met with the Head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission to discuss accountability for human rights violations and with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia to press for a truce and raise concerns about the risk of

atrocities. She wondered how the international community could reduce the likelihood of further human rights violations occurring during the fighting.

16. **Ms. Brossard Oris** (Cuba) said that her delegation reiterated its opposition to exercises that responded to politically motivated, hegemonic interests and were used to exert pressure on countries of the global South. Selectivity, double standards and punitive approaches did not help to improve the human rights situation on the ground; rather, they led only to confrontation and distrust. Her Government encouraged cooperation and genuine dialogue based on objectivity, universality and non-discrimination as the most appropriate means of promoting and protecting human rights in every country.

17. **Ms. Malac** (United States of America) said that, while welcoming the commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to avoid combat operations in urban areas, the United States was deeply concerned by the escalation in violence in northern Ethiopia. It strongly condemned the violence committed against civilians by all parties and was deeply disturbed by reports of unlawful killings, rapes and displacement. It was likewise concerned by reports of arbitrary detentions based on ethnicity, the denial of humanitarian assistance and restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, online and offline. Her Government called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, unhindered access for humanitarian assistance, the withdrawal of Eritrean forces and accountability for human rights violations. She asked what steps the international community should take to support comprehensive transitional justice and accountability in Ethiopia.

18. **Ms. Babedi** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the fair and objective assessment of human rights in all countries, with full respect for national sovereignty and human dignity, was vital, as was full adherence to the principles of objectivity, universality and non-selectivity. The universal periodic review remained the only universally agreed mechanism for addressing human rights in a fair and equal manner. The Group strongly opposed politicization and double standards in human rights as a confrontational and counterproductive practice that could bring no meaningful outcome. It commended the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia to fulfil its obligations to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, welcomed its regular reporting to the universal periodic review process and appreciated its commitment to facilitating the work and implementing the recommendations of the joint investigation team of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR. Lastly, the Group wished to underscore that national ownership was critical to

efforts to build a prosperous Africa where human rights were fully respected.

19. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that country-specific, politically motivated reports, mechanisms, commissions and resolutions violated the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation, equality and mutual respect. They also undermined the continued promotion of respect for the principles of political independence, national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the self-determination of peoples, principles that were enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Venezuela rejected selectivity and politicization in the consideration of human rights issues. Efforts were needed to build on the progress made since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the credibility of which was undermined by such special procedures. Human rights should be examined within the framework of the universal periodic review and the treaty bodies on the basis of cooperation and dialogue with the country concerned. Venezuela maintained its commitment to the declaration made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries rejecting the creation of country-specific human rights mandates, since they led to confrontation and hindered constructive dialogue with States, which was contrary to the spirit in which the United Nations had been founded.

20. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was concerned that the escalation of the situation in Ethiopia could lead to the breaking of the ceasefire, threaten the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation and increase the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons. His delegation was also categorically opposed to the politicization of the subject in United Nations human rights entities, as it in no way improved the situation on the ground. Not a single African country had voted to establish the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia; Western countries had voted for it with the intention of instrumentalizing human rights against African countries.

21. The Russian Federation welcomed the decision by the Government of Ethiopia to continue cooperating constructively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It also valued the role of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which had shown great professionalism and impartiality. A definitive settlement of the situation in Ethiopia would be possible only through constructive negotiations in accordance with the principle that African problems called for African solutions. The Russian delegation invited all States to support the

efforts by the Ethiopian authorities to normalize the situation and improve living conditions.

22. **Mr. Kenneally** (Ireland) said that his Government shared concerns about the growing and profound polarization occurring along ethnic lines and the disturbing cycle of violence and retribution across Ethiopia. It supported calls for an immediate ceasefire, full humanitarian access and restoration of services. Accountability for all atrocities committed must be a key part of any negotiated solution to the conflict. His Government supported the Commission's efforts to complement the work of the joint investigation team and national accountability mechanisms. It urged all parties to the conflict to cooperate fully and provide the Commission with unhindered access to all parts of Ethiopia. He inquired about the main challenges for the Commission in implementing its renewed mandate and how the international community could best support its efforts.

23. **Mr. Nyman** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union deplored the dramatic escalation in violence, the enormous death toll and the irreparable cost to human life and remained firmly convinced that there could be no military solution to the conflict. It was alarmed at the deteriorating humanitarian environment in northern Ethiopia since the resumption of hostilities. The gravity and scale of human rights violations and abuses were appalling; it called for their immediate end. The parties to the conflict must immediately end hostilities and engage in direct talks with a view to agreeing a formal ceasefire and a permanent political solution. Unhindered humanitarian access and delivery of humanitarian aid to all affected communities must likewise be ensured. It was paramount to conduct comprehensive, independent and transparent investigations into all allegations of international law violations. Full accountability and justice for victims were essential to achieve a durable peace.

24. **Mr. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that his country was deeply worried about the numerous human rights violations, including those amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, that had occurred since the outbreak of the conflict. He noted that the establishment of the Commission had not led to an improvement in the situation on the ground and that a further escalation was under way. His delegation wished to know how the United Nations could contribute to the increased effectiveness of the work of the Commission. His Government agreed with the Commission's recommendation for more concerted action on the part of the Security Council, including by placing the situation in Ethiopia on its agenda. He wondered what

action the Council should take to restore peace, stability and security in the region and how it should work with the African Union to that end.

25. **Mr. Lohr** (Luxembourg) said that, while welcoming the launch of African Union-led peace talks, his Government was nevertheless deeply concerned about the presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray, the use of drones against civilians and the situation of millions of persons in urgent need of humanitarian aid. It urged the parties to the conflict to remove barriers to humanitarian access and encouraged the Government of Ethiopia to cooperate with and provide unhindered access to the Commission. His delegation wished to know how the Commission envisaged fulfilling its mandate in the absence of government cooperation; how it intended to work with the fact-finding missions of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and local civil society organizations; and how it planned to address the issue of the recruitment of children by the different parties.

26. **Mr. Geisler** (Germany), expressing his Government's continued support for the mandate of the Commission, said that Germany encouraged the Government of Ethiopia to meet with the Commission and called for the Commission to be provided with the unconditional access it needed to fulfil its mandate. All parties to the conflict must immediately end hostilities and engage in direct talks with the aim of reaching a formal ceasefire agreement and a lasting political settlement. Further civilian atrocities must be prevented by all means. His delegation wished to know how the Commission could support the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in strengthening national mechanisms for justice and accountability and what could be done to effectively counter the shrinking space for civil society organizations, human rights defenders and independent journalists in Ethiopia.

27. **Ms. Tesfamariam** (Eritrea) said that her country strongly rejected the outrageous and unsubstantiated accusations contained in the report, which was an extension of the relentless media disinformation campaign by the Tigray People's Liberation Front and its supporters to cover up and justify the Front's unpunished acts of terrorism in the region, which included a well-documented massacre and efforts to collapse the Federal Government of Ethiopia and bring about regime change in Eritrea. The allegations were an attempt to misrepresent the history and culture of Eritrea, where long-established customary laws provided for harsh penalties for the intolerable crime of sexual violence. They were also inconsistent with the history of the Eritrean forces, which were among the

most disciplined and principled in the region. The Commission's efforts to shift the blame from the Front, which had committed outrageous crimes and massacres with impunity, served to demonstrate the political intent of the mandate, which was a continuation of the selectivity and politicization that had long contributed to the ineffectiveness of the Human Rights Council. She reiterated her Government's call for universality, objectivity, non-selectivity and the elimination of double standards and politicization in the consideration of human rights issues.

28. **Ms. İnanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that her country remained committed to finding a solution to end the violence and establish peace and stability in Ethiopia. It welcomed the start of the African Union-led peace talks and hoped that they would pave the way to a permanent end to the conflict. Türkiye was actively working with all parties to end the crisis and continued its cooperation with other countries in line with its international obligations and the relevant conventions. It stood ready to provide support to the Ethiopian people with a view to establishing peace and tranquillity in the country.

29. **Ms. Zhu Jiani** (China) said that her country supported the efforts of all parties in Ethiopia to give priority to the interests of the country and its people, engage in inclusive political dialogue and restore peace and stability. The international community should respect the will of the parties concerned and support them in seeking lasting, effective and domestic solutions. China welcomed the African Union-led talks, for which an external enabling environment should be created by the international community.

30. China had long advocated addressing differences in human rights through constructive dialogue and cooperation. It was against the establishment of country-specific mechanisms at the behest of certain Member States without the consent of the countries concerned. The relevant Member States should respect the human rights path that had been independently chosen by the people of Ethiopia and resist interfering in the internal affairs of Ethiopia in the name of humanitarian assistance and human rights. Unilateral coercive measures imposed on Ethiopia had severely undermined the human rights of its people and should be terminated immediately.

31. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon), underscoring the importance of cooperation on human rights issues, in particular with the countries concerned, said that the politicization of human rights and the Manichaean division artificially maintained between States was unlikely to create conditions conducive to dialogue and

cooperation to improve the human rights situation in any country. Her delegation encouraged all those who cared about the human rights situation in Ethiopia to adopt a cooperative approach without delay. The work of the United Nations on human rights issues must be governed by the fundamental principles of universality, transparency, impartiality, non-selectivity and non-politicization.

32. **Mr. Nze** (Nigeria) said that his country subscribed to the principles of constructive and genuine dialogue and cooperation, universality and objectivity, and rejected selectivity, politicization and double standards. Politicization of human rights had proved to be counterproductive and confrontational; it had failed to achieve any meaningful outcome in the promotion and protection of human rights. Nigeria remained convinced that the universal periodic review process was the only mechanism to address human rights issues in a constructive manner. The human rights of all countries should be assessed fairly and objectively, with full respect for national sovereignty, human dignity and mutual respect. Nigeria commended the initiatives that had been taken by the Government of Ethiopia to improve the situation of its people and welcomed the African Union-led intervention. It reaffirmed the indivisibility, interconnectedness and interdependence of all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the right to development, which should be addressed in a fair and equitable manner.

33. **Mr. Ratner** (Member of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia) said that it was the view of Commission members that national ownership of accountability mechanisms was critical. For that reason, and as part of its mandate, the Commission had interacted and held productive discussions with the Government of Ethiopia and domestic institutions during its visit to Addis Ababa. It looked forward to continued collaboration and engagement on transitional justice and other issues, including with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which was carrying out important investigative work. The support of the international community for the mandate of the Commission and the country's domestic processes would be vital.

34. As the Commission began its second term, it intended to cooperate with domestic mechanisms on a number of the thematic issues that had been addressed in the report, such as sexual and gender-based violence and its long-term effects on women and girls, the humanitarian situation in northern and other parts of Ethiopia, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and hate speech. The Commission was extraordinarily

concerned about the mobilization of hate speech on social media by State and private actors to demonize opponents. It should be emphasized that the mandate of the Commission was to examine violations by all actors; the Commission had no agenda to focus on violations committed by any one particular party.

35. The African Union-led peace process represented the best hope for ending the conflict and the human rights violations; the work of the Commission was complementary to that process. The worst atrocities in wars happened with no witnesses. Preventive mechanisms such as the Commission endeavoured to shed a light on violations of human rights and humanitarian law to help to bring them to an end. The international community, in particular members of the African Union, must therefore support the African Union-led process and the work of the Commission. It was hoped that, with renewed engagement with the Government of Ethiopia and a full staff of investigators, the Commission would be granted access to all sites to continue its investigations in an independent and impartial manner, provide more information to the international community and support the national accountability and transitional justice mechanisms of Ethiopia.

36. *Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) took the Chair.*

37. **Mr. Amde** (Ethiopia) said that, having listened to some of the statements that had been made, he had a strong feeling that the die had been cast and that a set of predetermined actions was already under way. For his delegation, the trust had gone; it had heard messages not of peace but of warning, one after the other. His country had withstood many challenges in the past and would undoubtedly overcome those it currently faced. It might seem powerless in the face of the block of countries who stood against it, but it had faced them before. The fate of 120 million people could not be left to a handful of "experts". Ethiopia would always welcome well-meaning actors; it would not, however, welcome those who had already made the decision to condemn, censor and sentence Ethiopia and its people to death. The Government was committed to holding all perpetrators to account for the good of its own people, not to please some experts. Lasting peace could only be achieved through national ownership of justice and accountability for crimes that had been committed in all regions.

38. **Mr. Zongo** (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi), providing an update on the situation of human rights in Burundi (see [A/77/227](#)), said that, following the renewal of his mandate by the Human Rights Council in its resolution [51/28](#), he would

continue to assess opportunities and challenges in relation to the promotion and protection of human rights in Burundi. Inclusive dialogue and cooperation were critical to identify priorities for strengthening the rule of law and mainstreaming human rights. As a State Member of the United Nations since 1962, Burundi had extended a standing invitation to the special procedure mandate holders on 6 June 2013. It was therefore essential that Burundi reaffirm its consent to engaging more effectively to advance human rights.

39. He remained concerned by paradigm shifts in the global geopolitical environment that had led to misunderstandings about the nature and purpose of his mandate, which served only to divert discussions on substantial issues and undermine efforts to improve the situation of human rights in Burundi. His priorities included supporting opportunities to protect human rights, telling the truth in order to uphold the principle of accountability and providing the Government of Burundi with constructive advice. During his renewed mandate, he would also focus on analysing the root causes and drivers of conflict with a view to establishing early warning mechanisms and preventing the future resurgence of conflict. In addition, an emphasis would be placed on strengthening the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, expanding the civic space and safeguarding economic and social rights and the rights of women, children and refugees.

40. In his report, he had highlighted a number of advances that had been made in Burundi to tackle trafficking in persons. However, there had been no substantial change in the situation of human rights in the country. In the aftermath of the 2015 crisis in Burundi, accountability and major institutional reform were needed to achieve sustainable peace. Recommendations on addressing impunity and implementing a fully transparent and equitable judicial system had been made in the framework of the universal periodic review process of 2018. The multidimensional consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had worsened the socioeconomic situation, affecting agricultural production and exacerbating extreme poverty owing to the rising cost of basic necessities, fuel shortages, a lack of access to health care and education, a food crisis and youth unemployment.

41. Support for Burundi must take account of the cyclical violence, including the 2015 crisis, that it had faced. Initiatives aimed at contributing to the country's development also had the advantage of fostering social development and marking the country's openness to its bilateral and multilateral partners. It was therefore important to ensure that human rights were more effectively mainstreamed in government actions and

that strong institutions were in place to strengthen the rule of law and combat impunity. To that end, he intended to draw on Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on peace, justice and strong institutions, to support those efforts and encourage greater consideration of human rights in Burundi.

42. **Mr. Maniratanga** (Burundi) said it was regrettable that a report of a purely subjective nature had been submitted to the General Assembly at a time when there had been a number of encouraging and notable developments. For example, Burundi was no longer on the agenda of the Security Council or the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and its suspension from the International Organization of la Francophonie had been lifted, as had the economic sanctions that had been imposed by the European Union. The Government had launched reforms in multiple areas and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights had been reaccredited with category A status. It was clear that the partners of Burundi had changed their perception of human rights in the country. It was therefore disappointing that report was so out of step with the reality on the ground, thus demonstrating the political motives that lay behind it. The report was a non-event for Burundi; his Government would not engage in any way with any decision that had been taken about Burundi without its participation.

43. Enormous progress had been made regarding human rights in Burundi, in particular regarding the freedoms of expression, the press and association. Measures had been taken to reduce prison overcrowding, civil society organizations that had been suspended in 2015 had resumed their activities and human rights defenders, political actors and refugees had voluntarily returned to the country. In that context, special procedure mechanisms on Burundi were inappropriate. Unfortunately, the torchbearers of certain institutions of the Organization discouraged such positive developments by overly politicizing democracy and the fight against impunity. In countries like Burundi, when democracy took root certain United Nations officials and a minority of Member States distorted it by labelling it as not credible and non-inclusive. When the Government of Burundi strove daily to tackle impunity, they sought to dismiss its efforts. It was high time for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to fall into step with Member States to ensure a common approach to the policy direction of countries, rather than trying to control their actions through commissions and special rapporteurs imposed to satisfy third States.

44. It was time for the United Nations to recognize the advances that had been made in Burundi over the past

17 years. The term “fragile country” no longer applied to Burundi; it had become a beacon of human rights, democracy, security and political stability in the subregion. His delegation therefore called upon all Member States to support a recommendation to the Fifth Committee that a budget should no longer be allocated to the Special Rapporteur mandate. In the light of the multiple challenges facing multilateralism, that budget should be redirected to other United Nations projects. As far as his Government was concerned, the special procedure on Burundi no longer existed. Burundi favoured the universal periodic review as a unique space for sharing best practices and ensuring respect for the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality, objectivity and the equal treatment of countries. His Government reiterated the importance it attached to human rights issues through cooperation that respected the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other regional instruments to which Burundi was a party.

45. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country reaffirmed its principled position of rejecting selectivity and politicization in the consideration of human rights issues and the creation of country-specific mechanisms without the consent of the State concerned. That practice violated the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation, equality and mutual respect. It also ran counter to the promotion of the principles of political independence, respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the self-determination of peoples, which were enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

46. Venezuela maintained its commitment to the declaration made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries rejecting country-specific human rights mandates because they led to confrontation, hindered constructive dialogue with States and were contrary to the spirit in which the United Nations had been founded. With that in mind, Venezuela called for efforts to build on the progress made since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the credibility of which was undermined by such special procedures. Human rights should be examined within the framework of the universal periodic review and the treaty bodies on the basis of cooperation and dialogue with the countries concerned.

47. **Mr. Valido Martínez** (Cuba) said that his country reiterated its opposition to politically motivated mandates that responded to hegemonic interests and were used to exert pressure on countries of the global South. Selectivity, double standards and punitive approaches did not help to improve the human rights

situation on the ground; rather, they led only to confrontation and distrust and detracted from the credibility of the United Nations human rights mechanisms. The politicization of human rights issues must stop. Selectivity and manipulation must be prevented from continuing to taint the international sphere. His Government favoured cooperation and genuine dialogue based on objectivity, universality and non-discrimination as the most appropriate means of promoting and protecting human rights in all countries. The universal periodic review mechanism guaranteed that approach. The situation of human rights in any country, including Burundi, should be assessed in accordance with the principles of equality, non-selectivity and impartiality and on the basis of dialogue and cooperation with the country concerned.

48. **Ms. Greffine** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), welcoming the report of the Special Rapporteur and expressing full support for his mandate, said that her delegation called upon the Government of Burundi to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and allow him to visit the country. While it welcomed the progress that had been made, it remained concerned about the fragile human rights situation in Burundi. It wished to encourage the Government of Burundi to take specific measures in favour of human rights and to carry out thorough and impartial investigations of violence and abuse committed by the security forces and members of the *Imbonerakure*, the ruling party's youth league. Her delegation would welcome the comments of the Special Rapporteur on what measures the Government of Burundi should take to protect human rights defenders, how the insecure economic and social rights of Burundians could be improved and his priorities for the coming months.

49. **Ms. Malac** (United States of America) said that her delegation noted recent reports of harassment of opposition supporters and allegations of abuse of Congolese civilians by Burundian forces in South Kivu Province. It urged the Government of Burundi to investigate thoroughly and prosecute, where appropriate, all human rights violations and abuses; embrace opportunities to cooperate with United Nations mechanisms, which could support its accountability efforts; and show good faith by working with the Special Rapporteur. Long-term peace and stability in Burundi required increased efforts to end impunity and ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses. Her delegation wished to know how the international community could bring about greater accountability for abuses and violations and promote judicial independence in Burundi.

50. **Ms. Ochoa Espinales** (Nicaragua) said that her delegation reaffirmed its rejection of politicized country-specific reports that were based on selectivity, devoid of objectivity and lacked the consent of the countries concerned. It was the duty of all nations to foster friendly relations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and the obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to not interfere in matters that lay essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. The Third Committee and its mechanisms must abide by the principles of universality, impartiality, non-selectivity, genuine dialogue and cooperation – the fundamental pillars of the Organization. Nicaragua firmly rejected the manipulation and use of the human rights agenda as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of States. The aim of such an opportunistic and illegitimate approach was to sully the image of sovereign States and override the universally accepted principles of international law and multilateralism.

51. **Mr. Tozik** (Belarus) said that OHCHR should ensure that reports by Special Rapporteurs were submitted in a more timely fashion, so that States had enough time to prepare for interactive dialogues in the Third Committee. Although his delegation shared the opinion that States must promote and protect human rights and fulfil all their commitments under relevant international instruments, it consistently opposed the selectivity of country-specific procedures. Such mechanisms did not inspire trust because they tried to justify their existence by distorting the real human rights situation, created an atmosphere of confrontation and in no way facilitated dialogue and interaction. The universal periodic review should be the primary intergovernmental mechanism for the consideration of the human rights situations in all countries without exception.

52. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her delegation wished to reiterate its position that the selective consideration of country-specific situations and the exploitation of the Third Committee for political ends contravened the principles of universality, non-selectivity and objectivity. Such an approach also undermined cooperation and dialogue, which were essential principles for the promotion and protection of human rights. The universal periodic review was the functional mechanism for addressing the situation of human rights on an equal footing without resorting to naming and shaming. It must not be weakened by parallel mechanisms.

53. **Ms. Tesfamariam** (Eritrea) said that her delegation opposed country-specific mandates, including on the situation of human rights in Burundi. The use of such mandates was a selective approach to

addressing human rights in certain countries; it often targeted developing countries, but failed to have any meaningful impact, derailing national efforts and leading to missed opportunities to contribute to the promotion of human rights constructively and cooperatively. Eritrea strongly believed that the universal periodic review was the most comprehensive and appropriate mechanism for addressing human rights issues in all countries in an equal and fair manner. International cooperation on the promotion and protection of human rights could only be advanced on the basis of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity and through the elimination of double standards and politicization. It was to be hoped that the situation of human rights in Burundi would be approached in a spirit of constructive dialogue and cooperation.

54. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation remained opposed to the establishment of the post of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi without the consent of Burundi. In addition, given that the mandate was being imposed on that country, it could not be claimed that the report was objective and reflected the real state of affairs. The States that had pushed for the establishment of such a post were continuing to pursue their favoured practice of instrumentalizing the human rights agenda in order to pressurize an African developing country.

55. By contrast, the Russian Federation had consistently rejected the imposition of unilateral approaches, including through mechanisms created by inter-State organizations. Interactions between international human rights institutions and Burundi should be constructive and impartial, and their aims should be social harmony, national reconciliation and the settlement of humanitarian and socioeconomic development. The Russian Federation supported the idea that African problems called for African solutions and welcomed the increasing participation of Burundi in sessions of international, regional and subregional forums. The international community's role was to set up mutually respectful dialogue with Burundi, not to pressurize it on the pretext of protecting human rights.

56. **Ms. White** (United Kingdom), while welcoming the stated commitment of the Government of Burundi to improving the human rights situation, said that that the continuing human rights violations and abuses were a matter of concern. The United Kingdom called upon Burundi to further increase its engagement with the international community to achieve long-term peace and stability. Progress on human rights was vital in its own right and to create the conditions for development and investment. It was essential for the Government of Burundi to fulfil its obligations to protect human rights

and hold perpetrators of violations to account. Her delegation wondered how the international community could continue to support the Government of Burundi in that endeavour.

57. The United Kingdom respectfully urged the Government to reconsider its stance on engaging with the mandates established by the Human Rights Council and allow OHCHR to operate in Burundi.

58. **Mr. Nze** (Nigeria) said that his delegation was of the view that the human rights of all countries should be assessed in a fair and equal manner, with full respect for national sovereignty, human dignity and mutual respect. It reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing constructive dialogue and international cooperation on the promotion and protection of human rights. Nigeria strongly believed in the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights and opposed politicization and double standards. Politicization had been counterproductive and confrontational and had failed to achieve any meaningful outcome in the protection of human rights. The universal periodic review remained the sole universally agreed mechanism for addressing the human rights situation of every country in an equal and constructive manner. His delegation welcomed the diverse initiatives that had been taken by the Government of Burundi to further improve the human rights of its citizens and its continued reporting to the universal periodic review.

59. **Ms. Zhu Jiani** (China) said that her country welcomed the active steps that had been taken by the Government of Burundi to bring about hard-won peace, stability and reconciliation, economic and social development and promotion and protection of human rights. The international community should respect the sovereignty and independence of Burundi, commend its efforts to solve its own problems and continue to expand economic cooperation and development assistance. China consistently advocated constructive dialogue and cooperation and opposed politicization when dealing with differences in human rights. Certain countries had pushed for the establishment of special procedure mechanisms, without the consent of the countries concerned, and had used human rights as a political tool against developing countries, which only intensified confrontation and was not conducive to solving problems. Those countries should uphold the principles of non-selectivity and non-politicization, abandon double standards and respect the path of development and human rights that had been chosen by the Burundian people. Furthermore, they should stop interfering in the internal affairs of Burundi under the pretext of human rights and return to the path of dialogue and cooperation.

60. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon), reaffirming the importance of taking a cooperative approach to human rights issues, said that stakeholders committed to improving the human rights situation in a country could not work effectively without the cooperation of the country concerned. The excessive politicization of human rights and the artificially maintained Manichaean division between States were unlikely to create the conditions for dialogue and cooperation to improve the human rights situation in a country. Cameroon encouraged all delegations who cared about the human rights situation in Burundi to adopt a constructive and cooperative approach without delay. The work of the Organization in the field of human rights must be governed by the fundamental principles of universality, transparency, impartiality, non-selectivity, non-politicization and objectivity. Burundi was capable of improving the situation of its people, as demonstrated by its acceptance of recommendations made during the universal periodic review, which remained the preferred mechanism for monitoring human rights situations.

61. **Ms. Melfald** (Norway) said that, while some positive developments had been noted, her delegation remained concerned about the human rights situation in Burundi, in particular the threats and use of violence against opposition members, human rights defenders, civil society and journalists. All violations and abuses must be effectively investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Her delegation urged the Government of Burundi to cooperate with OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur, including by granting him full and unhindered access and providing him with all necessary information. She asked how Member States could best support the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

62. **Mr. Zongo** (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi) said that addressing the human rights situation of a country was no easy task. He recalled that Burundi had maintained a standing invitation to the special procedures since 2013, thereby indicating its acceptance of those mechanisms. His mandate was purely technical in nature and was not aligned with any political body. Its objective was to contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law and improve the overall well-being of the population. His approach was one of support, not confrontation.

63. Subsequent to the drafting of his report, there had been a number of developments that were heading in the right direction. His priorities for the coming months revolved around strengthening the rule of law, building stronger State institutions and reinforcing the capacity and independence of the justice system. The cooperation of the Government of Burundi would be crucial in that endeavour. Burundi had come a long way: it had faced

and was trying to recover from a cycle of crises, the most recent of which had occurred in 2015. The international community should provide support rather than draw dividing lines. He endeavoured to stay above the political debate and to provide added value.

64. Improving the situation of human rights in a country was a dynamic rather than static process. Through his mandate, his objective would be to identify priorities for Burundi in the promotion and protection of human rights, such as in economic and social rights and the right to food, health care and education. He also envisaged efforts to establish or strengthen mechanisms to prevent further crises. Once the issues and priorities had been identified, technical support could be provided in a transparent and objective manner. The aim was to enable Burundi to resolve crises and return to the path of development. He and his Office had extended the hand of cooperation to Burundi and would define modalities to support the country to rebuild, refocus on human rights and find solutions so that Burundi could be removed from the agenda of the Human Rights Council.

65. **Mr. Maniratanga** (Burundi) said that it was somewhat troubling that statements from 2014, which had been spread by the opposition on social media, were still being cited. He wished to point out the active youth participation in development in Burundi. While most countries were experiencing a rural exodus, an inverse phenomenon was occurring in Burundi. As a result of youth empowerment programmes and the setting up of a youth investment bank, young people were leaving the cities to set up businesses in rural areas and villages. It was disappointing that there was an evident gap between the reality on the ground and those who continued to talk about Burundian youth in an erroneous manner. Lastly, he wished to reiterate his delegation's recommendation that the budget allocated to the Special Rapporteur for the coming year be used for other purposes; the mechanism was no longer appropriate for Burundi.

66. **Mr. Babiker** (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea), introducing his report (see [A/77/149](#)), said that there had been no progress, only a deterioration, in the situation of human rights in Eritrea. The country continued to lack the rule of law; it had no constitution, no legislative assembly, no independent judiciary and no independent media. The involvement of Eritrea in the armed conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia had served to highlight persistent human rights violations linked to the system of indefinite national or military service and further compounded the already dire human rights situation in the country. The round-up of individuals for the purpose of military conscription had dramatically intensified. In September 2022,

thousands of conscripts between 40 and 66 years of age had been called up to fight in Tigray, with men, women, children and older persons being sent to the front lines. Previously documented patterns of recruitment of children, some as young as 14, by Eritrean forces, had worsened.

67. The human rights situation continued to push thousands of Eritreans to flee the country. At the same time, Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers faced increasingly restrictive asylum systems in transit and destination countries. Of particular concern was the situation of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, where Eritrean refugees had reportedly been killed in attacks or died of preventable causes linked to a lack of access to food, water and medicines in Tigray. He was currently gathering further information on reports that Eritreans from the Afar region had been denied access to asylum procedures in Ethiopia. Urgent and immediate action was required to protect refugees and other vulnerable populations.

68. Urgent action was also required to address widespread human rights violations such as the use of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. The situation of hundreds of Eritreans who had been arbitrarily detained, or even disappeared, in secret prisons, was of grave concern. He urged Eritrea to reveal the whereabouts of victims of enforced disappearance and to develop a transparent and efficient system for the registration of detainees. Among the disappeared were 16 journalists, 11 former members of the Government and 2 American-Eritrean citizens. There had been a worrying increase in attacks on the clergy, with at least 47 Christians having been arrested during the reporting period.

69. As a recently re-elected member of the Human Rights Council, Eritrea should uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms, including its special procedure mandate holders. It was therefore regrettable that the Government of Eritrea continued to oppose his mandate. His requests to conduct a country visit remained unanswered. He wished to emphasize his availability and willingness to work with the Government and his hope that it would consider meeting and initiating a dialogue with him to address the significant human rights challenges that the country faced.

70. **Ms. Tesfamariam** (Eritrea) said that her country neither recognized nor consented to the ill-conceived mandate of the Special Rapporteur – the product of a politically motivated initiative. The mandate, which violated the very principle for which the Human Rights

Council had been created, relied on unacceptable human rights benchmarks that undermined the national context, ownership and priorities of Eritrea. The report contained information that negated the reality on the ground and ignored the tangible progress that had been made to address people's basic needs against the backdrop of a very difficult political environment. It depended on unverified claims from dubious sources, including groups and individuals with a long history of advocating regime change in Eritrea.

71. It was of critical importance to establish unity of thought, practice and organization to combat the politicization that endangered the Council. The adverse impacts of unilateral coercive measures on innocent civilians and their enjoyment of human rights had been noted by the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. However, in his report, the Special Rapporteur had welcomed the imposition of unilateral sanctions on Eritrea, clearly demonstrating the political nature of his mandate. From the outset, he had overstepped his mandate, devoting a substantial portion of his report to the situation in Tigray, Ethiopia, and attacked the national service programme of Eritrea which was the backbone of its national defence and development capabilities, enabling it to assert the right to self-defence, the right to development and the right to live in peace and defend against any threat to its sovereignty. Like any nation, Eritrea faced human rights challenges, which the Government was working to address in earnest. The question was whether Eritrea faced a human rights crisis that warranted a decade of attention and action by the Council. The answer was no. Gaps in human rights standards were best addressed through the universal periodic review and other mechanisms that promoted the full enjoyment of all human rights.

72. Since the restoration of peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2018, the Tigray crisis had been invented to abort the revitalization of regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa and reassert the geopolitical agendas of the United States and its Western allies during the shifting global order. It was unacceptable that the Tigray crisis had been exploited to scapegoat Eritrea yet again for unfounded human rights allegations, including the obstruction of humanitarian assistance by Eritrean forces, allegations which her delegation totally rejected. The report had been drafted to lay the groundwork for the continuation of an unfair and unjust mandate that had been counterproductive to efforts in Eritrea to respect human rights. Her delegation called upon all Member States to support the efforts of Eritrea to

consolidate the emerging dynamics of peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa; implement its universal periodic review recommendations; oppose the country-specific mandate on Eritrea; intensify the fight against double standards and the instrumentalization of human rights for political ends; and avoid the undermining of the Council's mandate to promote and protect human rights everywhere.

73. **Mr. Nyman** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) called on the Government of Eritrea to ensure full respect for human rights and the rule of law, including by ending the practice of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, enforced disappearance and indefinite national service and the use of sexual and gender-based violence. Moreover, the Government must guarantee the exercise of rights including freedom of expression, religion and belief, and of peaceful assembly and association. The European Union condemned attempts to silence dissent by punishing the family members in Eritrea of those who had fled and sought refuge abroad. It called upon Eritrea to withdraw its troops from Ethiopian territory and to cooperate fully with international investigations into breaches of international law and violations of human rights that had been committed in northern Ethiopia. His delegation wondered how the international community could best assist the Special Rapporteur in monitoring and improving the human rights situation in Eritrea.

74. **Ms. Malac** (United States of America) said that her country remained deeply concerned by reports of unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other human rights violations and abuses in Eritrea. The involvement of Eritrea in the war in Ethiopia had also resulted in abhorrent human rights abuses, including the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers and the kidnapping and forced conscription of Eritrean refugees. Eritrean forces must permanently withdraw from Ethiopia and cease fuelling the conflict. Her delegation wished to know what more could be done to hold perpetrators to account for human rights violations and abuses committed in Eritrea and those committed by Eritrean forces in Ethiopia.

75. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country reaffirmed its commitment to the declaration made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries rejecting country-specific human rights mandates, as they led to confrontation, hindered constructive dialogue with States and were contrary to the spirit in which the United Nations had been founded. Venezuela rejected selectivity and politicization in the consideration of human rights issues and the establishment of country-specific mechanisms

without the consent of the countries concerned. Such mechanisms violated the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation, equality and mutual respect. They also undermined the continued promotion of the principles of political independence, respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the self-determination of peoples, all of which were enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Venezuela called for efforts to build on the progress made since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the credibility of which was undermined by such special procedures. Human rights should be examined within the framework of the universal periodic review, the treaty bodies and other instruments, and always on the basis of cooperation and dialogue with the countries concerned.

76. **Mr. Valido Martínez** (Cuba) said that his delegation reiterated its opposition to exercises that were used to exert pressure and responded to politically motivated, hegemonic interests. Selectivity, double standards and punitive approaches did not help in improving the human rights situation on the ground; they led only to confrontation and distrust. His Government favoured cooperation and genuine dialogue based on objectivity, universality and non-discrimination as the most appropriate way to address the promotion and protection of human rights in all countries.

77. **Ms. Ochoa Espinales** (Nicaragua) said that her delegation once again rejected politicized, country-specific reports that were based on selectivity, devoid of objectivity and lacked the consent of the countries concerned. It was the duty of all nations to foster friendly relations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and the obligation under the Charter of the United Nations not to interfere in matters that lay essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. The Third Committee and its mechanisms must abide by the principles of universality, impartiality, non-selectivity, genuine dialogue and cooperation – the fundamental pillars of the Organization. Nicaragua firmly rejected the manipulation and use of the human rights agenda as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of States. The aim of such an opportunistic and illegitimate approach was to sully the image of sovereign States and override the universally accepted principles of international law and multilateralism.

78. **Ms. Babedi** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group strongly believed in the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity and firmly opposed politicization and double standards in the field of human rights, an approach that had proved to be confrontational and

counterproductive and had failed to achieve any meaningful outcome. The human rights of all countries should be assessed fairly and objectively, with full respect for national sovereignty and human dignity. The universal periodic review remained the sole universally agreed mechanism to address the human rights situation of every country in an equal and constructive manner.

79. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing constructive international cooperation on human rights; welcomed the various initiatives of the Government of Eritrea to further improve the human rights of its citizens, including through implementation of the universal periodic review; commended the Government's presentation of its first voluntary national review to the high-level political forum on sustainable development; and noted with satisfaction the positive efforts towards peace and regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa, while encouraging continued developments in that regard. The international community should recognize those developments and support the Government to consolidate its efforts to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights.

80. **Mr. Kim Nam Hyok** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation continued to reject all country-specific reports, mechanisms and mandates, which pushed political agendas with the aim of violating national sovereignty and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. It was of deep concern that the politicized and unfair practice of considering the human rights situations of specific countries still prevailed. Politicization, selectivity and double standards in addressing human rights issues only hindered cooperation and constructive dialogue between countries. The universal periodic review mechanism provided for the impartial, transparent, objective, non-selective and non-politicized consideration of the human rights situation of all countries. The only way to bring about sustainable peace, stability and development in Eritrea was through constructive dialogue and cooperation.

81. **Ms. White** (United Kingdom) said that according to the joint investigation team of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR, Eritrean troops had likely committed human rights violations and abuses in northern Ethiopia. The Eritrean Government must act on those findings and ensure that such atrocities did not happen again. In the light of the re-election of Eritrea as a member of the Human Rights Council, the Government should implement its universal periodic review recommendations, release all persons held in arbitrary detention and withdraw its troops from Tigray. It should also cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. Her delegation wondered how members of the Council

could support the Special Rapporteur in discharging his mandate in view of the Government's refusal to cooperate.

82. **Ms. Rizk** (Egypt), reaffirming that all human rights, including the right to development, were universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, said that Egypt condemned all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. All human rights issues must be addressed following a constructive, objective, non-confrontational, non-selective and non-politicized dialogue-based approach, in a fair and equal manner and respecting the national sovereignty of the country concerned. Her delegation wished to emphasize that the Human Rights Council was responsible for considering the human rights situation of every country through the universal periodic review, which was based on cooperation and constructive dialogue and remained the sole universally agreed mechanism to address the situation of human rights in all Member States, equally and constructively.

83. **Mr. Nze** (Nigeria), reaffirming his country's commitment to enhancing dialogue and constructive cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights, said that the human rights of every country should be assessed fairly and objectively, with full respect for national sovereignty, human dignity and mutual respect. Nigeria strongly believed in the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity and firmly opposed politicization of and double standards in human rights. Politicization had proved to be a confrontational and counterproductive approach, failing to achieve any meaningful outcome in the promotion and protection of human rights. The universal periodic review remained the sole universally agreed mechanism for the consideration of the situation of human rights in every Member State in a fair and constructive manner.

84. His delegation welcomed the diverse initiatives that had been taken by the Government of Eritrea to further improve the human rights of its citizens, its continued efforts to implement its universal periodic review commitments and the submission of its first voluntary national review report to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. His delegation condemned the use of human rights mechanisms to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign State.

85. **Ms. Dale** (Norway), expressing concern at the deteriorating human rights crisis in Eritrea, reports of violence committed by Eritrean troops in Tigray and the dire situation of Eritrean refugees, said that her delegation urged the Government of Eritrea to

strengthen its engagement with the Human Rights Council mechanisms, including by granting the Special Rapporteur full and unhindered access, and to implement all accepted universal periodic review recommendations. Her delegation would be interested in hearing from the Special Rapporteur on how Member States could most effectively support the efforts of Eritrean human rights defenders and civil society organizations to promote human rights in Eritrea.

86. **Mr. Amde** (Ethiopia) said that country-specific mandates were often politically motivated, were counterproductive and undermined the work of the Human Rights Council. Despite the consistent objections of Member States, the Council continued to be exploited in the pursuit of a selective and politically motivated approach to the promotion and protection of human rights that failed to recognize national efforts. Ethiopia rejected the report of the Special Rapporteur, commended the efforts of the Government of Eritrea to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of its people and welcomed its engagement with the human rights treaty bodies and the universal periodic review process. It was disappointing that the Special Rapporteur had included in his report unsubstantiated allegations concerning the northern region of Ethiopia, thereby exceeding his mandate and ignoring the relevant concerns that had previously been raised. Politicization and double standards must end and the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity must be upheld as the only means of addressing human rights issues.

87. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon), reaffirming the importance of taking a cooperative approach to guaranteeing human rights, said that stakeholders committed to improving the human rights situation in a country could not work effectively without the cooperation of the country concerned. The excessive politicization of human rights and the artificially maintained Manichaean division between States were unlikely to create the conditions for dialogue and cooperation to improve the human rights situation in a country. Cameroon encouraged all delegations who cared about the human rights situation in Eritrea to adopt a constructive and cooperative approach without delay.

88. The work of the Organization in the field of human rights must be governed by the fundamental principles of universality, transparency, impartiality, non-selectivity, non-politicization and objectivity. Cameroon was of the view that the Government of Eritrea would always act for the good of its people and that it had the ability to manage the human rights situation in the country for the best.

89. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said it was strange how the country-specific reports of the special procedure mandate holders on a certain Member State all started with the same caveat, namely that the Special Rapporteur had been unable to conduct a visit owing to the lack of cooperation with the Member State in question. Syria took a firm position against country-specific reports, resolutions and mandates. If ever there was even the slightest progress resulting from such reports and mandates, he had no doubt that many States would express support. As things stood, the meetings of the Third Committee entailed nothing but politicized statements and accusations. It was time to make space for constructive dialogue.

90. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her country reiterated its concern at the continued abuse of the Third Committee for the consideration of reports emanating from politically motivated mandates that were based on double standards and biased approaches. The practice of considering country-specific situations in the Committee was counterproductive. Moreover, exploitation of that platform for political ends was in breach of the Charter of the United Nations, violated the principles of universality, non-selectivity and objectivity and undermined cooperation and dialogue as the essential principles for promoting and protecting all universally recognized human rights. The universal periodic review was the proper mechanism for reviewing the human rights situation of every Member State on an equal basis, without recrimination and with the full participation of the Government concerned.

91. **Ms. Zhu Jiani** (China) said that her country welcomed the efforts of Eritrea to promote and protect human rights, explore development approaches in line with its national context and make progress in advancing economic and social development, eliminating poverty and strengthening human rights. China firmly supported efforts to maintain national sovereignty, independence and dignity and to oppose foreign interference and unilateral sanctions. It had long advocated constructive dialogue and cooperation as a means of addressing differences in human rights, rather than using human rights as a tool to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries or establishing country-specific bodies without the consent of the countries concerned. In the light of the objections raised by Eritrea and countries of the region, China called upon the Human Rights Council to terminate the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

92. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was against the politicized examination of the situation in Eritrea, as the human rights situation

on the ground could not be improved by establishing mechanisms that did not enjoy the support of the country in question. Similarly, the Russian Federation condemned the instrumentalization of human rights by Western States in their struggle with African developing States and called on them to stop terrorizing developing countries with confrontational language regarding human rights.

93. Eritrea had not supported the extension of the Special Rapporteur's mandate. The Special Rapporteur should have looked for opportunities to interact with the Government of Eritrea, but had instead adopted a confrontational approach and drafted a report filled with accusations. Indeed, Eritrea was one of 10 States that had expressed their attitude to the politicization of the special procedures by refusing to support the corresponding resolution in the Human Rights Council.

94. It was astonishing that the Special Rapporteur supported the unlawful sanctions imposed by the United States to exert pressure on Eritrea. Unilateral coercive measures negatively affected the exercise of human rights, as had been stated repeatedly, including in resolutions of the Security Council. Eritrea worked well with entities of the United Nations system and participated in the universal periodic review. He called on all States and human rights mechanisms to work with Eritrea in a spirit of cooperation, taking into account the country's legitimate interests.

95. **Mr. Tozik** (Belarus) said that his delegation wished to repeat its principled position of rejecting country-specific approaches in the Committee. Engaging whole teams of country-specific rapporteurs was a waste of resources which could be used more effectively for practical and useful projects. It was also clear that the report on the situation of human rights in Eritrea did not correspond to the principles of universalization, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. It also lacked detail on progress made in several human rights aspects, with the authors instead dictating to sovereign States how they should function and what laws and decisions they should take. If the Special Rapporteur were genuinely interested in improving the human rights situation in Eritrea, he would have adopted an entirely different approach, since Eritrea did not need to receive evaluations of the progress in implementation of recommendations that it had not accepted during the universal periodic review in 2019.

96. **Mr. Maniratanga** (Burundi) said that his delegation reiterated its principled position regarding the universality of human rights and rejected special procedure mechanisms that led to politicization and

lacked objectivity and impartiality. Burundi commended the progress that had been made by the Government of Eritrea, including with regard to economic, social and cultural rights. It likewise welcomed a regional cooperation agreement between the Horn of Africa countries and called for international support and solidarity to aid in meeting its objectives of peace, development and the full enjoyment of human rights for all. It was time to rethink the special procedure mechanisms in order to save the universal character of human rights. As things stood, human rights had become an instrument used by some Member States to the detriment of others.

97. **Mr. Babiker** (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea) said he wished to point out that, far from being politicized, his report contained information on specific cases, including the arbitrary or incommunicado detention and disappearances of various persons, including children. Information had been sought from Eritrea, which had failed to respond. He had shared an advanced copy of his report with Eritrea; he had received no reply. At the start of his mandate, he had believed that, as an African from the region, he would be able to engage in a constructive dialogue on specific human rights issues. It was not conducive to dialogue to imply in the Third Committee that the report was incorrect and yet refuse to engage.

98. He noted that many Member States had spoken about the issue of selectivity and stated that the mandate interfered in the national sovereignty of Eritrea. Regarding the statement that had been made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of African States, which reflected the African position with regard to his mandate, he wished to emphasize that torture, enforced disappearances, the detention of journalists, the lack of an independent judiciary and the absence of the rule of law were not politicized issues, they were factual ones. Mention had been made of the need for dialogue. He recalled that the Special Rapporteur mandate had been given by Member States of the Human Rights Council specifically to engage in dialogue. Member States should therefore facilitate the engagement of the Government of Eritrea so that he could gain access and verify the situation on the ground. Moreover, as a re-elected member of the Council, Eritrea should uphold the highest human rights standards and cooperate with the entire United Nations human rights system. As things stood, the universal periodic review recommendations had not even been implemented, and neither had the decisions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

99. It was important to point out that he had not exceeded his mandate, which extended extraterritorially,

including when Eritrean forces had gained control in Tigray and when Eritrean refugees had been killed in the same region. Moreover, his mandate covered Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers globally. Lastly, he wished to reiterate that Member States and the Council could help to improve the human rights situation in Eritrea by supporting his mandate and facilitating constructive engagement with the Government. Failure in that regard represented a failure not of the mandate but of the human rights system. He called upon Eritrea to make a commitment as a member of the Council by opening the door to cooperation and engagement.

100. **Ms. Tesfamariam** (Eritrea), thanking those delegations who had showed their solidarity, said that earlier that very morning the United Nations had stated in a tweet that misinformation was dangerous, that it put people's lives at risk and that it was important to verify the facts before sharing something online. She could not agree more. Misinformation, disinformation and "malinformation" were very dangerous; and yet, through the figure of the Special Rapporteur, unsubstantiated allegations against States had been repeated by the Human Rights Council, thereby inadvertently propagating the very dangers that the United Nations was warning against.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.