



# General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
10 March 2023

Original: English

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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 25th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Blanco Conde .....(Dominican Republic)  
*later:* Mr. Venancio Guerra (Vice-Chair) .....(Portugal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.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)

**(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (continued)**

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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 and A/77/356)

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

1. **Mr. Mythen** (Ireland), speaking also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Peru, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, said that a great debt was owed to civil society actors and human rights defenders, without whom informed

decisions could not be made by the United Nations and the mandates of United Nations entities could not be effectively carried out. Acts of intimidation and reprisal committed against those cooperating or seeking to cooperate with the United Nations should therefore be unequivocally condemned.

2. The most recent annual report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (A/HRC/51/47) was welcome and the cases of reprisals included therein illustrated the breadth of the issue of. The matter needed to be addressed in a coordinated manner. Many of the Secretary-General's concerns were apt, in particular: the continued targeting of women, minorities, representatives of Indigenous Peoples, peacebuilders and human rights defenders; the evidence of an increase of online surveillance, privacy intrusion and cyberattacks; the application of laws and other instruments that hindered civil society's engagement and advocacy efforts at the United Nations; the misuse of counter-terrorism laws against organizations and individuals in response to their cooperation with the United Nations; and the effect of such restrictive measures in deterring victims and civil society from cooperating with the United Nations.

3. States were therefore urged to take proactive steps to address reprisals by conducting robust investigations, fully complying with the obligations of international law, ensuring accountability and supporting and protecting victims from threats and violence. States should promote cooperation with the United Nations and support the work of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. All cases of reprisals should be reported and States should also provide emergency grants to those facing intimidation or reprisal in conflict settings.

4. The United Nations had a heightened responsibility when those who cooperated with the Organization were targeted. The United Nations should therefore do everything possible to facilitate a safe environment through a coordinated and system-wide response whereby measures mitigating the risk of reprisals were put in place. Initiatives to reinforce coordination and readiness on the issue, such as the United Nations Guidance Note on the Protection and Promotion of Civic Space, were welcome and the United Nations should ensure their effective implementation.

5. The United Nations should also continue efforts to improve data collection, analysis and documentation of cases of intimidation and use such information to actively improve policies and practices.

6. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica), speaking also on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect, said that in order to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes, it was necessary to understand their early warning signs, risk factors and aggravating conditions. Systematic or widespread human rights violations and abuse and hate speech often served as key early warning signs of such crimes and could significantly elevate the risk of atrocities occurring. Such violations and abuse could also constitute atrocity crimes.

7. Effective prevention of mass atrocity crimes required identifying and responding to risks at an early stage, beginning with the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, with particular attention to the protection of women, children and other vulnerable persons. States should therefore adopt and implement human rights policies at all levels of government and decision-making, provide education on human rights and introduce laws that protected the rights of persons belonging to minorities and promoted social inclusion.

8. International human rights mechanisms could play a key role in preventing atrocity crimes and upholding the responsibility to protect. The Committee offered a venue in which to demonstrate the clear connection between atrocity risks and human rights violations. It also provided opportunities for Member States to raise awareness of that connection and strategize on how to strengthen collective action in order to protect vulnerable populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

9. **Mr. Nunes** (Timor-Leste), speaking on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) Core Group, as well as Andorra, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Palau, Panama, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and Ukraine, said that the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would only be possible with the full decriminalization of all sexual orientations and gender identities globally.

10. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, 11 countries had decriminalized consensual same sex relations and one country had decriminalized the existence of trans persons. While such progress was encouraging, work still needed to be done to achieve full decriminalization as 66 countries still criminalized same-sex relations de jure and de facto, 13 explicitly criminalized the

existence of trans persons and 36 countries criminalized the existence of trans persons through vagrancy, prostitution, morality, public nuisance and other laws.

11. The Group expressed its full support for the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and looked forward to the upcoming presentation of his report and his continued engagement with the Committee. As mentioned in his report, the decriminalization of same-sex consensual activity was the responsibility of States, as part of their international obligations to address discriminatory violence. Social inclusion would require the dismantling of all legislation criminalizing sexual orientation and gender identity and expression and negating a person's identity. Everyone should live free and equal irrespective of who they were or whom they loved.

12. In the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, the Group called for an end to the multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination faced by LGBTI persons. In order to achieve the full realization of human rights for everyone, leaving no one behind, the Group called for the full decriminalization of sexual orientation and gender identity by 2030.

13. **Mr. Kulháněk** (Czechia), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States and, in addition, Albania, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Georgia, Guatemala, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Serbia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, said that it was the responsibility of each State to ensure that rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion could be exercised without fear of intimidation, discrimination, coercion, violence or persecution. Such rights, which were intrinsically linked to the right to freedom of opinion and expression, were therefore human rights. The actions taken by an increasing number of Governments to restrict the exercise of those rights was deeply concerning.

14. Freedom of expression and opinion included the freedom to express opinions on religions or beliefs. States should accept the expression of dissent or criticism against any religion, provided such expression did not constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or acts of violence. Indeed, interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue could play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence.

15. Laws criminalizing blasphemy could have serious inhibiting effects on freedom of expression and on freedom of religion or belief. States should therefore repeal such laws and end their application against persons belonging to religious or other minorities. Although progress had been made in the global movement to abolish those laws, the continued criminalization of apostasy in 22 countries was regrettable. Furthermore, the use of the death penalty, physical punishment or deprivation of liberty as punishment for blasphemy and apostasy in some countries was deeply concerning.

16. Laws limiting the right to leave or change one's religion or belief were among the most common violations of freedom of religion or belief. States were therefore urged to end the application of such laws, with a view to repealing them in the near future.

17. Religion could never be used as justification for the violation of any human rights. States should therefore uphold women's human rights, ensure gender equality and repeal discriminatory laws that allowed, condoned or justified harmful practices and violence against women on religious grounds.

18. **Ms. Kokkinakis** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that it was more important than ever to reaffirm the commitment of the European Union to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Human rights were universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and States with different legal systems, traditions, cultures and religious backgrounds must respect, protect and fulfil human rights as set out in the conventions of the United Nations. The full realization of human rights required a meaningful interaction between Governments, civil society and individuals. The European Union strongly condemned all forms of harassment against civil society and human rights defenders.

19. The European Union strongly condemned the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine as a gross violation of international law. It rejected and refused to recognize the illegal annexation by Russia of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces and the Crimean peninsula. The European Union urged all States and international organizations to reject that illegal annexation and demanded that Russia withdraw all forces and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine and respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. It also strongly condemned the reported forcible transfer of population within the territories under Russian military control and

deportations to the Russian Federation. The deteriorating human rights situation in Russia remained deeply concerning.

20. The European Union welcomed the recent report from the Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan ([A/HRC/52/84](#)) and called for the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons living in that country. It was deeply concerned by the systematic, institutionalized and structural violation of human rights in Afghanistan, including the rights of women, girls, journalists and other media workers, human rights defenders, LGBTI persons and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities. The European Union called on the Taliban to respect international law and the international conventions to which Afghanistan was a party.

21. The European Union welcomed the assessment report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China. The European Union underscored the need for justice and accountability and urged China to cooperate with OHCHR in implementing the report's recommendations. The large network of political re-education camps, mass arbitrary detentions and widespread surveillance remained a serious cause for concern. China must abide by its obligations under national and international law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including Uighurs and persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities across China, including by fully respecting the principle of non-refoulement. The repressive use of the national security law in Hong Kong, China, also remained gravely concerning.

22. The human rights situation in Myanmar had seriously deteriorated since the illegal coup of February 2021, particularly the situation of Rohingya persons and other minorities, and serious human rights violations were being committed by the Myanmar security and armed forces. The European Union strongly condemned the politically motivated executions of pro-democracy activists and opposition leaders in July 2022.

23. The resumption of hostilities and escalation of fighting in northern Ethiopia, ending five months of a humanitarian truce, was concerning. The European Union reiterated its call for all parties to the conflict to immediately end the violence, stop human rights violations and abuses and enter into a process of inclusive political dialogue. It fully supported the efforts

led by the African Union in finding a pathway to a negotiated, durable resolution to the conflict.

24. The European Union strongly condemned the human rights violations and continued deterioration of the human rights legal framework in Belarus, including amendments that had widened the application of the death penalty. Belarus should introduce a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition. The European Union also condemned the regime's involvement in the war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine.

25. The widespread and disproportionate use of force against protestors in Iran was concerning and the response of the Iranian security and police forces to demonstrations had resulted in injuries and the loss of lives. The European Union urged the Iranian authorities to abide by the principles enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran was a party.

26. The situation in Syria remained extremely worrying. The European Union called for an end to the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties, in particular the Syrian regime and its allies. An inclusive political situation based on the comprehensive implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) was the only route to peace in Syria.

27. Affirming its strong commitment to the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief for all individuals, the European Union condemned the criminalization of apostasy and the abuse of blasphemy laws.

28. The European Union was committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It stressed the need for universal access to quality, affordable and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education and health-care services.

29. The Committee's work reflected new priorities in responding to current challenges, especially the extreme global impacts of climate change. The European Union welcomed the opportunity to have a first interactive dialogue with the new Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

30. **Mr. Fuller** (Belize), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the

importance of the universality of human rights had been consistently reaffirmed and was intrinsically linked to peace, security and sustainable development. CARICOM therefore reiterated the need for a holistic approach to human rights matters and underscored the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure the full realization of human rights for all.

31. CARICOM welcomed the upcoming presentation by the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Climate change was a unique challenge for small developing States that continued to impact the realization of all fundamental human rights and freedoms. The countries of the Caribbean remained gravely concerned about the particular vulnerability of small States to the negative implications of climate change for rights such as the right to life, water, food and housing, which impeded progress made in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. CARICOM therefore welcomed the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change and looked forward to the Special Rapporteur's upcoming report on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage.

32. **Ms. McGill** (Liberia), speaking also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Peru, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay, said that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the measures required to tackle it had disproportionately affected women and girls at time when hard-fought gains on women's rights had already been seriously under threat. Attempts had increasingly been made to unravel the international consensus on the importance of gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

33. Too many women were still denied the right to make decisions about their own lives and were subject to sexual and gender-based violence, including harmful practices. Member States could not waver in their commitment to promote, protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of all women and girls. Persons in situations of vulnerability should be at the centre of those efforts and global action should be accelerated by applying a gender perspective in efforts to foster resilience.

34. As societies that protected and promoted the human rights of all women and girls, including their economic and political rights, were more stable, peaceful, equal and prosperous, women must be empowered to make their own choices and decide their own futures. The bodily autonomy of women and girls must therefore be respected through support for the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights, the prevention of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and the elimination of harmful practices. Policies aimed at empowering women should also advance comprehensive access to sexual and reproductive health care, rights and support.

35. It would be impossible to build stronger societies and achieve sustainable development without the full, equal and meaningful participation of women across all levels of decision-making. Without access to sexual and reproductive health services and information on their rights, women and girls would experience barriers to such participation. Work must therefore be done to advance gender equality and inclusive governance. Young people were rightfully demanding participation, agency and leadership and must therefore also be engaged meaningfully as equal partners in decision-making, in order to create a path forward and build a brighter and more inclusive future.

36. Lastly, their countries called for continued commitment to accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

37. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China), speaking also on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Zimbabwe, said that an effective and functional multilateral system

based on international solidarity, unity and cooperation was needed more urgently than ever. The 2030 Agenda urged States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and other calls had been made to urgently lift such measures. However, they continued to be imposed and, coupled with secondary sanctions and overcompliance, had devastating consequences on developing countries and their populations and exacerbated existing humanitarian and economic challenges, resulting in a lack of access to essential goods and services, such as food, medicine, safe drinking water, fuel and electricity, and negatively affecting the enjoyment of human rights, such as the right to health and the right to life. Such measures hindered the ability not only of the countries targeted to obtain necessary goods, such as medicines, medical equipment and vaccines in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but also of humanitarian organizations to deliver life-saving assistance to affected people. Unilateral coercive measures and overcompliance also threatened education and restricted academic freedom, access to technology and scientific research and international cooperation in the arts, culture and sports, as well as travel, thereby depriving affected populations of the full realization of their human rights.

38. Their countries welcomed the most recent Ministerial Declaration of the Group of 77 and China, which reaffirmed that the imposition of coercive economic measures did not contribute to socioeconomic development, and the most recent declaration and communiqués of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries condemning unilateral coercive measures and calling for their elimination. Their countries also recognized the work done by the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights.

39. Their countries called for States to immediately and completely cease the use of unilateral coercive measures and to avoid imposing future unilateral sanctions that were not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The current global situation called for solidarity and unity rather than confrontation and division.

40. **Mr. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that the number of civilian casualties and arbitrary executions in situations of armed conflict remained staggeringly high. Illegal warfare was a clear human rights challenge and should be recognized as such. The Human Rights Committee had addressed the link between illegal use of force and

the right to life and a deeper understanding in that regard was necessary. Acts of aggression inevitably entailed countless human rights violations, which particularly affected civilians and vulnerable individuals during conflict. The criminalization of aggression contributed to preventing such acts and so, in order to ensure justice and deter future aggression, perpetrators must be held accountable.

41. His country was concerned by the worsening human rights situation in Myanmar and, in particular, the imposition of death sentences for alleged political offences. Such developments were an indication of authoritarianism, which could have severe consequences for the lives and livelihoods of the civilian population. Liechtenstein welcomed the recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court on behalf of the National Unity Government and supported its quest for justice for those heinous crimes. It called on the Security Council to address the situation, to put in place an arms embargo in line with the call issued by the General Assembly for an end to the attack on the civilian population and to foster accountability in Myanmar.

42. Following a recent trend in cases brought before domestic and international courts, Liechtenstein was conducting a series of workshops on legal avenues to fight climate change, taking human rights obligations into account, the results of which would be available at the end of 2022.

43. **Ms. Cedano** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Central American Integration System, said that international migration was of great relevance to the development of countries of origin, transit and destination and would require a coherent and comprehensive response through international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue. No State could address migration in isolation.

44. It was necessary to effectively promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, in particular women, children, young people, persons with disabilities, persons of African descent, older persons and Indigenous Peoples. International migration should be addressed through a balanced approach whereby the roles and responsibilities of each of the countries of origin, transit and destination in promoting and protecting the human rights of all migrants were recognized and false narratives potentially exposing migrants to more situations of vulnerability were avoided. Migrants contributed positively and profoundly to the cultural, economic and social development of their host countries and countries of origin.

45. The increasing number of migrant children and young people who were unaccompanied or separated from their parents and in a situation of vulnerability was worrying and the States members of the Central American Integration System reiterated their commitment to protecting the human rights of such persons under their international human rights obligations. The smuggling of migrants and crimes connected with irregular migration, such as trafficking in persons, remained a serious problem and its elimination would require a coordinated international response and strengthened multilateral cooperation between the countries of origin, transit and destination.

46. The livelihoods of millions of people were impacted by climate change and environmental deterioration which, in tandem with factors such as the violation of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, situations of conflict and multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, had led to high levels of migration. States should show greater solidarity with migrants, especially in emergency situations, and strengthen international cooperation in order to improve migrant workers' protection, well-being, safe and voluntary return and effective reintegration into the labour market. Member States and competent organizations and actors should also recognize and address the consequences of humanitarian emergencies for migrants, especially for those in vulnerable situations, and should redouble coordinated international efforts to provide assistance and protection in collaboration with national authorities.

47. International, national and regional policies and plans regarding migration should include a gender perspective in order to ensure that necessary measures were taken to protect women and children from the dangers and risks of abuse faced during migration. Migration should also be included in development strategies, as recognized in the 2030 Agenda, in order to fulfil the obligation to protect the rights of all migrants, and international organizations, civil society and the private sector should increase dialogue between them to strengthen and formulate inclusive public policy for the promotion and respect of the human rights of all persons, regardless of their migration status.

48. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that the promotion and protection of all human rights were strengthened through dialogue and cooperation founded on the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation, taking into account both the



principle of sovereignty and the obligations assumed under the Charter.

49. Trends towards unilateralism and divisionism hindered the role of the United Nations in maintaining balance within the international community and undermined expectations of a democratic, fair, inclusive and equitable system. Political, economic, social and cultural diversity should therefore be not only preserved, but respected. Together with strengthened multilateralism, promotion of a culture of peace, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, active non-violence and combating hate speech and disinformation, such diversity would strengthen the implementation of the values contained in the Charter and in the Declaration of Human Rights.

50. The Group rejected double standards with regard to human rights and was concerned by the continued and increasing proliferation of mechanisms and procedures that claimed to carry out independent evaluations of the human rights violations in a given State. Such mechanisms often lacked the consent of the State in question, were based on secondary, tertiary, partial or unreliable sources and were motivated by dubious political agendas.

51. The Group condemned systemic racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance and opposed the rise in ideas promoting the superiority of some people over others. In that connection, Member States should give maximum priority to guaranteeing the rights of the most vulnerable.

52. The Group condemned the sustained and increasing use of unilateral coercive measures that impacted the full enjoyment of human rights. It was contradictory and immoral that some Governments claimed to be defenders and protectors of human rights and yet, through their deliberate and systematic policies, especially in the use of unilateral coercive measures, committed mass violations of human rights, or even crimes against humanity, against billions of people.

53. **Mr. Gafoor** (Singapore) said that Singapore had taken a pragmatic and non-ideological approach to governance, including human rights. It aimed to build a fair and inclusive society that prioritized the social and economic development of its people through strict adherence to the rule of law and a focus on outcomes rather than ideology.

54. During the Committee's deliberations on human rights, the principle that each country had the sovereign right to determine its own political and legal systems

based on international law must be upheld. The Committee should be a platform for constructive and mutually respectful dialogue that respected the diversity of views of Member States and focused on international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Singapore therefore called on Member States to avoid using the Committee as a platform to sermonize and moralize and to avoid making value judgments based on the false belief that some cultures and societies were superior to others.

55. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland would continue its commitment to universal and indivisible human rights in the context of peace and security and called on all Member States to respect their human rights obligations and work together to develop sustainable solutions centred on individuals and their rights.

56. The institutions and mechanisms of the third pillar of the United Nations had the full support of Switzerland and should have the means to carry out their mandate, since their effectiveness was essential for conflict resolution and the prevention of future crises. To that end, Member States should ensure that those institutions and mechanisms had the resources they required. Increased cooperation between the different pillars of the United Nations was also a priority for Switzerland.

57. Switzerland called for the abolition of the death penalty, which was incompatible with respect for human rights, and therefore encouraged Member States to support the draft resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty. Switzerland supported the introduction of the Principles of Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (Méndez Principles) in the draft resolution on torture before the Committee at the current session. The Méndez Principles would protect individuals under interrogation and ensure that the work of national authorities was effective and respected human rights.

58. Switzerland was also committed to coherent policy on the environment and human rights, having presented, during the previous session of the General Assembly, a draft resolution to recognize the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. Given the interdependence between the environment and human rights, the resolution's historic adoption had encouraged greater political commitment to the environment and served as a catalyst to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

59. **Ms. Skoczek** (Poland) said that Poland attached particular importance to upholding the human rights of those in the most vulnerable situations and believed that



maintaining high standards of good governance translated directly into enhanced protection of human rights.

60. Poland prioritized the situation of human rights in Eastern Europe and was deeply concerned about the situation in bordering countries. The growing number of victims of atrocities from the unprovoked and illegal war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine was deplorable and Poland had made efforts to alleviate the human suffering caused during the conflict by accepting millions of Ukrainian refugees and providing them with shelter, the right to work and free education and health care. However, human rights violations in the context of the conflict would only stop when Russia ceased its war and withdrew its troops from Ukraine.

61. The deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus was exemplified by a growing number of political prisoners and had involved violations of the human rights of Polish nationals. Polish civil society organizations and their activities were being outlawed and individuals harassed or arbitrarily detained. The Belarussian regime was systematically eliminating the Polish language public education system, attacking Polish cultural associations and demolishing Polish cemeteries and memorials. Poland condemned the massive human rights violations by the authorities of Belarus and called on the Belarussian regime to immediately and unconditionally release those detained on politically motivated charges and to drop the charges against them.

62. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country, a party to five major United Nations human rights treaties, was committed to fulfilling the obligations arising from them and cooperating with the relevant treaty bodies. Saudi Arabia had undertaken significant human rights reforms since its adoption of the Vision 2030 initiative, including enhancements to the country's institutional framework and judicial system. The Government was also supporting human rights organizations and human rights defenders by enabling them to contribute to relevant policies and programmes. Those reform plans extended beyond human rights issues to encompass improvements to quality of life for all residents.

63. Saudi Arabia continued to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms. The Human Rights Commission, under its memorandum of understanding with OHCHR, had made efforts to build national capacity in that area. In cooperation with United Nations offices and agencies, his country had extended help to people in disaster and conflict areas around the world and, in 2021, was among the world's

largest humanitarian donors, according to the Financial Tracking Service.

64. The Palestinian question was a priority for the country and would remain so until the Palestinian people obtained all their legitimate rights, especially the right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Over the past two years, Saudi Arabia had donated more than \$500 million to the Palestinian people. Saudi Arabia reaffirmed the need for solidarity with the Yemeni people and condemned the human rights violations committed by the terrorist Houthi militia. Saudi Arabia had provided more than \$19 billion in assistance to the Yemeni people. Saudi Arabia was following the issue of the Muslim Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar with great concern and commended the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to support the Rohingya through an annual draft resolution in the Committee. Saudi Arabia called for an immediate political resolution of the Syrian crisis and for the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland.

65. **Ms. Zinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that a multinational, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional world was pivotal to the stability and peaceful coexistence of States and peoples. The Russian Federation had the largest multi-ethnic and multi-confessional population in the world and had a centuries-long tradition of good-neighbourliness among its ethnicities, cultures and faiths. Drawing on that rich experience, it paid considerable attention to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities, who were increasingly discriminated against in various regions of the world.

66. In that context, the aggressive Russophobia exhibited by a number of countries over the previous few months was unprecedented. Indeed, since the end of February 2022, Russians had systematically been subjected to discrimination in Western States on the basis of their ethnicity. Appeals had been made at the highest political levels to exclude Russian ballet, literature and music from universal heritage; countries of the European Union had introduced visa restrictions for Russians, subjecting them to collective punishment; and some of the most odious and radical figures in the West were scarcely dissimulating their plans to eradicate the very Russian identity. The widespread discrimination of children with Russian citizenship, or even Russian roots, was alarming. The humiliation of students by their classmates, their exclusion by teachers and their subjection to psychological pressure, which prevented them from benefiting from education, was

proof of the depth and scale of anti-Russian sentiments in Western society.

67. The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities had been adopted 30 years earlier by States at various stages of development and with diverse political and cultural stances. Since then, it had become an essential part of the human rights system and its provisions were no less relevant and necessary in the modern world. The Russian delegation called on the Governments of all States to conscientiously adhere to their commitments in respect of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, especially those enshrined in that document.

68. **Mr. Peñaranda** (Philippines) said that his country mainstreamed human rights in its policies, plans and programmes and had adopted a human rights-based, culture-sensitive and gender-sensitive approach to development and governance. It was in that spirit that his Government had signed the first ever national-level United Nations joint programme in 2021. The Philippines understood the responsibility of the State to be the primary duty bearer in guaranteeing full respect for human rights and continued to strengthen its domestic accountability mechanisms, such as its independent national human rights institution.

69. The Philippines called on all States to protect the human rights of migrants, regardless of their status, in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It also called on States to protect the human rights of women, children, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. The articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could not be reserved for a select few but rather should be brought to life through the enjoyment of human rights by all.

70. **Mr. Passmoor** (South Africa) said that his country was committed to making the enjoyment of human rights attainable for all people and its election to serve on the Human Rights Council for the period 2023–2025 would provide an opportunity to continue advancing the fulfilment of human rights both in South Africa and in the world.

71. Economic, social and cultural rights were inextricably linked to civil and political rights. The work of the General Assembly should therefore be true to the letter of the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which recognized that link. It was important to create an enabling environment for the attainment of

economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. Therefore, South Africa encouraged the equal pursuit of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and recognized that States should remain committed to their realization while accounting for varying stages of development and political systems.

72. The application and interpretation of human rights should apply universally and should be guided by the International Bill of Human Rights and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Appreciation of and criticism towards States should be applied equally; politically motivated criticism of certain States diluted the value of human rights and undermined the principle of multilateralism.

73. South Africa was opposed to the application of unilateral coercive measures, which limited the enjoyment of human rights, especially social, cultural and economic rights, and had a far-reaching impact on the populations of affected States. It was also the responsibility of Member States to ensure the evolution of the principles and values of human rights within the use of new and emerging technologies. Concerned by the lack of funding for OHCHR and its reliance on donor funding, South Africa called for sufficient funds in order to ensure its independence.

74. **Ms. Pereira Portilla** (Colombia) said that her country had centred its foreign policy around the concept of total peace, based on respect for human rights, democracy, the sovereignty and autonomy of peoples and the fight against discrimination. Recognizing the need for gender equality and the comprehensive empowerment of women and girls, Colombia sought to increase the role of women and other vulnerable groups in the preparation and implementation of its foreign policy. Work on the national development plan and road map had involved members of all parts of the diverse society of Colombia.

75. Colombia had worked with OHCHR to incorporate human rights into its national policies on health, social protection, food, water, sanitation and education. A plan for the protection of social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants had been introduced and the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean had been ratified. The protection of the environment should receive a particular focus during discussions on human rights since the effects of climate change worsened situations of vulnerability caused by multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination.

76. Lastly, Colombia had recently accepted the mandate of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to hear individual petitions and was committed to the implementation of peace agreements, recognizing their importance as a mechanism for ensuring the effective enjoyment of human rights.

77. **Mr. Elizondo Belden** (Mexico) said that the central role of human rights should be strengthened in all responses to the multidimensional crises currently faced by all countries. Close collaboration with the universal system of human rights often coincided with positive change on a national scale and it was therefore necessary to continue aligning cooperation between the different bodies of the United Nations with the national priorities of each State.

78. Mexico would continue to prioritize the promotion of the rights of all people in situations of vulnerability. Within the Committee, Mexico wished to contribute to achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence, but efforts to eliminate discrimination, hate speech, xenophobia and disinformation should be increased.

79. The work of the Committee should help to strengthen the collective capacity of States in applying international human rights instruments. Mexico called for improvements to standards of protection in resolutions against torture and against extrajudicial killings, for the promotion of a moratorium on the death penalty and for the strengthening of the full enjoyment of the right to privacy and freedoms of thought, religion and expression, among other fundamental rights. The current session also provided an opportunity to strengthen the effectiveness of the system of the human rights treaty bodies.

80. **Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom) said that the principles underlying the Charter of the United Nations should remain the guiding light for work within United Nations system and the Committee.

81. The war crimes, heinous butchery and wanton destruction carried out by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine could not be ignored by the Committee and those responsible must be held to account. The United Kingdom welcomed the decision by the Human Rights Council to examine repression by Russia of its own citizens and called for support to be provided to ordinary Russians facing brutal restrictions on their fundamental freedoms. It was also important to recognize how such repression helped Russian aggression abroad.

82. The United Kingdom was concerned by the situation of the Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang, noting that actions by China constituted crimes against humanity. It urged China to implement the recommendations made in the OHCHR assessment report and allow independent experts of the United Nations to conduct unrestricted visits to Xinjiang. Such systemic discrimination reaffirmed the need for a collective commitment to freedom of religion or belief; building mutual understanding and respect between communities would be essential in the fight against intolerance.

83. The bodily autonomy of women and girls in the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights must be respected and increased efforts were needed to prevent gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, and to eliminate harmful practices.

84. The United Kingdom recognized the vital role of civil society in the promotion of human rights and, as a member of the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners, would continue to champion civil society participation in the field and in discussions within the United Nations system.

85. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that India firmly believed in pluralism and the rule of law for the effective realization of all human rights and had long been actively engaged with the global human rights agenda.

86. His country's actions to realize human rights continued to evolve and more rights were becoming justiciable through the progressive interpretation of laws. In India, compliance with human rights standards was monitored by a range of commissions, a free press and civil society. The Government had taken several rights-based social protection measures in pursuit of inclusive growth, which had lifted millions out of multidimensional poverty.

87. The promotion and protection of human rights would only be effective through an approach based on dialogue, consultation and cooperation and should be addressed in a fair and equal manner, with objectivity, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, non-selectivity and transparency as guiding principles. A balanced approach was needed to enhance the capacities of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and of rights-holders to claim their rights.

88. Within the international human right framework, India called for the operationalization of the right to development to be prioritized. Furthermore, the universal periodic review should not be used as a

platform to push selective human rights issues. States should also consider how human rights could be protected in the digital age and envision measures to counter misuses of technologies that led to human rights abuses.

89. Lastly, Member States should take an unequivocal and resolute position against terrorism in order to prevent and combat threats to human rights, including the right to life, fundamental freedoms and democracy.

90. **Ms. Mimran Rosenberg** (Israel) said that the protection of human rights was embedded in the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel. Education was the cornerstone for the protection and promotion of human rights in any society and, to that end, Israel continuously implemented reforms and initiatives to further promote education. Measures had been taken to introduce digital-based learning, a model for improved inclusion and personal empowerment of students had been adopted and new criteria for class-based affirmative action had been introduced to ensure equal access to universities.

91. The Government was taking legislative action to promote the needs of the LGBTI community and supported the promotion and protection of rights for persons with disabilities through measures such as ensuring that all public transportation was accessible.

92. Israel was fully committed to global efforts to ensure the highest attainable standard of health and, together with Germany, had funded an initiative to improve the mental health of uniformed personnel. Complete health could not exist without clean drinking water and Israel had used technology to combat water shortages in the country. Conscious of the needs of other countries, Israel had also dramatically expanded its water supply agreement with Jordan.

93. **Ms. Espinoza Madrid** (Honduras) said that her country was committed to fulfilling its international obligations as a party to the human rights treaty bodies of the United Nations and the American Convention on Human Rights.

94. Following the coup d'état of 2009, which had led to widespread corruption and grave violations of human rights, Honduras now wished to promote, protect and ensure human rights in the country, create a culture of respect for human rights within public institutions and ensure effective access to justice and reparations. In 2022, a law had been passed that allowed for investigations into the unjust criminalization of those who had fought to reinstate the rule of law in Honduras.

95. For multiple reasons, such as bad governance, corruption and drug-related activity, an unprecedented number of Honduras nationals had needed to migrate. A new commission had been established to improve the quality of life of the migrant community and the Government had created protocols and mechanisms to tackle the disappearance of migrants and other crimes against migrants, which would also allow progress to be made towards the Global Compact for Migration as well as the 2030 Agenda.

96. In addition to introducing policies aimed at fostering an inclusive and violence-free society, the Government had increased its focus on populations that had been systematically marginalized, stigmatized and criminalized. Honduras would continue to promote human rights and provide improved indicators for human rights monitoring.

97. **Mr. Mlynár** (Slovakia) said that his country condemned the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression by Russia against Ukraine and called for a swift, comprehensive and human rights-based response within the United Nations system. Slovakia was deeply concerned about the serious effects of the Russian invasion on global food security and called on Russia to enable the free and safe passage of agricultural delivery and shipping from Ukrainian ports. Within the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, Slovakia called for continued efforts to provide evidence and recommendations on accountability and to raise awareness of the alleged abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law related to the conflict.

98. Slovakia was deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus and called on Belarussian authorities and representatives to respect, protect and secure the full enjoyment of human rights for all and to immediately and unconditionally release all opponents of the regime.

99. Slovakia was also deeply concerned about the increasing erosion of respect for the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan by the Taliban, including the continued prevalence of violence and discrimination. Slovakia called for the equal enjoyment of human rights for all women, girls and children, including the right to education, which was essential for achieving sustainable development.

100. **Mr. Abd Aziz** (Malaysia) said that some States, while presenting themselves as promoters of human rights, were deliberately pushing the boundaries of existing human rights frameworks and undermining efforts to advance human rights. The response of all

States to human rights violations must be consistent across the world but some lives appeared to be more important than others, as demonstrated by the impunity enjoyed by Israel for the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people. Malaysia called on Israel to end all violations of international law and international humanitarian law and to fully comply with relevant Security Council resolutions.

101. The crisis in Myanmar was gravely concerning and the inability of the Security Council to take decisive actions to address the situation was regrettable. Some members of the Council were using the efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a pretext for such inaction. However, failure to address the situation would expose the population of Myanmar to risks of trafficking and smuggling in persons.

102. The Constitution of Malaysia provided for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and his Government continued to review its legislation in order to further improve the well-being, human rights and dignity of its citizens. The right to development was imperative, as economic prosperity would allow for the better enjoyment of human rights.

103. Malaysia firmly opposed all forms of unilateral coercive measures and condemned their imposition while the targeted countries continued to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

104. *Mr. Venancio Guerra (Portugal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

105. **Mr. Chindawongse** (Thailand) said that, more than ever, it was critical to place people at the centre of policies and Thailand was pursuing a human rights-based approach in that regard.

106. Urgent attention should be given to the most vulnerable, who were disproportionately impacted by current global challenges. To that end, Thailand placed particular importance on ensuring the right to health, which had been essential in the success of its response to COVID-19. States should also review and revise their legislation, policies and regulations to ensure consistency with international human rights norms and standards, taking the recommendations of treaty bodies and special procedures into account where possible.

107. Effective technical cooperation and capacity-building were essential tools to help countries strengthen human rights implementation on the ground and, together with enhanced engagement with stakeholders, contributed directly to the promotion and protection of human rights. It was in that spirit that

Thailand engaged with the special procedures and independent experts of the Human Rights Council.

108. Thailand reaffirmed its support for the work of the Human Rights Council and other United Nations human rights mechanisms. Thailand had been endorsed as the ASEAN candidate for the Human Rights Council for the period 2025–2027 and would continue to engage and contribute to advancing human rights, complementing the efforts of the international community to advance the 2030 Agenda, to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and to promote human security.

109. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that promoting and protecting human rights was a fundamental pillar of economic, social and cultural transformation. Qatar had made great progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including in the areas of education, health care, the environment, workers' rights, women's empowerment and children's rights. Qatar had succeeded in delivering high-quality education services to millions of children and young people in 65 countries, including countries in conflict, through programmes supported by the Qatar Fund for Development, at a cost of nearly \$1 billion.

110. In recent years, tangible progress had been made in the area of workers' rights through a package of comprehensive labour reforms that had been praised by human rights groups and United Nations bodies. Qatar was committed to respecting and protecting human rights during its preparations to host the 2022 World Cup football competition. A team had been formed to monitor the application of human rights standards on the ground to ensure that all actors complied with labour law. The State was also keen to take steps to ensure public order and the safety of the players while also respecting the human rights of the public. Programmes were in place to enhance law enforcement capacities in line with international standards, especially when it came to respecting the human rights of fans.

111. At the beginning of 2022, Qatar had, for the fifth time, become a member of the Human Rights Council, which reflected the international community's confidence in the country's effective and positive role in the human rights arena. Qatar had also donated \$100,000 for the implementation of a human rights initiative of the Secretary-General, which would contribute to strengthening the Organization's work in addressing the causes and effects of complex crises and building safe, sustainable and peaceful societies. Qatar had also provided assistance for the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, whose headquarters were in Doha.

112. **Mr. Margaryan** (Armenia) said that the protection of human rights was at the core of national reforms in Armenia, which aimed to improve transparency and accountability, eradicate corruption, enhance the independence of the judiciary, promote gender equality and help young people to fulfil their potential. Armenia was strongly committed to preventing mass atrocities and the crime of genocide.

113. The increase in hate speech, racial and ethnic profiling and the glorification of hate crimes had led to discrimination and human rights violations. Armenia therefore called for the international community to increase efforts to uphold human rights and human dignity, to address the challenges and conditions currently causing massive human rights abuses and violence and to engage fully in combating ongoing and systematic human rights violations.

114. Armenia had repeatedly alerted the international community to identity-based hatred and violence against the Armenian people, as well as the dangerously mounting levels of racism, deteriorating human rights record and hateful political rhetoric in Azerbaijan. The lack of an adequate international response was a source of grave concern for the integrity and objectivity of the entire human rights discourse. Armenia therefore called for a strong unequivocal condemnation of such acts and for sanctions to be imposed on perpetrators and those complicit in inciting such crimes, including those at the highest political level.

115. **Ms. Michaelidou** (Cyprus) said that for the forty-eighth consecutive year, her country wished to discuss the ongoing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms as a result of the invasion and occupation of Cyprus by Türkiye. Such human rights violations could not be normalized simply because they had occurred for a long time.

116. A third of Greek Cypriots were currently displaced and deprived of their property rights as a result of armed aggression by Türkiye. Those living under Turkish occupation faced discriminatory treatment based on their ethnic origin, race and religion, and were deprived their rights to education and to religion, among other rights. The rich heritage of Cyprus had been looted, vandalized and destroyed, yet Türkiye continued to ignore internationally binding treaties regarding the protection of cultural heritage. Furthermore, the fate of around half of the persons missing since the Turkish military invasion of 1974 was still unknown. Türkiye should fully disclose all information in its possession to ensure that the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus

had immediate and unhindered access to all military areas in the occupied part of Cyprus.

117. The Security Council had condemned illegal actions in the city of Varosha, Cyprus, and had expressed regret that unilateral actions had contravened its previous resolutions and statements regarding the situation there. The defiance of such resolutions and statements by Türkiye demonstrated its deliberate policy to undermine the resumption of negotiations. Cyprus called for a settlement that fully conformed with standards for individual human rights.

118. **Mr. Marschik** (Austria) said that States should respect fundamental freedoms and human rights, fight against impunity and demand accountability, particularly in the light of the flagrant and deliberate breach of the Charter of the United Nations by Russia in its unprovoked war of aggression on Ukraine.

119. To that end, Member States should collectively address human rights violations and abuses, as well as the persistent failure to protect human rights. As all States should be held to the same standards and obligations, Austria supported constructive dialogue and cooperation within the Committee on country-specific human rights situations. Austria condemned persecution, discrimination and violence against minorities and, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, had pledged to do more to protect the rights of such persons Austria was also concerned by the implications for women's and girls' rights owing to the situation of human rights in Iran, Afghanistan, Belarus and Ukraine and reiterated its full commitment to advancing gender equality.

120. It was critical to discuss the human rights implications of new technologies, which should not be misused to incite violence against vulnerable groups. The work of journalists and other media workers was essential in that regard and Member States should ensure that they could work freely without fear of arrest, persecution or harassment.

121. It was unacceptable that human rights defenders faced persecution, including after interventions at the United Nations, and Austria remained focused on combating transnational organized crime.

122. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had made it clear that certain human rights should not be prioritized over others. Nevertheless, it was important to remember that some rights could act as catalysts for the enjoyment of others.

It would be beneficial to invest in those rights, which included the right to life, food, health and education, through investment in infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, roads and airports. Economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development, should be at the heart of efforts to ensure the enjoyment of human rights. It was therefore important to overcome political divisions and focus on practical measure to implement the Declaration on the Right to Development.

123. The people-centred approach taken by Cameroon had produced admirable results in ensuring the enjoyment of all human rights. Literacy rates were among the highest in the region and, in the past 15 years, life expectancy had increased and poverty and income inequality had fallen.

124. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that human rights were universal, inalienable, indivisible and interrelated, and that in assessments of human rights situations, a holistic approach was required, whereby all categories of human rights were considered on an equal basis. Human rights must also serve the interests of sustainable development. Effective collaboration on human rights depended on constructive dialogue, respect for international law and strict adherence to the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States. A balance also needed to be struck between individual interests and freedoms, the public good and social justice.

125. From the point of view of human rights, ideal countries did not exist and those claiming the contrary were either being disingenuous or not paying enough attention to themselves. While every State was obliged to do its best to fully uphold the human rights set out in the relevant international instruments, each would have its own path and no one-size-fits-all decisions could be taken. The task of international organizations like the United Nations was therefore to assist States on their path and to ensure that human rights were again considered exclusively in formats that promoted an exchange of experiences. The universal periodic review played a key role in that regard as an instrument for the constructive promotion of human rights at the national level.

126. Belarus had consistently rejected the use of human rights as a foreign policy weapon and would continue to debunk the myth that certain States had an impeccable human rights record. One method that it used was to publish an annual report on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs covering the most high-profile cases of human rights violations in certain countries.

127. Unilateral coercive measures were a further foreign policy weapon whose application affected the enjoyment of all human rights. Such measures were inconsistent with international law and had catastrophic consequences for the enjoyment of rights in States subject to sanctions. The position of the international community in that regard was unambiguous and had been enshrined in dozens of official United Nations instruments, including General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the reports of special procedure mandate holders. His delegation called for the discontinuation of unilateral coercive measures.

128. **Mr. Pedroso Cuesta** (Cuba) said that some rights were prioritized above others and many countries flying the flag of human rights did not even recognize the rights to development, peace, a healthy environment and international solidarity. Selective practices, punitive approaches and double standards in the area of human rights continued to affect developing countries. Colonizers, oppressors and violators of the most sacred human rights often presented themselves as defenders of freedom, including within the human rights machinery of the United Nations, which resulted in mechanisms losing credibility and the confidence of Member States. The manipulation of false information regarding human rights was an increasing and concerning phenomenon and was often used to justify agendas targeting developing countries. Such agendas contravened the Charter of the United Nations and international law and had nothing to do with genuine human rights concerns.

129. In order to advance the promotion and protection of all human rights, international dialogue and cooperation should be encouraged and respect shown for the right to self-determination. It was necessary to foster sustainable development, eradicate hunger and poverty and ensure access to high-quality health care and education.

130. The current international system should urgently be replaced by a more just, equitable and democratic one and the application of unilateral coercive measures should be stopped. Cuba had been subjected to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for more than six decades. The measure was a flagrant and systemic violation of human rights and a crime that violated the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Similarly, the practice of drawing up unilateral lists, which had no purpose other than to single out developing countries, should be stopped as it was an affront to multilateralism. The inclusion of Cuba on such lists had no basis and was designed to put pressure on the country as part of hostile policies and campaigns to discredit it.



131. **Ms. Theofili** (Greece) said that the principles of equality and non-discrimination were constitutionally safeguarded in Greece and provided guidance for all policy action. National action plans were in place for gender equality, LGBTI equality, child protection and the safeguarding of the rights of persons with disabilities, and Greece was committed to combating racism, ensuring respect for the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and protecting freedom of expression.

132. Since 1974, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus had continuously been violated as a result of the military invasion and illegal occupation by Türkiye. In particular, the issue of missing persons in Cyprus and Greece was highly sensitive, leaving families still uncertain of the fate of their loved ones, and 47 of the 735 persons still missing were Greek citizens. Greek Cypriots continued to live as internally displaced persons and the decision taken by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders in July 2021 to reopen the fenced-off area of Varosha, Cyprus, ran contrary to Security Council resolutions.

133. Measures taken by Türkiye regarding the educational and religious rights of enclaved persons had come too late and widespread looting and destruction of the cultural and religious heritage of Cyprus was of great concern. Greece supported efforts for the resumption of meaningful negotiations for a consensual, comprehensive and viable settlement based on a bicommunal and bizonal federation, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*