



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
25 April 2023

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 27th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 20 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Venancio Guerra (Vice-Chair) (Portugal)

Contents

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

- (a) Implementation of human rights instruments (*continued*)
- (b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*)
- (c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*)
- (d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

22-23770 (E)



Please recycle



In the absence of Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic), Mr. Venancio Guerra (Portugal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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)

([A/77/48](#), [A/77/56](#), [A/77/139](#), [A/77/157](#), [A/77/160](#), [A/77/162](#), [A/77/163](#), [A/77/167](#), [A/77/169](#), [A/77/170](#), [A/77/171](#), [A/77/172](#), [A/77/173](#), [A/77/174](#), [A/77/177](#), [A/77/178](#), [A/77/180](#), [A/77/182](#), [A/77/183](#), [A/77/189](#), [A/77/190](#), [A/77/196](#), [A/77/197](#), [A/77/199](#), [A/77/201](#), [A/77/202](#), [A/77/203](#), [A/77/205](#), [A/77/212](#), [A/77/226](#), [A/77/235](#), [A/77/238](#), [A/77/239](#), [A/77/245](#), [A/77/246](#), [A/77/248](#), [A/77/262](#), [A/77/262/Corr.1](#), [A/77/270](#), [A/77/274](#), [A/77/284](#), [A/77/287](#), [A/77/288](#), [A/77/290](#), [A/77/296](#), [A/77/324](#), [A/77/345](#), [A/77/357](#), [A/77/364](#) and [A/77/487](#))

(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. de Varennes** (Special Rapporteur on minority issues), introducing his report ([A/77/246](#)), said that, 30 years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the protection of minority rights was being outright neglected, resulting in massive abuses of the human rights of tens of millions of persons belong to minorities and contributing to global instability, severe humanitarian crises and violent conflicts.

2. There was a failure to mainstream and integrate the rights of minorities at the United Nations despite the adoption of the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in 2013. Inaction and negligence in the protection of

minority rights had become features of the international landscape, as demonstrated by the international community's inability to address or respond to the extremely disturbing allegations that had been raised, including the possible denial of citizenship for millions of people, most of whom were Bengali or belonged to other minorities, in Assam, India; voting restrictions in the United States of America leading to the disenfranchisement of millions of people, most of whom belonged to minorities; and crimes against humanity involving Uighur and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang, China. Minority rights had languished in the United Nations system, with recent decades seeing a decreasing interest in minority issues. United Nations initiatives for other marginalized or vulnerable groups had been much more numerous, whereas no major institutional initiatives for the protection of minorities had been launched in recent years.

3. Alongside such outright institutional neglect of the human rights of minorities were increased levels of hate speech, incitement to violence, scapegoating and bigotry targeting minorities, leading to a more unstable and unjust world. In recent years, the perpetrators of such acts had been ignored, and the victims and human rights defenders themselves had even been prosecuted and persecuted. In some cases, majoritarian politicians were exploiting fear for short-term political gains at the expense of minorities. The grievances of minority communities were often at the root of, or exploited in, violent internal conflicts, with the number of such conflicts in the world near their highest levels in the past 30 years. Unless the massive violations of the rights of minorities were addressed, the world would continue to face risks of growing instability and a period of continuing breakdown of peace.

4. In his report, he had recommended the development of an action plan to strengthen the protection of minority rights and the operationalization of the 2013 Guidance Note, in which the Secretary-General had called for minority rights to be mainstreamed and integrated across all United Nations pillars and activities, including through initiatives such as the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and the Faith for Rights toolkit. He had also called for the United Nations to launch a process for the development of a treaty on minorities as a legitimate area of international cooperation in a climate where minorities were facing massive violations of their rights, including the stifling of their cultures, the denial of the use of their languages, especially in education, and

unacceptable restrictions on their rights to practise their religions.

5. **Ms. Szelivanov** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the multiple threats facing the world, both online and offline, disproportionately affected those in particularly vulnerable situations, including persons belonging to minorities. The international community must address the multiple, aggravated and intersecting forms of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities.

6. Conflicts were caused by many factors, including the manipulation of a certain group's grievances by outside forces for geopolitical reasons or the practice of raising false alarms to artificially create tensions and divisions within a State. The European Union strongly condemned the use of the protection of minority rights as a pretext for the illegal use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, as was the case in the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine. Human rights must be protected, not misused.

7. In the light of the rise in hate speech, xenophobia and racism online, which had been fuelling violence and attacks against persons belonging to minorities, she asked how hate speech on social media could be tackled. Her delegation would also like to know how the international community could ensure that social media was not misused to fuel conflicts but rather played a role in solving them.

8. **Mr. Bunch** (United States of America) said that his Government welcomed the contribution of the Special Rapporteur's report on his visit to the United States ([A/HRC/49/46/Add.1](#)) to its ongoing dialogue on how to counter systemic racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance and the unique vulnerabilities faced by members of minority groups and marginalized communities. His Government was deeply committed to the advancement of the human rights of members of minority groups and marginalized communities in its domestic and foreign policy.

9. The United States had recently submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination its periodic report, in which it had addressed myriad issues affecting members of minority groups and marginalized communities, such as racial discrimination, economic inequality, targeted acts of violence, unequal access to education, health disparities, disinformation and hate speech.

10. He asked how countries could work together to address the cross-cutting and intersectional issues faced

by members of minority groups and marginalized communities.

11. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by China on behalf of the group of like-minded countries on the issue of Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet. Interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign States and politicizing human rights issues, including minority issues, were unacceptable. Belarus supported the efforts of China to protect its sovereignty.

12. His delegation welcomed the Special Rapporteur's blunt assessment of the work of the United Nations system in his report. The discussions during the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities had shown that the Special Rapporteur's criticism was founded.

13. His delegation had concerns about the Special Rapporteur's recommendation to increase the participation of minority representatives and organizations in the meetings of United Nations bodies. Dialogue with minorities should be widely promoted at the national level and be taken into account in the national positions that were voiced at the United Nations. Flooding the United Nations system with other actors would complicate negotiations and ultimately paralyse the work of the Organization.

14. His delegation was prepared to discuss with other Member States the possibility of establishing a permanent forum for minorities.

15. **Mr. Edbrooke** (Liechtenstein) said that his Government was grateful for the Special Rapporteur's support for its work on conflict prevention through forms of internal self-determination, political autonomy and subnational governance, including the release of the handbook on the prevention and resolution of self-determination conflicts in 2021. With regard to paragraph 75 of the Special Rapporteur's report, his delegation wondered what Member States and relevant parts of the Secretariat could do to better prevent conflict by upholding the human rights of minorities. His delegation would also be interested to know what could be learned from other relevant organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe High Commissioner on National Minorities.

16. Liechtenstein was concerned at reports of the disproportionate conscription of ethnic minorities by the Russian Government to fight in its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. He asked what the United

Nations could do to address the ongoing trend of minority groups often being among the first to suffer the consequences of conflict both at home and abroad.

17. **Ms. Fuchs** (Austria) said that her country welcomed the Special Rapporteur's initiative to organize regional forums on minority issues and had gladly hosted the forum for Europe and Central Asia in Vienna in 2022. At the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Austria had pledged to promote digitalization projects aimed at minority groups and to enhance support for education in minority languages from a young age. Her delegation commended those States that had made voluntary pledges and called upon all States to uphold their commitments to protect minority rights.

18. Significant gaps remained in the protection of minority rights in many countries. Minority rights were misused as a pretext for war. Austria condemned in the strongest possible terms the illegal and unprovoked war waged by Russia in Ukraine, including its manipulation of minority issues.

19. Issues related to minorities could be overcome and lead to a stronger, more vibrant and thriving society. The autonomy of South Tyrol served as a model for the successful protection of minority rights under the shared responsibility of two neighbouring countries.

20. **Ms. Keller** (Switzerland) said that her Government gave priority to the protection of minorities as part of its commitment to human rights. The participation of minorities in all spheres of society and political life contributed to a country's stability and prosperity.

21. It was regrettable that minority issues were not given sufficient attention and that lack of respect for minority rights too often provided fertile ground for conflicts. Her delegation fully supported the Special Rapporteur's call to integrate minority rights in all United Nations pillars and increase their visibility. She asked how the need to protect minority rights could be re-emphasized.

22. Switzerland would continue to protect the rights of minorities, to promote their participation in political processes and to combat all forms of discrimination. Particular attention should be given to tackling hate speech on online platforms and social networks.

23. **Ms. Lula** (Poland) said that her country echoed the strong condemnation by the European Union of the use of the protection of minority rights as a pretext for the illegal use of force against the territorial integrity or

independence of any State, as exemplified by the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine. The brutal repression by Russia of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in Ukraine was aimed in particular at Crimean Tatars, who had been forced to struggle for their identity since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014.

24. In the context of education and minority languages, her delegation wished to highlight the ongoing persecution of the Polish minority in Belarus. Despite numerous calls by her country for the Belarusian authorities to stop such repression, the Polish language was being eliminated from the education system and Polish memorials and cemeteries were being destroyed.

25. **Mr. Mogyorósi** (Hungary) said that his delegation welcomed the high-level meeting of the General Assembly and the regional forums to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The anniversary was an opportunity for taking stock and making new recommendations, which were of high importance in the light of the serious setbacks to the rights of national minorities. It was crucial to protect the individual and collective identity of autochthonous national minorities and to enable them to exercise their cultural, educational and linguistic rights autonomously. A compulsory framework regulating the protection of the rights of national minorities should be adopted, taking into account the basic principles that national minorities were not a domestic but a global issue, that citizenship and national identity were often separate concepts, that the protection of national minorities was based on the right to identity, that it was equally necessary to ensure both individual and collective rights, and that national minorities should be considered constituent parts of the States in which they lived. His country had lived up to those principles, having legally recognized thirteen nationalities since 1993.

26. **Mr. Rashid** (Pakistan) said that the global surge in populism, Islamophobia and hate-based ideologies, amplified through online platforms, was fuelling violations of the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of minorities. Pakistan was alarmed by the demonization and dehumanization of minority individuals and communities in certain cases. In recent years, there had been calls for genocide in India against the Dalit and Muslim minorities. The dangerous embrace of a majoritarian Hindutva ideology by India in all regions was cause for serious concern. That ideology had permeated institutions that were required to protect fundamental rights. With hijab bans, anti-conversion

laws, the denial of citizenship rights, attacks on mosques, calls for genocide and State-sponsored pogroms against Muslims, early warning signs were flashing for the situation of Muslim rights in India. The recent public flogging of Muslim men by State police in Gujarat was another example of utter discrimination against minorities in the region.

27. He asked what pathways and options were available for the drafting of a global instrument on the human rights of minorities and the creation of conflict prevention mechanisms with a view to better responding to violations of the rights of minorities.

28. **Ms. Ponikvar** (Slovenia) said that her country had a long-standing commitment to promoting the rights of persons belonging to minorities nationally, regionally and internationally, including through regional human rights organizations and regional minority forums.

29. The protection of minority rights needed to be further mainstreamed in the work of the United Nations. The Special Rapporteur's work on minorities in conflict situations had been of particular importance. Respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities had a decisive impact on peace and stability and reduced the risk of violent conflict. Persons belonging to minorities also played an important part in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives.

30. Slovenia commended the Special Rapporteur's focus during his field trips on addressing the discrimination, exclusion and other violations of human rights faced by minority women and girls. She asked how the role and meaningful participation of minority women could be reinforced in the prevention of ethnic conflicts, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

31. **Ms. Zinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the Special Rapporteur had conducted comprehensive research supported by historical analysis, facts and specific examples. Her delegation agreed with the Special Rapporteur's conclusion that there had been a regression at the United Nations in the promotion of minority issues and the protection of minority rights. It was paradoxical that the Organization's human rights work was increasingly focused on protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, women, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and sexual minorities, whereas national minorities, which faced a heightened risk of violations of their rights, were practically invisible to United Nations officials.

32. United Nations human rights structures, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the treaty bodies, took a

selective and biased approach to the protection of the rights of national minorities. For many years, clear violations of their rights had been ignored in certain Baltic countries, including the ban on using and being educated in their mother tongues, their exclusion from political and public life, and the preservation for more than 30 years of the shameful institution of "non-citizenship".

33. While the Special Rapporteur's recommendations would obviously be rejected by some countries, they deserved careful consideration and discussion at the intergovernmental level. The recommendations to develop an international legally binding instrument and establish a permanent forum were particularly interesting.

34. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that his delegation condemned the abuse of a United Nations platform by Pakistan to propagate its false and malicious propaganda against India. It was ironic that Pakistan was speaking about the rights of minorities, given that it had decimated its minorities and that some minorities had become extinct in that country. Pakistan continued to commit grave violations of the rights of Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Ahmadiyyahs. Thousands of women and children, in particular girls from minority communities, had been subjected to abductions, forced marriages and conversions in Pakistan. His delegation dismissed and condemned all such actions by Pakistan.

35. India was a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multilingual country of continental proportions that was guided by the principles of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. With regard to the specific reference to statelessness made by the Special Rapporteur in his report, his delegation was disappointed to see that issue being wrongly and repeatedly linked with the issue of minority rights. Minorities in India enjoyed all fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution. All citizens had the fundamental right to preserve their language, script and culture. Every minority community had the right to establish and run educational institutions of their choice and to provide instruction to children in native languages. The Ministry of Minority Affairs sought to improve socioeconomic conditions for religious minorities and to facilitate equitable education, employment and economic opportunities for them. He asked what best practices had been observed in the preservation of minority languages.

36. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her delegation was deeply concerned by the Special Rapporteur's findings from his country visit to the United States. It was alarming that hate crimes targeting minorities in that country had risen to the highest level

in over a decade. Iran shared the Special Rapporteur's concern about the fact that no federal legislation directly or generally prohibited discrimination on the ground of religion or belief, leaving religious minorities vulnerable to discriminatory practices and policies. The United States should prohibit racial discrimination in all its forms and broaden the protection afforded by law.

37. The negative impact of United States policies was not limited to the American people and the minorities living in that country. The complex set of unilateral sanctions, coupled with secondary sanctions against third parties, overcompliance and zero-risk policies by businesses and financial institutions, exacerbated existing humanitarian and economic challenges and negatively affected the lives of minorities throughout the world. Any advocacy for the rights of minorities should not interfere with the legal and legitimate sovereign rights of Member States or the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of countries. She asked how racial discrimination and hate speech against minorities, in particular Muslims, in European Union member States could be tackled.

38. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that her delegation would be interested to hear what could explain the gradual loss of interest in minority issues at the United Nations and whether the failure by certain countries to recognize collective rights could be one of the causes. Given the intersection between minorities and other vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, refugees and migrants, her delegation would like to know the extent to which the concerns of minorities were taken into account in the context of those vulnerable groups. She asked how cooperation with the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and other mechanisms on racism could be harnessed to promote and protect racial minorities. Lastly, she asked how the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the various minority forums could contribute to reviving interest in minority issues at the United Nations.

39. **Ms. Li Xiaomei** (China) said that all countries should better protect minorities and adopt comprehensive measures to eliminate breeding grounds of discrimination and hatred. The equal development of minorities must be integrated into overall national development processes, with measures targeting the problems faced by minorities, such as poverty, education and health care. A peaceful and just environment must be created for minorities. As a unified multi-ethnic country with 56 ethnic groups, China was

building a community with a shared future for all ethnic groups.

40. After his visit to the United States, the Special Rapporteur had noted that the United States still did not have in place legal protection mechanisms for minorities, and that African Americans, Hispanics, Indigenous Peoples and Asian minorities did not see their rights fully protected. Her delegation hoped that the Committee and the Special Rapporteur would continue to closely follow violations of minority rights in the United States and enhance accountability.

41. **Mr. Kim Nam Hyok** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation reiterated its principled position that the human rights work of the United Nations should be conducted in an objective, transparent, non-selective and non-politicized manner. Recently, undisguised attempts had been made to destroy the security of independent States by interfering in their internal affairs under the pretext of minority issues. His country continued to reject all attempts to politicize human rights at the United Nations and to use them to interfere in other countries. His delegation supported the position of China of defending its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and safeguarding prosperity and stability in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

42. **Mr. Hamid** (Maldives) said that statelessness, education in minority languages, hate speech targeting minorities on social media, and the prevention of violent conflicts through the protection of the human rights of minorities were pressing issues that were fundamental to ensuring the fulfilment and protection of the human rights of those who were most marginalized. As a signatory to seven of the nine core human rights instruments, his country remained committed to ensuring progress in all areas of the human rights agenda with a view to fully realizing the human rights of all people.

43. China had been an important development partner of Maldives, and the relationship between the two countries was based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Maldives reiterated its firm commitment to the long-standing One China policy and was confident that, under the principle of one country, two systems, the Chinese people would continue to prosper and enjoy economic benefits and universally accepted fundamental freedoms.

44. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of China and fully supported the efforts of the Chinese Government to refute accusations made against it. His Government shared the concerns raised

by the Special Rapporteur in paragraph 14 of his report about the police killings of, and violence and brutality towards, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino people and others. He asked how difficult it was for the Special Rapporteur, within the limits of his mandate, to do anything to prevent such acts of hatred against minorities when dealing with the American Administration, which saw itself as superior to all other countries and continued to lecture Member States about human rights.

45. **Ms. O'Hara-Rusckowski** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that international human rights violations affecting minorities had frightening consequences for societies. For example, the increasing role of social media was facilitating bullying, censorship, fake news and incitement to violence through hate speech. In 2016, the Pope had warned of the epidemic of animosity towards religious and ethnic minorities. The Order was deeply concerned about the uprisings, wars and conflicts raging around the globe.

46. In 2013, the Sovereign Order had appointed an ambassador for the Roma people, who was developing 24 projects in seven countries across Europe. A commendable example was Hungary, where the Government was running 300 centres with the Order. In the 12 years prior to the establishment of those centres, only one child had been able to attend university, whereas in just two years following their establishment, 14 had been able to attend.

47. The Order supported the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur in his report and suggested that all stakeholders pool their efforts to promote respect for all peoples. She asked what steps could be taken to increase the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making.

48. **Mr. de Varennes** (Special Rapporteur on minority issues) said that the world was going through a dark period in which the activities of the United Nations related to minorities could be characterized by inaction and negligence. To rectify that situation, three approaches should be considered. Above all, it was essential to develop tools that were better adapted to responding to the enormous challenges facing the world, such as hate speech, xenophobia and discrimination targeting minorities. The first approach should be to begin discussions on a new treaty that would clarify the nature and scope of the rights of minorities. It was often not clear what those rights were or how they should be implemented. Such an approach would be a first step towards according minority rights the importance that they deserved.

49. The second approach should be for the United Nations to revive the action plan that had been proposed by the Secretary-General in 2013 and had since been largely forgotten and abandoned. Its revival would put an end to the trend of negligence and inaction by the United Nations in the face of the world's biggest challenges, including conflicts. Most modern conflicts were internal conflicts that involved the grievances of minorities or the instrumentalization of their grievances and feelings of exclusion and discrimination. The action plan should be revisited to ensure that minority issues were not forgotten, abandoned or ignored in institutions and initiatives of the United Nations.

50. The third approach should be to consider a permanent forum for minorities. Minorities were among the most vulnerable and marginalized communities around the world. Unless the United Nations gave them the attention and focus that they needed, statelessness, hate speech on social media targeting minorities and conflicts involving minorities would continue to increase. The establishment of a permanent forum was the least that should be done to tackle some of the biggest challenges and the dark period in terms of the global protection of the human rights of minorities.

51. There were many good practices in the protection of the rights of minorities around the world. The autonomy arrangement in South Tyrol in Italy had enabled German- and Ladin-speaking minorities to be educated and to obtain employment and public services in their own language, thereby preventing the conflict from continuing. Other good practices included the official multilingual and multicultural approaches in Canada and the acceptance of religious diversity in Singapore. Interesting approaches could also be found in countries such as Austria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Finland, Hungary, Mauritius and Mexico.

52. The time had come to address the massive violations of human rights affecting minorities through the establishment of a permanent forum to give space and a voice to minorities, the implementation of a plan of action to integrate and mainstream the rights of minorities in the institutions and activities of the United Nations, and discussions on a treaty that was better adapted to the challenges facing the world.

53. **Ms. Xanthaki** (Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights), introducing her report ([A/77/290](#)), which was focused on the role of cultural rights in sustainable development, said that cultural rights continued to be sidelined in sustainable development strategies despite recognition by States of their central importance, including through General Assembly resolution [76/214](#) and the Declaration for Culture

unanimously adopted during the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development in September 2022. Violations of cultural rights in the name of economic development could be seen worldwide. In the Bahamas, the development of the Barbuda Ocean Club was having a detrimental impact on the cultural rights of the local populations. The Special Rapporteur had shared her concerns with the relevant authorities but, to her regret, they had not responded. Despite repeated interactions with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, there continued to be reports of plans for the Ngorongoro Conservation Area involving relocation, forced evictions, home demolitions and other restrictions. In Canada, Malaysia, Türkiye and other countries, hydroelectric dam and oil pipeline construction projects had had serious consequences for the traditional activities of local populations and none of the developments had included any meaningful consultation with the parties concerned during the decision-making process. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, gentrification continued to threaten the cultural rights of Latin American migrants.

54. In her report, the Special Rapporteur reminded States of the legal obligations that they had undertaken to uphold and protect the cultural rights of individuals and communities, including in the context of development processes. A “one-size-fits-all” approach was inconsistent with current standards on cultural rights; sustainable development must instead be tailored to the people concerned. Alternative visions of development must be considered and local populations must be allowed to make choices according to their own values, cultures and philosophies. To that end, continuous and informed consultation with those individuals and communities was key. At the organizational level, cultural development should be established as a fourth pillar of sustainable development alongside economic development, social development and environmental protection and a stand-alone goal on culture should be established for the post-2030 agenda. A human rights-based approach that included cultural rights must be adopted throughout the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.

55. **Mr. Gastorn** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the name of his country had been written incorrectly in the Special Rapporteur’s report and asked that it be corrected to “United Republic of Tanzania”. Regarding the reference to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in paragraph 73 of the report, he said that it was a multiple land use site with a balanced ecosystem of human activities, conservation and wildlife. The Special

Rapporteur’s statement in her report that Maasai were “at risk” of eviction seemed to reflect her personal perception alone, as no evictions had in fact taken place nor were any planned, and hence there was no fear of eviction. Moreover, the report did not identify any specific conservation measures that would give cause for fear of eviction. His Government’s development and conservation efforts in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area were aimed exclusively at sustainably protecting and preserving the balance of the Area’s ecosystem while upholding basic human rights, including cultural rights. Lastly, he asked the Special Rapporteur to take note of the fact that the issue of eviction had been refuted by the East African Court of Justice in its judgment of 30 September 2022.

56. **Ms. Szelivanov** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that development could be sustainable only if culture was allowed to play an important role therein. Noting the focus in the Special Rapporteur’s report on the important contribution of the cultural sector to sustainable development, including through supporting social cohesion and promoting new modes of development, she asked the Special Rapporteur how cultural sectors could play a stronger role in post-conflict situations. Regarding the Special Rapporteur’s call for the establishment of an inter-agency platform measuring the contribution of culture to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, she asked whether the Special Rapporteur had any specific suggestions on how such a platform might function and how it might interact with the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.

57. **Mr. Weinstein** (United States of America) said that cultural rights and human rights should be enjoyed equally by all without fear of discrimination. The United States condemned any actions by Governments or other actors that targeted or discriminated against individuals on the basis of their ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural identities. The destruction of parts of the unique cultural heritage of Ukraine by the President of Russia through his war of aggression was an affront to the identity, history and dignity of the people of Ukraine. In addition, Russia was repeatedly undermining the cultural rights of its own people, including by deprogramming the work of artists who did not support the war effort and excluding such artists from cultural events and competitions.

58. The United States was also deeply concerned by the ongoing repression of the ethnic, religious and cultural identities of members of minority groups in China. In its assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, OHCHR described efforts by China to combat and extinguish

alleged “religious extremism” through policies targeting expressions of Uighur cultural and linguistic identity and Islamic religious practice. In addition, China continued to interfere in the religious and cultural identity of Tibetans, including their right to select, educate, and venerate their own leaders in accordance with their beliefs. Reports of ongoing mass detention on the basis of ethnicity in Ethiopia; targeted attacks on members of the Hazara community in Afghanistan; the exclusion of women and girls from participation in much of Afghan society; and continued detention and discriminatory policies targeting Rohingya in Burma based on their ethnicity and religion were also sources of deep concern. He asked the Special Rapporteur to outline the tools available to her to preserve and protect cultural rights that were endangered by aggressive State policies.

59. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that his delegation agreed that cultural rights should be at the centre of sustainable development processes. Cultural rights were a priority for his Government: two of the State’s essential objectives as laid down in the Constitution of Cuba of 2019 were to protect the country’s cultural heritage and secure its cultural development, and his Government dedicated substantial resources to those ends. However, those efforts were being undermined by the economic, commercial and financial blockade that had been imposed on Cuba by the United States for over six decades and ratcheted up to an unprecedented level during the pandemic. The blockade, which was in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, was impeding cultural development and the enjoyment of cultural rights in Cuba, including by limiting access to equipment and materials and impeding the participation of Cuban artists in international events and of foreign artists in events in Cuba. His delegation would welcome the Special Rapporteur’s views on the impact of the application of unilateral coercive measures, such as the blockade imposed against Cuba by the United States, on the enjoyment of cultural rights.

60. **Ms. Baptista Grade Zacarias** (Portugal) said that the focus in the report on the importance of cultural rights to sustainable development was commendable. A balance must be struck between the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development, but also with the cultural dimensions of sustainability. In that context, she asked how the economic value of cultural industries and activities could be better integrated into development indicators and programmes. Secondly, the Special Rapporteur indicated in her report that cultural rights had been violated in the name of development and that such

violations could be avoided in the future by ensuring real participation by individuals and local communities through consultation. Her delegation would be interested in hearing about good practices for integrating such an approach into national policies for safeguarding and promoting cultural rights. Lastly, she asked how the enjoyment of the cultural rights of different communities around the world could be supported by the establishment of a permanent forum for minorities.

61. **Ms. Kaczmarek** (Poland) said that, while the Special Rapporteur had rightly stated in her report that many violations of cultural rights were committed in the name of development, her delegation wished to focus on the deeply worrying issue of the deliberate eradication of cultural identity in the context of instability and armed conflict. Her Government deplored the land-grabbing, forced displacement, resettlement and destruction of cultural heritage that had taken place in Ukraine as a result of the unprovoked and illegal Russian war of aggression. In October 2022, UNESCO had verified damage to more than 200 sites in Ukraine, including religious sites, museums, historic buildings, monuments and libraries. Such actions by the Russian Federation must stop and the cultural rights of the Ukrainian people must be protected. In addition, her Government condemned the brutal violation by the Belarusian authorities of the human rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Polish cultural associations had been attacked, Polish civil society organizations had been outlawed and activists had been subjected to harassment and arbitrary arrest, including the leader of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Andżelika Borys, and the independent journalist, Andrzej Poczobut. Despite her Government’s calls on the Belarusian regime to cease its acts of repression, it continued its systematic elimination of the Polish language from the public education system and its deliberate destruction of Polish cemeteries and memorials. She asked how the cultural rights of persons in situations of armed conflict and instability could be better protected, thereby preserving the cultural heritage and ensuring the development – cultural and otherwise – of local populations.

62. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that the focus in the report on the role of culture in sustainable development was welcome. Culture was indeed an enabler of sustainable development: it provided individuals and communities with a strong sense of identity and social cohesion, and contributed to more effective and sustainable development policies and measures. People-centred and culturally sensitive approaches to sustainable development were therefore needed. The

knowledge economy, which valued the role of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises in enhancing the contributions of the cultural sector to sustainable development, should be a top priority in national strategies. Referring to the Special Rapporteur's support for the adoption of a stand-alone goal on culture in the post-2030 development agenda and for the adoption of a global agenda for culture, he asked how the transformational impact of culture on the realization of sustainable development could be measured, especially the impact of intangible heritage. He also asked how to remedy the lack of emphasis placed on the cultural sector by external aid programmes, given the sector's potential to be an engine for growth.

63. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that the results of programmes implemented by international financial institutions in developing countries such as Cameroon showed that development models imposed through external political or economic pressures were doomed to failure. A people-centred approach must always be prioritized. Development was sustainable only when it was aligned with the aspirations, customs, traditions, systems and world vision of the individuals and groups affected; their resources must be protected, their heritage considered and their values used to shape that development. She asked what role cultural rights could play in the convention on the right to development currently under preparation. She also asked which measures the Special Rapporteur would recommend to ensure that the post-2030 programme included a cultural dimension, specifically through the establishment of a fourth pillar of sustainable development. Lastly, her Government urged the Special Rapporteur to take action within the framework of her mandate to strengthen the capacities of States, international institutions and other stakeholders to place cultural rights at the heart of sustainable development.

64. **Mr. Rashid** (Pakistan) said that, despite widespread recognition of the link between cultural rights and development, violations of the cultural rights of individuals and communities for political, economic and ideological ends continued. Such was the case in one country in his region, where the political, economic, social and cultural rights of 200 million Muslims and persons living in occupied territory had been blatantly violated in the course of attempts to obliterate Islamic heritage, impose majoritarian supremacist ideology, beliefs and practices and justify the colonial occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, a disputed territory as recognized by the United Nations. History was being distorted, school syllabuses changed, historical Muslim cities and monuments renamed and mosques and other Muslim sites destroyed. Entire streets and buildings

were being given Hindu names in Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir. The irony was that much of that oppression was exerted in the name of development, which was in defiance of the Special Rapporteur's conclusion that no violation of human rights, including cultural rights, could be justified in the name of development. He asked what options were available, including a possible international human rights instrument, to protect cultural heritage in countries where State machinery was being used to systematically erase the cultural identity of minority populations in the name of development.

65. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that her Government agreed that development policies should be inclusive and human rights-based and that cultural rights had not yet been sufficiently incorporated. Culture was an integral part of sustainable and human development. Regrettably, her Government's comprehensive efforts to conserve cultural heritage and protect the rights of local people had not been correctly reflected in the Special Rapporteur's report, which had focused exclusively on the Ilisu Dam project. That project should not be regarded solely in terms of economic development; it was a regional transformation project that had been providing economic, social and cultural benefits to local people. The Hasankeyf district, partially affected by the reservoir, had been moved to its new location in accordance with the resettlement plan, which covered both resettlement of the local people and relocation and protection of cultural heritage. Her delegation stood ready to engage actively with the Special Rapporteur, including by providing further details on the project. Lastly, she asked how States could be better supported in the context of the need to resist the "one-size-fits-all" model.

66. **Ms. Oduwaiye** (Nigeria) said that full respect for cultural rights, traditions and beliefs was integral to achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no one was left behind. As the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria was a multinational State home to more than 250 ethnic groups that spoke over 500 distinct languages and identified with a wide range of cultures, traditions and beliefs. Her Government's acknowledgement of such cultural diversity was key to fostering social integration, peace, unity and national development. In that context, her delegation was gravely dismayed by the introduction of several concepts on which no consensus had been reached and by continuous attempts to integrate new notions and standards into the time-honoured and time-tested United Nations system. Her Government continued to disassociate from and unequivocally object to selfish attempts to impose

strange values that offended Nigerian culture, traditions and religious beliefs. In that connection, she asked what modalities should be established within the United Nations system to end infringements on the sovereignty of Member States and continued violations of and disrespect for the cultural rights, traditional heritage and religious beliefs of Member States.

67. **Ms. Li Xiaomei** (China) said that her Government attached great importance to the protection of cultural rights. Her delegation hoped that the Special Rapporteur would base her future work on article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

68. The delegations of the United States and some other Western countries continued to abuse the Committee's interactive dialogue by referring to the so-called Xinjiang report by OHCHR. Such abuse was presumably a reaction to the rejection in the Human Rights Council of their draft decision entitled "Debate on the situation of human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China". The so-called Xinjiang report had lost its credibility and legality in the wake of the majority vote against the draft decision. The States members of the Human Rights Council voting against the draft decision had understood that the draft sought not to protect human rights but to interfere in the domestic affairs of another country. Her delegation called on the United States and the sponsors of that draft decision to refrain from such interference.

69. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that the arts, culture and creative industries formed the building blocks of a healthy society and were fundamental to ensuring holistic and sustainable growth. His Government endeavoured to protect and promote the country's cultural diversity, including through its policies, programmes and laws, in order to strengthen social cohesion and mutual respect among present and future generations, and to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. His Government had ensured that all progressive legislation extended to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir so that the territory could resume its previous pace of socioeconomic and cultural development. Since the application of Union laws in the territory, the residents, particularly women, had enjoyed more freedom and fundamental rights. He asked the Special Rapporteur to share her views regarding the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the contribution of the cultural sector to sustainable development. Lastly, his delegation strongly condemned the abuse of a United Nations platform yet again by Pakistan to propagate its false and malicious propaganda against his country. His delegation

dismissed and condemned all such efforts with the contempt they deserved.

70. **Ms. Petit** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO, through its standards-setting role, took a rights-based approach to culture that was anchored in the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. UNESCO worked to uphold cultural rights by protecting cultural heritage, including in times of conflict; supporting artistic freedom; promoting the social and economic rights of culture professionals; promoting the fair remuneration of creators in the digital environment; fighting against the illicit trafficking of cultural property; and supporting the return and restitution of such property. There could be no stability, peace or sustainable development without full respect for human rights and cultural rights. Culture provided a human-centred approach to sustainable development. UNESCO member States had recently affirmed their commitment to cultural rights at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development in September 2022 through the adoption of the Declaration for Culture, wherein culture was recognized for the first time as a global public good. That commitment included promoting inclusive access to culture and participation in cultural life, strengthening the economic and social rights of artists, fostering linguistic diversity and implementing legal and public policy frameworks that upheld the right of Indigenous Peoples to their cultural identity and heritage. She asked what was needed to ensure greater investment in policy by organizations in the area of cultural rights.

71. **Ms. Xanthaki** (Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights) said that one of the concerns that she shared with the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism was the repetition of references to internal affairs and the untouchability of certain issues. The very purpose of the United Nations human rights system was to discuss and monitor the situation of human rights within Member States. She was therefore confident that Member States would welcome the fulfilment of her mandate and her focus on the situation of cultural rights in their countries. The politicization of dialogue sometimes impeded the performance by the special rapporteurs and independent experts of their functions.

72. Regarding the reference to the "one-size-fits-all" model, it was important to uphold international standards on cultural rights by ensuring that all voices were heard, not just when development projects were being implemented but also at the inception stage, when the very meaning of development was discussed and

decided. A top-down approach to development must be avoided.

73. She had been surprised at the mention of article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, since the provisions of that article, which stated that everyone had the right to participate in cultural life, were the very basis of her work.

74. Concerning the tools available to address various issues, internationally binding documents were readily available; what was missing, regrettably, was the fulfilment by States of their international legal obligations in relation to cultural rights. In that connection, States must seek active, continuous and informed consultation with individuals and communities and the participation of those individuals and communities in all phases of development. With marginalized individuals and communities, that consultation must be conducted with a view to reaching consent and, in the case of Indigenous Peoples, free, prior and informed consent. As suggested by Portugal, the establishment of a permanent forum for minorities would lend persons belonging to minority groups a stronger voice within the United Nations system and thereby support respect for their cultural rights, including in relation to sustainable development.

75. It was important to continue and to strengthen the collaboration between her mandate and UNESCO. Their combined work on cultural rights and culture, respectively, would be a formidable force in addressing the visibility gap in cultural rights.

76. Regarding the comments and questions on the cultural sector, States, as the primary actors in the fulfilment of cultural rights, should adopt measures to ensure that the cultural sector could regain its pre-pandemic vigour and stand on its own two feet. Although often seen exclusively as an economic asset, the cultural sector was extremely important to development as it offered creativity, imagination and alternative visions of sustainable development. As for measuring the contribution of the cultural sector, the UNESCO Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda represented a good starting point. It was also important to take into account the concluding observations of the human rights treaty bodies in that regard.

77. She fully agreed with the OHCHR assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

78. Lastly, concerning the comments made by the representatives of Türkiye and the United Republic of Tanzania, her office had sent communications to which

no reply had been received. It was vital that States make use of one of the most basic tools available for the protection of cultural rights, which was the exchange of information with the Special Rapporteur. Member States must make full use of that tool by inviting the Special Rapporteur to conduct country visits and by responding to communications.

79. **Ms. Miti-Drummond** (Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism), introducing her report on persons with albinism on the move ([A/77/199](#)), said that there was little statistical information about displaced persons with albinism. They were considered persons with disabilities owing to visual impairment and high susceptibility to skin cancer, but the relevant data and statistics were not sufficiently disaggregated.

80. Persons with albinism relocated to escape death, violence, stigma and discrimination, to minimize exposure to the sun and to gain access to better health-care services, inclusive education and accessible transport. Persons with albinism who had skin cancer or rare forms of albinism requiring specialized medical treatment were particularly likely to move across borders in search of better health care.

81. Despite the growing numbers of persons with albinism successfully claiming asylum based on persecution, many still struggled with asylum and other migration processes, which were not always accessible and for which information was not always available in an accessible format. Authorities who oversaw asylum processes often knew little about the very serious threats and problems associated with albinism, which could affect processing and outcomes.

82. Persons with albinism in refugee camps frequently did not have access to critical health-care services or necessary dermatological and ophthalmological goods and services. For those in Africa, continuous exposure to the sun was life-threatening. There were also frequent reports of stigmatization, discrimination and insecurity, including attacks and bullying.

83. Outside of refugee camps, persons with albinism struggled to integrate into their new communities and to understand how to access critical social services and benefits to which they were entitled. Often, persons who had experienced trauma in their countries of origin did not have access to the psychosocial support they needed. Employment was a huge challenge both in and outside refugee camps.

84. There had been positive developments. They included the recognition by the European Union Agency for Asylum of persons with albinism as members of a

particular social group that suffered from discrimination, stigmatization and persecution; the specific guidance on persons with albinism offered in the updated Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and the African Union Plan of Action To End Attacks and Other Human Rights Violations Targeting Persons with Albinism in Africa (2021–2031). The report also presented examples of positive national practices, as well as details on civil society organizations that were providing legal or humanitarian support for persons with albinism on the move, and it offered recommendations for addressing their multi-faceted challenges.

85. **Mr. Gastorn** (United Republic of Tanzania), reiterating his country's full support for the mandate of the Independent Expert, said that paragraph 7 of her report cited a 2017 research paper according to which more than 10,000 persons with albinism had reportedly been displaced from their homes to escape persecution. Beginning in 2015, his Government had adopted a number of short- and long-term measures to support and protect persons with albinism, and since 2016 there had been no reports of killing of or violence against persons with albinism. His delegation would be pleased to provide the Independent Expert with more recent sources of information that accurately reflected the situation on the ground.

86. **Ms. Szelivanov** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), echoing the Independent Expert's call for more research and dialogue on the human rights violations experienced by persons with albinism, said that the European Union would continue to formulate human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-sensitive policies in its work in support of such persons, to advocate for the inclusion of civil society organizations in that work and to ensure a concerted, multisectoral approach to addressing those human rights violations and combating impunity for them. The recently established European Union Agency for Asylum provided guidance to member States with a view to harmonizing European classification processes for migrants, including persons with albinism. She asked how States could further their dialogue with relevant stakeholders on addressing key human rights concerns for persons with albinism.

87. **Ms. Oduwaiye** (Nigeria) said that her country would not condone discrimination against persons with albinism and, through its national policy, was mainstreaming albinism in diverse sectors of development. She asked what could be done to galvanize greater international support to protect and promote the rights and fundamental freedoms of persons

with albinism and guarantee their access to justice and remedies.

88. **Ms. Makwati** (South Africa), reiterating her country's commitment to promoting and protecting the human rights of persons with albinism, said that its national policy framework on preventing and combating trafficking in persons addressed trafficking in persons with albinism, and it observed International Albinism Awareness Day. Noting the lack of disaggregated data, she asked how States could ensure that the accounts of refugees and asylum-seekers with albinism were accurately recorded.

89. **Ms. Yu Kaili** (China) said that Member States and the international community should take effective measures to promote and protect the human rights and dignity of persons with albinism. To encourage medical research and give persons with albinism access to medical resources, her Government had listed albinism as a rare medical disorder in 2018.

90. **Ms. Miti-Drummond** (Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism) said that she was pleased to hear about the measures taken by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania since 2015. However, the fact that at least 10,000 persons with albinism had been displaced in 2017 remained a matter of concern. Welcoming the commitment of the European Union to include civil society organizations in its work on persons with albinism, she said that it was important to include associations of persons with albinism in the development of migration policies and asylum processes, as well as to ensure that immigration officials recognized albinism as a disability.

91. Welcoming the revised Nigerian national policy on albinism, she said that future revisions should address migrants and refugees with albinism, as they had specific needs, and should also promote the visibility and inclusion of persons with albinism in all policies affecting them. In addition, all censuses and data collection mechanisms should include a question about albinism. In Africa, the results of improved censuses showed the number of persons with albinism to be much greater than estimated.

92. She welcomed the recognition by South Africa that persons with albinism were sometimes on the move as a result of trafficking. Future South African plans of action on albinism should include a section on refugees and migrants with albinism.

93. Despite the lack of disaggregated data, given the number of persons with albinism whom she had identified in refugee camps and the volume of

information that she continued to receive on such persons seeking refugee status, many, many persons with albinism were clearly on the move. Migrants and refugees with albinism should be recognized as persons with disabilities and extended the appropriate special measures, and immigration authorities should be made aware that persons with albinism were persons with disabilities, had specific medical and psychosocial needs and might fall within the category of asylum-seekers.

94. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

95. **Mr. Bae Jongin** (Republic of Korea) said that his Government was concerned that the promotion and protection of human rights was being overshadowed by the many recent security crises. Given the nexus between peace, development and human rights, it had decided to increase its official development assistance budget by 15 per cent in 2023, despite the adverse economic conditions.

96. The Republic of Korea urged the military regime in Myanmar to cease acts of violence and restore democracy immediately, and called on the Taliban authority in Afghanistan to end its systematic restriction of the movement, employment and education of women and girls. It remained deeply concerned about the grave human rights violations occurring in Ukraine, including the indiscriminate shelling and bombing of populated areas by Russia. The reports of unlawful killings, torture and conflict-related sexual violence should be fully investigated.

97. The human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had worsened. The harsh penalty regime established to enforce strict COVID-19 measures was said to include a shoot-to-kill policy for people attempting to cross borders, and a 2020 law reportedly set a penalty of imprisonment or death for possessing or distributing media content from the Republic of Korea. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/77/247) once again highlighted other serious concerns, including food insecurity and a lack of access to health facilities. Nevertheless, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had expended its scarce resources to fire over 40 ballistic missiles in 2022 alone, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions. While his country remained committed to providing humanitarian assistance regardless of the political conditions, the international community must keep a watchful eye on the misuse of resources by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His Government's recent

appointment of an ambassador-at-large on North Korean human rights and the appointment of a new Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea provided an opportunity to raise public awareness of the human rights situation and to engage with more fully with the North Korean Government. The Republic of Korea fully supported the Special Rapporteur's prioritization of accountability, as there had been no progress in achieving it. It deplored the September 2020 killing of an unarmed citizen of the Republic of Korea in the Yellow Sea by the military of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and urged that country to disclose all relevant information.

98. **Ms. Chand** (Fiji) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights were at the heart of the multilateral order. Fiji had signed or ratified 14 human rights instruments and was a steadfast champion of the generally recognized vulnerable groups, which should be expanded to include climate refugees and persons internally displaced by climate change. The human rights of peoples and communities on the frontlines of climate change were under unprecedented threat, intensified by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Climate change was widening the gap between the Global North and the Global South, owing in part to the growing climate debt burden of developing countries. The establishment of an adequately funded loss and damage facility would be a step towards securing and protecting the rights of climate refugees and persons internally displaced by climate change.

99. During her country's presidency of the Human Rights Council in 2021, the Council had adopted two crucial resolutions, resolution 48/13 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and resolution 48/14, establishing the mandate of the special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

100. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan), recalling that his country had sponsored General Assembly resolution 76/227 on countering disinformation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, said that Pakistan had formed a group of friends to advance its implementation. As a first step towards countering disinformation, the international community should establish an institutional arrangement to facilitate interactions among Member States, the media, private companies and other stakeholders. It should also develop an international plan of action to counter disinformation online and offline in the public and

private domains, and it should agree on uniform rules, regulations and standards for States, social media companies and business enterprises.

101. Pakistan had been the principle target of Indian disinformation campaigns for over three decades. India also used disinformation to justify its suppression of the Kashmiri freedom struggle as a war on terrorism, to cover up war crimes and crimes against humanity in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, and to stir up hatred against the Indian Muslim minority, which included calls for genocide against Muslims by adherents of the extremist Hindutva ideology. The international community should establish mechanisms through which the Indian disinformation campaigns could be exposed and India held accountable.

102. **Mr. Yoseph** (Ethiopia) said that, in 2018, Ethiopia had initiated far-reaching legal reforms to increase political freedom, improve transparency and accountability and establish a system of institutional checks and balances. As a result, all Ethiopians, including those previously classified as terrorists, could participate freely in the process of democratization, and an enabling environment had been established for civil society. Freedom of the press was protected, and prisoners were treated with dignity. Ethiopia was confident that those measures, coupled with ongoing economic reforms, would ultimately bring peace and prosperity.

103. However, the war initiated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front continued to devastate northern Ethiopia. The Front had been shelling the Ethiopian regions bordering Tigray for months and had engaged in organized, systematic violence against women and girls, indiscriminate killing and widespread looting and property destruction. His Government had demonstrated its commitment to ensure accountability for those crimes and heinous human rights violations by investigating them jointly with OHCHR and implementing the resulting recommendations.

104. Ethiopia was extremely concerned about the growing politicization of human rights and the continued failure of the Human Rights Council to uphold its core mission. His Government had opposed the establishment of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, primarily because the proposal had been politically motivated. Subsequently, it had engaged with the Commission in a genuine effort to find mutually acceptable modalities of cooperation, but to no avail. The Commission had later submitted a report containing unsubstantiated allegations, which was unacceptable. Ethiopia would continue to strive to overcome its internal challenges

and to safeguard the well-being of all its citizens. Privileging confrontation over dialogue, naming and shaming sovereign States and imposing politically motivated unilateral coercive measures were counterproductive and contrary to the Charter of the United Nations.

105. **Ms. Qamber** (Bahrain) said that her Government had launched a national human rights plan for the period 2022–2026, covering civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, the rights of the most vulnerable groups and solidarity rights. The plan included 102 projects in areas such as legislation, institutional development and capacity-building.

106. The legislative environment in Bahrain had contributed to strengthening the exercise by women of their political rights and to increasing their contribution to economic development, with Bahraini women representing 43 per cent of the national workforce and 47 per cent of business owners. Her Government had always striven to promote the participation of young Bahraini people in various forums, because they were a key pillar of its economic vision to 2030.

107. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, her Government had provided free health services and check-ups for all citizens and residents without discrimination, administered almost 3.5 million vaccination doses and launched a financial package worth \$12 billion to support the most affected individuals and sectors. Bahrain had been ranked first in a global index for COVID-19 recovery, and Manama had been the first city in the Middle East region to be declared a health city by the World Health Organization.

108. To combat trafficking in persons, her Government had adopted national laws and acceded to relevant international conventions. Bahrain had been awarded Tier 1 status in the Trafficking in Persons Report of the State Department of the United States for the fifth year in a row.

109. Bahrain was keen to continue its cooperation with the various United Nations bodies and to implement projects and initiatives in line with its international commitments. Her Government was constantly endeavouring to fulfil its obligations to the human rights treaty bodies and to strengthen cooperation with OHCHR.

110. Parliamentary and municipal elections would be held in Bahrain in November 2022, marking a new step forward towards the consolidation of the democratic process, with citizens participating in the selection of their representatives. Her Government was taking steady, serious and ambitious steps to promote and

protect human rights, dignity, freedoms, prosperity and security as the focus and goal of the comprehensive development process.

111. **Mr. Morales Dávila** (Nicaragua) said that health care and education were free in Nicaragua. All lands held by Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent would soon be formally titled, and the country had achieved food sovereignty. Nearly all Nicaraguans had access to electricity, almost 70 per cent of which was produced from renewable sources. Nicaragua remained the safest country in Central America and one of the safest in Latin America and the Caribbean.

112. The self-interested, interventionist policies of States imposing illegal sanctions and unilateral coercive measures violated the right to development and hindered the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. His Government would continue to work to restore the human rights of the Nicaraguan people and to promote a culture of peace and hope.

113. **Ms. Carty** (United States of America) said that her country was committed to working multilaterally to advance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. The Russian war against Ukraine was a test of the fundamental principles of the United Nations. The States Members of the United Nations must collectively and firmly hold Russia accountable for its attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and call out its war crimes, atrocities and abuses.

114. The fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations were also threatened by the People's Republic of China, which was perpetrating genocide in Xinjiang and severe repression in Tibet, undermining fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong and imposing draconian controls on freedom of expression and other human rights across China.

115. In Syria, victims and families of the missing and forcibly disappeared had suffered for over a decade, and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic continued to document targeted killings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and siege-like tactics that might amount to collective punishment, hostage-taking and torture. The United States welcomed the Secretary General's report on missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/76/890) and supported his call to strengthen existing mechanisms and to create a new institution dedicated to clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons.

116. In Iran, the United States condemned the use of violence against peaceful protestors and supported the Iranians who were peacefully demonstrating to secure their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the face

of horrific repression. It deplored the abhorrent death of Mahsa Amini while in police custody and condemned the Government's efforts to limit Iranians' ability to communicate, as well as its targeted online harassment of protestors.

117. In Venezuela, the United States called on the authorities to release arbitrarily detained or missing persons, to end the torture and ill-treatment of detained persons and to investigate and hold accountable the persons responsible for those and other human rights violations. It welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which, together with OHCHR, played a vital role in the international community's efforts to hold the regime accountable.

118. In Afghanistan, Burma, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran, South Sudan, Sudan and Syria, the United States was concerned about restrictions on human rights, including freedom of expression, about the failure to pursue accountability for human rights violations and about the hostile environment for human rights defenders. In Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and elsewhere around the world, it was concerned about the use of laws restricting the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association to detain activists and outspoken critics of the Government.

119. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the human rights mechanisms should not shy away from dealing with systemic violations of the right to development and the right of self-determination. Regrettably, the Israeli system of apartheid remained in place, and the regime's raids, tactics of intimidation and unlawful and inhumane siege of Gaza continued unabated, with the unconditional support of the United States and other Western countries.

120. In the United States, minorities were disproportionately incarcerated as a result of racial and ethnic profiling and legal inequality, and police brutality went unpunished. High-ranking politicians continued to incite hatred of Muslims, people of African descent, women, Native Americans, migrants and refugees. Moreover, the United States had repeatedly endeavoured to destabilize legitimate Governments by stirring up unrest, attacking multilateralism, imposing unlawful and inhumane economic sanctions and advancing a foreign policy based on interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

121. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples were overrepresented in the justice system as a result of the historical and systemic violation of their right to life and their rights of access to health care, education and

employment. Hate speech and crimes against racial and religious minorities also remained a matter of concern. In the European Union, discrimination on the basis of religion, race and ethnicity was on the rise. The Qur'an had been burned repeatedly, and Muslims and other minorities were victims of hate speech. Some member States refused to extradite or prosecute alleged terrorists.

122. As a country of diverse cultures, religions, ethnicities and languages, the Islamic Republic of Iran was committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of all. It attached great importance to cooperation with non-discriminatory intergovernmental human rights mechanisms such as the universal periodic review and the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. The Special Rapporteur's latest report ([A/HRC/51/33](#)), which had followed her May 2022 visit to Iran, provided numerous examples of the grave impact on human rights of the unilateral coercive measures illegally imposed by the United States against Iran.

123. The Islamic Republic of Iran rejected all country-specific resolutions and mandates that manipulated human rights for political purposes. It categorically rejected the baseless allegations of certain countries regarding recent developments in Iran. Multilateralism should be valued as the cornerstone of the United Nations system, and all human rights should receive equal attention.

124. **Ms. Pereira Gomes** (Brazil) said that her country was fully committed to the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and was working to ensure their full participation in economic, social, cultural and political life. In 2022, it had made significant improvements in its database on persons with disabilities and had created a national disability information system. It also participated actively in the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

125. Brazil was one of the founding members of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, established in 2020 to counter the wave of religious stigmatization, racism, xenophobia and hate sweeping the globe, and would host the Alliance's ministerial meeting in 2023. In 2021, it had jointed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as an observer, and in 2022, it had supported General Assembly resolution [76/250](#) on holocaust denial. Following its decision to issue humanitarian visas to those fleeing internal crises, Brazil had welcomed hundreds of refugees, many from religious minorities.

126. **Mr. Balobaid** (Yemen) said that his Government was committed to honouring its human rights obligations and continued to cooperate unconditionally with the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations of Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and mechanisms established pursuant to the various international instruments to which it had acceded. In that connection, it would strive to strengthen its cooperation with OHCHR and the States members of the Human Rights Council. The international community was urged to increase its support for the National Commission, so as to enable it to continue fulfilling its mandate.

127. Noting that violations of human rights in Yemen had been addressed in several United Nations reports, he said that his delegation wished to make it clear that such violations had been committed by the terrorist Houthi militias, which continued to systematically violate international law, including, in particular, human rights law. Those militias had attacked, detained and threatened journalists and individuals who cooperated with the United Nations, local and international organizations, as well as human rights defenders and humanitarian workers. In addition, they had continued to torture Yemeni civilians, recruit children and plant landmines, as well as to curtail the freedom of the media and intimidate and assassinate members of the judiciary. His delegation called upon the international community to take a firm stance with respect to those militias and compel them to implement the relevant international resolutions, the most significant of which was Security Council resolution [2216 \(2015\)](#).

128. **Mr. Magosaki** (Japan) said that the Russian aggression against Ukraine infringed on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country and violated international law prohibiting the use of force. Japan condemned unilateral changes of the status quo by force in the strongest terms and called on Russia to comply fully with its obligation to respect international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law.

129. In Myanmar, Japan deplored the executions of detainees; it reiterated its appeal to the Myanmar armed forces to end violence immediately, release the detainees and restore democracy. In China, it was deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and once again urged China to take concrete positive action, including by providing transparent explanations. Japan was deeply concerned about the situation in Iran, where the protests following the death of Mahsa Amini had resulted in numerous deaths and injuries.

130. The abduction of Japanese citizens by the People's Democratic Republic of Korea violated Japanese sovereignty and the human rights of the people abducted. Japan urged the Government to return all of the abductees immediately, especially in view of their families' advanced age, and looked forward to the continued understanding and cooperation of the international community in addressing that very important matter.

131. In September 2022, Japan had released its Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains. It would host the World Assembly for Women in December 2022.

132. **Mr. Tammsaar** (Estonia) said that the Russians had left a bloody trail of mass graves and war crimes behind them, much like the Nazis and the Soviets. It was appalling that Russia was using its annual draft resolution on combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices (A/C.3/77/L.5) to justify its horrific deeds in Ukraine and the aggression itself. Estonia would continue to denounce the grave violations of human rights committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine and to call for the establishment of a special tribunal for the punishment of the crime of aggression against Ukraine. The consequences of the Russian aggression, including high inflation and the food and energy crisis, affected people worldwide.

133. He wished to express his country's support for the brave women and girls of Iran and Afghanistan who were standing up for their basic human rights. Estonia was closely monitoring the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus, where the rights of citizens, especially vulnerable groups, were being systematically violated, and it would continue to work on measures to ensure accountability. It continued to provide support for the child protection activities of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Although its membership in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations would end in 2022, it remained committed to strengthening the critical link between the United Nations and civil society. In 2022, it had had the honour of hosting the third Global Conference for Media Freedom, and it would continue to defend freedom of expression worldwide.

134. **Mr. Kouakou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that it was essential to continue to promote the full enjoyment of human rights, as difficult as that might be in the current context of armed conflict and humanitarian, migration and food crises. Côte d'Ivoire had ratified the principal international human rights instruments and was doing its

utmost to fulfil its treaty obligations. In 2014, it had adopted a law on the protection of human rights defenders, and in 2018, it had established an independent national human rights council to provide support for the preparation of treaty body reports and for collaboration with the international human rights mechanisms. It was working to strengthen prevention systems, particularly early warning mechanisms.

135. The promotion, protection and defence of human rights was intrinsic to the Sustainable Development Goals, which were based on economic, civil, cultural, political and social rights, as well as the right to development. Human rights issues should be resolved through constructive dialogue in accordance with the principle of non-intervention.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.