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Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 71: Promotion and protection of human rights (A/78/198)

- (a) Implementation of human rights instruments** (A/78/40, A/78/44, A/78/48, A/78/55, A/78/56, A/78/240, A/78/263, A/78/271, A/78/281, A/78/324 and A/78/354)
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- (c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives** (A/78/204, A/78/212, A/78/223, A/78/244, A/78/278, A/78/297, A/78/299, A/78/326, A/78/327, A/78/338, A/78/340 and A/78/511)
- (d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action** (A/78/36)

1. **Mr. Türk** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), introducing his report (A/78/36), said that he was deeply shocked by the horrific attacks launched by Palestinian armed groups a few days earlier and the ensuing full-blown conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The impact on civilians on both sides was intolerable. All parties should pull back from total warfare and vicious cycles of vengeance, and abide by international humanitarian and human rights law.

2. Human rights measures were the only way to make development inclusive and participatory, and therefore sustainable, to shape just laws, to ensure equitable societies, and to promote accountability and reconciliation. In short, they were the only way to forge enduring peace. Every Member State had an interest in promoting a strong core of human rights at the centre of

policy and governance, not least in the light of the turbulence the world was facing.

3. One quarter of humanity lived in places affected by conflict, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan, Ukraine and now, again, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2022, the number of civilians killed in war operations worldwide had increased by over 50 per cent, marking the first increase since 2015, when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had begun to compile such data.

4. Racism and gender-based discrimination were also rising, with concerted pushbacks against the important progress made in recent decades. Deliberate provocations, such as the recent incidents of the burning of the Qur'an, aimed to drive wedges between countries and communities. The rise in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia was particularly worrying in the light of recent developments. Abject poverty and skyrocketing inequalities constituted tragic failures of the world's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights. Harsh restrictions on civic space undercut justice institutions and media freedoms. Ungoverned digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, autonomous weaponry and surveillance techniques, profoundly threatened human rights. All of those trends compounded the accelerating menace of the triple planetary crisis, which represented the defining human rights threat facing the current generation.

5. In a world of rising storms, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided stability and clarity for the way forward. It was absolutely critical to rekindle the spirit that had led to the adoption of the Declaration in order to rebuild trust and move forward united as nations and as peoples. He hoped States could collectively advance a unifying, solutions-based approach to human rights that spoke to the needs of every human being, in every country, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.

6. Before assuming his current mandate, he had spent 30 years working in places where prevention had failed, conflict had erupted, discrimination had metastasized into ethnic cleansing and deprivation had compelled people to flee en masse. It was far better to address such issues before they exploded into disaster. Any corrective work done in an emergency was likely to be insufficient, creating new grievances for the future. States needed to advance policies and structural reforms against the backdrop of indivisible and interdependent human rights, which must finally be treated on a fair and equal

footing. It was vital to follow steps such as those outlined in his report.

7. Some had argued that discussion of the human rights situation in their country constituted interference in their sovereignty. However, even a passing knowledge of displacement and other impacts of human rights crises clearly showed that that was not the case. All people were interconnected, as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations. Human rights violations had a clear impact across borders and were a legitimate cause for international concern.

8. The work of OHCHR to monitor and address human rights violations was crucial to the establishment and maintenance of peaceful, secure societies. In Afghanistan, the dismantling of national human rights bodies and pervasive violations, including unprecedented discrimination against women, made sustained support for a United Nations human rights presence vitally important. Human rights observers from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) provided the country's only independent monitoring. In Colombia, the OHCHR country office had served as a key bridge among all actors and as an advocate for transitional justice and the rights of victims, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and women and girls.

9. He was determined to strengthen OHCHR efforts to foster economies grounded in human rights. Better guidance, expertise and assistance should be provided to Member States in that regard. By enabling meaningful civic participation in decision-making, particularly for women and others who had long been sidelined, the human rights economy could address the root causes of inequalities and grievances, build greater trust in government and ensure that policies were targeted more effectively to areas of need. That was a field in which OHCHR brought added value given its role in building bridges to connect civil society, United Nations operations and national officials.

10. Human rights guardrails were sorely needed for international financial and development institutions, so that Governments were not forced to undercut their investments in human rights in order to repay foreign debt. The Declaration on the Right to Development promised an international order that could better fulfil human rights. OHCHR would strengthen its work with institutions in support of the Secretary-General's call for reform of the international financial architecture and his Sustainable Development Goal stimulus proposal, and in line with the political declaration adopted at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

11. In 2023, OHCHR had received just over 5 per cent of the regular United Nations budget, a vastly inadequate amount given its task. Although its extrabudgetary funding had increased somewhat in recent years, that too remained insufficient. Moreover, it appeared likely that OHCHR would receive only 60 per cent of the extrabudgetary funding it had requested. OHCHR needed a level of core financing that guaranteed its capacity to implement all mandated activities. To that end, he had embarked on a change programme aimed at improving the Office's ability to serve its partners.

12. As preparations for the Summit of the Future advanced, human rights must be central to all discussions and to the work of strengthening the human rights pillar of the Organization. OHCHR would convene a high-level event in Geneva in December 2023 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The outcomes of the event would lay the foundation for the future of human rights and make an important contribution to the Pact for the Future.

13. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that unilateral coercive measures had a negative impact on national efforts to guarantee universal health coverage, combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as other pandemics and endemic diseases, and ensure timely access to vaccines, medical care and supplies. Despite protracted debates on those measures in 2023, in addition to reports by independent experts and special rapporteurs, the political declarations resulting from the recent General Assembly high-level meeting on health-related topics had flagrantly ignored that matter, which affected over a third of humanity. It would be helpful to hear the High Commissioner's assessment of the situation and any further information compiled by OHCHR on the negative impact of those measures on human rights.

14. The States members of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations were committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights, both individual and collective, on the basis of dialogue and cooperation in accordance with the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and non-confrontation, within a framework of equality and mutual respect. They rejected double standards in that area and expressed deep concern over the proliferation of biased mechanisms and procedures.

15. **Mr. Shrier** (United States of America) said that his country condemned the appalling attack on Israel by Hamas terrorists and reiterated its ironclad support for Israel in exercising its inherent right to defend itself. There were two paths before the region: that of greater integration and stability, with Israelis and Palestinians resolving their differences; or the path of terror pursued by Hamas, which had not improved the life of a single person.

16. The United States was gravely concerned about the human rights situations in Afghanistan, Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar and Syria. It condemned the genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the authorities of the People's Republic of China against Uighurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups; the suppression of Tibetans' and other minority groups' distinct religious, linguistic and cultural identities; and the crackdown on Hong Kong. It also condemned the horrific atrocities and other abuses carried out by Russian forces in Ukraine, including the mistreatment of Ukrainian civilians. Moreover, it was concerned about the dramatic intensification by Russia of its suppression of domestic dissent. Deeply concerned about Yemen and the reports of migrants being killed on the border, the United States had urged Saudi Arabian authorities to investigate those allegations, to facilitate access for international organizations to the border region and to fulfil their obligations under international law.

17. **Mr. Elizondo Belden** (Mexico) said that his country remained open to international scrutiny and committed to following the recommendations issued by human rights mechanisms and experts. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights offered an opportunity for States to reaffirm their multilateral commitment to the universality, interdependence, indivisibility and gradual development of human rights. He asked what the main challenges were with regard to the full implementation of the Declaration and the associated international instruments.

18. **Ms. Broderick** (Ireland) said that her country unequivocally condemned the attack by Hamas on Israel. It was deeply shocked by the events unfolding in Israel and Gaza and expressed its condolences to all victims and their families. Ireland welcomed the work of OHCHR in supporting human rights defenders and urged it to adopt systems to identify, document, report and follow up on reprisals against them. The integrity of the United Nations, as well as that of its treaty bodies and special procedures, should be upheld and protected, including through adequate resources. Moreover, all

States should implement universal periodic review recommendations, ratify outstanding treaties and issue a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders. She asked what steps could be taken by States to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could benefit all, both at that time and into the future.

19. **Mr. Escobar** (Argentina) said that recent setbacks with respect to the human rights situation in various regions, including a rise in violence and discrimination against vulnerable groups, represented a major challenge for the international community. Given the situation, his delegation would welcome clarification on the measures that the Office could pursue in the short to medium term to address those issues.

20. **Ms. Sánchez García** (Colombia) said that human rights had been an integral part of the peace process in her country, which was why the agreement governing the work of the OHCHR office in Colombia had been renewed until at least 2032. Her delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's acknowledgement of the willingness of Colombia to accept his recommendations relating to human rights. In the light of her President's proposal to hold a third World Conference on Human Rights, it would be valuable to hear the High Commissioner's thoughts on that matter.

21. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that support for Palestinian self-determination and empathy for Palestinians must never obscure the fact that Hamas was a hateful, anti-Semitic terrorist group. Canada stood firmly with Israel and its right to defend itself against terror under international law.

22. The description of the world set out in the High Commissioner's report was both accurate and alarming, and Canada agreed with the recommended approach of making human rights a central tenet of the work of the international community. Given the High Commissioner's experience of the United Nations system and the human rights architecture, it would be interesting to hear about anything that had surprised him during his mandate period, as well as any underappreciated progress or unexpected difficulties that he had encountered.

23. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that his delegation wished to draw attention to the continued illegal occupation by India of Jammu and Kashmir. The failure of the international community to hold India accountable for its human rights abuses further undermined the credibility of the prevention mandate of OHCHR and its ability to consider human rights violations in a non-selective and impartial manner. Given the overwhelming evidence of egregious human

rights violations during the illegal occupation by India of Jammu and Kashmir, as consistently highlighted by special procedure mandate holders, clarity on when OHCHR would next issue a report on the matter would be greatly appreciated.

24. The emergence of Islamophobia as a new form of racism, leading to religious discrimination, incitement to hatred, hostility and violence, was cause for concern. That scourge must be combated to prevent the persecution of Muslims in some Western countries and an imminent genocide in India. Pakistan therefore called for Islamophobia to be covered in OHCHR annual reports.

25. **Ms. Dime Labille** (France) said that OHCHR played an essential role in providing the international community with information, holding countries to account and implementing reforms. However, OHCHR could not carry out its work effectively without the necessary resources. Accordingly, France had doubled its voluntary national contribution and would support OHCHR in future budget negotiations.

26. France would continue to oppose the death penalty, impunity and discrimination and to advance the rights of women, lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual persons, and human rights defenders. Ahead of the High Commissioner's announcement, in December 2023, of his vision for the future of human rights, France welcomed his stance in favour of a feminist revolution in the digital space and the protection of rights in the context of climate change. In that regard, it would be helpful for the High Commissioner to outline the consequences of his vision and strategy for the Office's missions and presence in countries and regions in the coming years, as well as for the working methods and financing of special procedures and treaty bodies.

27. **Ms. Carlé** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the High Commissioner's work and mandate were as important and relevant as ever on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirtieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Human rights, whether political, civil, economic, social or cultural, were key to solving many of the world's interlinked problems, including deepening inequality, extreme poverty, war and conflict, the risks generated by new technologies, and the triple planetary crisis. Human rights should be at the heart of United Nations activities, and an efficient, well-functioning and adequately resourced OHCHR was indispensable in that regard. Member States and the Secretariat should use the regular budget and extrabudgetary funding to provide OHCHR, as well as

other United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms, with the necessary resources.

28. The European Union firmly supported the independence and integrity of OHCHR and rejected any efforts to discredit or weaken its work. It strongly condemned all forms of intimidation, harassment and reprisals against those who cooperated with the United Nations. All States should create and maintain a safe and enabling environment in which civil society organizations and human rights defenders could operate without fear or interference. Given the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, her delegation would be interested to hear specific examples of situations in which protecting one human right had helped to ensure the fulfilment of others.

29. **Mr. Muhamad** (Malaysia) said that it was imperative for the international community to treat all human rights in a fair and equitable manner. Unfortunately, time and again, experience had shown that selected rights, particularly civil and political rights, were prioritized over other rights. Constant budgetary and resource-related challenges had affected the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section of OHCHR more than others. He asked what efforts could be made by OHCHR to address the lack of resources for programmes in the area of economic, social and cultural rights, including for capacity-building in Member States.

30. The universal periodic review was immensely valuable in promoting and protecting human rights globally. Malaysia would undergo the process for the fourth time in January 2024, and it looked forward to receiving pragmatic, implementable and constructive recommendations.

31. **Ms. Umulisa** (Rwanda), speaking also on behalf of Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe, said that the activities of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé had steadily increased since its founding in 2001, especially after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/171, in which the Assembly asked the Centre to step up its activities in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, taking into account the need to respond to requests from all countries within its area of competence. However, the Centre's limited capacity to implement its mandate, mainly due to financial constraints and growing demand for the Centre's services from Member States, was cause for concern. Over the previous six years, the General Assembly had asked OHCHR to use its existing

resources to provide the Centre with additional funds and staff, including human resources from the Central African subregion.

32. She therefore asked what measures had been taken to implement resolution 76/171 and how much the Centre's financial resources had increased. She also wished to ascertain the level of representation of the countries of the subregion among the Centre's staff and whether there was scope to allocate additional funds to the Centre from the Office's existing regular resources.

33. **Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein) said that it was unjustified and unfortunate that illegal war-making had been left out of the human rights discourse in recent decades. Furthermore, civil society had not given the issue the attention it deserved, despite it being one of the gravest human rights violations, especially with respect to the impact on the right to life. He wished to know how OHCHR could help to promote awareness of that issue. Ahead of the Summit of the Future, it would be helpful to hear the High Commissioner's thoughts on how to advance the debate on artificial intelligence, and especially the human rights dimension thereof. Lastly, he asked whether the High Commissioner thought that States should focus on implementing the standards set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related treaties, or whether there were any particular gaps in the field of standard-setting.

34. **Mr. Sylvester** (United Kingdom) said that his country strongly condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israeli citizens and called for an end to the attacks on Israel. The indiscriminate use of violence by Hamas and the resulting civilian casualties were horrific; taking over 100 Israeli citizens hostage was heinous. The United Kingdom stood firmly in support of Israel and its right to self-defence. Hamas did not represent the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and offered them nothing other than more terror and bloodshed. The despicable acts of Hamas had also resulted in the death of 687 Palestinians in Gaza and added to the suffering of Palestinian civilians. He asked how the international community could best support de-escalation.

35. **Ms. Perdomo** (Chile) said that her delegation was grateful to the High Commissioner for highlighting the link between the integration of human rights into development plans and policies and the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. However, her delegation would have liked the report to have reflected the Office's valuable work to promote the human rights of older persons, who did not receive the same policy support as other vulnerable groups. Chile looked forward to working closely with OHCHR at the meeting of the Open-ended

Working Group on Ageing in December 2023, when gaps with respect to the fulfilment of the human rights of older persons would be discussed. Lastly, she echoed the High Commissioner's call for countries to formulate voluntary human rights commitments to be presented at the upcoming event to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

36. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that his delegation agreed with the main conclusion of the High Commissioner's report that human rights challenges required global solutions and stronger international cooperation. In practice, however, the work of OHCHR was not always aimed at strengthening cooperation and often had the effect of fuelling confrontation and eroding trust. The Office should adhere strictly to the principles of constructiveness, transparency, non-selectivity, impartiality, non-confrontation and non-politicization in its work.

37. Certain blanket conclusions, such as the one regarding the unfortunate situation of civil society around the world, could create a false impression as to the root causes of the situation, when there were often perfectly reasonable and objective causes. Given that it was not possible to provide the full picture in a short report, such conclusions could lead to misinterpretations of the situation. It would be worth considering how to avoid that in future reports.

38. His delegation would welcome clarification regarding the request for "political support" in paragraph 110 of the report. Such a phrase seemed highly questionable when used in the context of funding, especially given that the regular budget of OHCHR was increasing while funding for other areas of United Nations work was decreasing.

39. No mention had been made in the report of unilateral coercive measures, which had an extremely negative impact on human rights, as stated in numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. His delegation would like to hear about the current and planned work of the Office to address that issue, and encouraged OHCHR to include relevant information on that matter in its next report.

40. **Mr. Zitko** (Slovenia) said that his country strongly supported the High Commissioner's call for every effort to be made to uphold the rights of women and girls and advance their full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of life. OHCHR was carrying out important work by highlighting how environmental and other global crises impeded the realization of human rights, especially for the most vulnerable. Its efforts to continue to influence global debates, contribute to the

understanding of gaps in protecting the human rights of older persons and support the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons were also appreciated.

41. A functioning, well-structured and sufficiently resourced OHCHR was a global public good, contributing to the early identification of risks and the prevention of wider conflicts and humanitarian crises. Slovenia would continue to play its part in promoting peace, inclusivity, non-discrimination and preventive action as a non-permanent member of the Security Council from January 2024.

42. **Ms. Lortkipanidze** (Georgia) said that her country was shocked by the recent horrific terrorist attack and stood in solidarity with the Government and people of Israel.

43. The war of aggression carried out by Russia against Ukraine in blatant violation of international law continued to undermine global peace and security. Moreover, the Russian Federation continued to incorporate Georgian territories into its political, military, economic, social and justice spheres, while simultaneously destabilizing the security environment and further aggravating humanitarian conditions. Recent statements regarding the deployment of a naval base in the occupied Abkhazia region and the region's inclusion in the integration process represented another blatant violation of international law, a gross violation of Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and further evidence of the aggressive policy of Russia against Georgia.

44. People residing in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions suffered from flagrant rights violations, while hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees had been expelled from their homes as a result of multiple waves of ethnic cleansing. The High Commissioner's opinion on feasible measures that could be taken to address human rights infringements affecting people in the occupied territories would be greatly appreciated.

45. **Mr. Al-Khaqani** (Iraq) said that his country was committed to cooperating constructively with the treaty bodies by submitting and discussing its national reports in a timely manner. It would also endeavour to implement recommendations with respect to improving its legislative framework and strengthening the bodies involved in the protection and promotion of human rights. Iraq was seeking membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2026–2028 because it wished to play an effective, fruitful role in the promotion of human rights. His delegation would like to

know how the High Commissioner evaluated his most recent visit to Iraq, in August 2023.

46. **Mr. Feruță** (Romania) said that the big picture with respect to human rights was quite bleak, especially given the attacks on civilians, and civilian infrastructure and facilities, in Ukraine and the recent terrorist attack against Israel. Governments must mobilize to address that bleak picture, given that human rights could not be separated from security aspirations and objectives and that it was impossible to foster development without human rights.

47. The notion that promoting human rights might infringe on State sovereignty was outdated and incorrect. In fact, respect for human rights created prosperity and predictability, and improved the security environment for all. He encouraged the High Commissioner to keep Headquarters apprised of developments in United Nations bodies in Geneva.

48. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the deteriorating human rights situation in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, European Union member States and the occupied Palestinian territories was deeply concerning. Her country condemned the ongoing plight of women and girls, religious minorities, people of African descent and Indigenous Peoples in those territories.

49. Her delegation was dismayed that the High Commissioner had not mentioned the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on the human rights of people in targeted countries in his report, and had instead included non-consensus-based language and items not underpinned by international agreements.

50. All countries had a sovereign right to develop their own legal systems, including determining appropriate legal penalties in accordance with international law and the right to a fair trial. With many countries still using the death penalty, singling out specific States in the report ran counter to the Office's obligation to act with impartiality and non-selectivity.

51. Her delegation categorically rejected mechanisms based on politics, such as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Given recent instances of the burning of the Qur'an in Europe, OHCHR should prioritize the issue of discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia in its work.

52. Ahead of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024, it would be helpful for the High Commissioner to elaborate on the

stance of OHCHR with regard to family issues and the protection of the family.

53. **Mr. Fepuleai** (New Zealand) said that his country condemned the terrorist attacks led by Hamas on Israel and called for restraint, the protection of civilians and the upholding of international humanitarian law by all parties. New Zealand would continue to advocate for gender equality, democratic rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other (LGBTQI+) persons, guided by the principles of inclusion and intersectionality. In a challenging global context, it was vital for States to work in partnership with civil society to uphold and defend human rights and ensure all voices could be heard.

54. **Ms. Tonon** (Italy) said that her country wished to reiterate its opposition to the death penalty on the grounds of human rights and respect for human dignity. Italy had presented the first resolution on a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty to the General Assembly in 2007. Support for such a moratorium had increased over the years, with 125 States voting in favour of the resolution at the previous session. Italy was working at the cross-regional level to establish constructive dialogue on the issue and was engaging in campaigns to raise awareness under the aegis of the European Union and the Council of Europe. In that regard, she wondered how cross-regional dialogue and the involvement of civil society could be strengthened with a view to further consolidating the existing consensus.

55. **Ms. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) said that her country was grateful for the commitment of OHCHR to advancing the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and asked the High Commissioner what the next steps should be in that regard. Having worked with OHCHR on the conflict risk tool project, Switzerland welcomed efforts with respect to prevention and early warning systems, and wondered what more could be done to strengthen preventative instruments as part of the new peace agenda. With a view to protecting and expanding civic space, Switzerland welcomed the Office's commitment to preventing and combating intimidation of and reprisals against persons who cooperated with the United Nations. Furthermore, it shared the view that gender-based discrimination and stereotypes remained deeply rooted in society. She asked how OHCHR planned to overcome such challenges.

56. **Ms. Kim** (Australia) said that her country unequivocally condemned the abhorrent attacks on Israel by Hamas, including indiscriminate rocket fire,

cruelty leading to a shocking loss of life and the taking of hostages. Australia called on Hamas to stop all attacks and release all hostages, and on all parties to protect civilian lives and uphold the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights and humanitarian law, and the rules-based order. Her country's guiding principle was advancing the cause of peace and progressing towards a just and enduring two-State solution in which Israel and a future Palestinian State could coexist with internationally recognized borders.

57. Human rights applied to all people, regardless of identity or birthplace. All countries must have a stake in the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and exercise their agency to uphold them.

58. **Mr. Hakobyan** (Armenia) said that the entire Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh had been forcibly displaced as a result of the brutal assault by Azerbaijan on 19 September 2023. There had been documented violations of the right to life and the prohibition of torture, and there was graphic evidence of mutilation, including of children. Given that the High Commissioner had stressed the importance of adhering to international humanitarian and human rights law, he asked how OHCHR would address the violation by Azerbaijan of those bodies of law with respect to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

59. **Mr. Kim** Nam Hyok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that it was important to promote international cooperation on human rights and engage in constructive dialogue on a fair and equal basis, taking into account the political, historical, social, religious and cultural diversity of each country. The biggest obstacle to international cooperation in the field of human rights was the abuse of human rights for political purposes. Human rights should never be used as a political tool to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States. Currently, developing countries, especially those with independent policy positions, were being selectively targeted. Selectivity and double standards hampered international efforts to protect and promote human rights and should no longer be tolerated. The High Commissioner and OHCHR should preserve the fundamental principles of respect for national sovereignty, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization.

60. His delegation totally rejected the allegations made by the United States and urged that country to focus on addressing the serious human rights abuses within its borders, such as racism, gun violence and discrimination against ethnic groups.

61. **Mr. Erdan** (Israel) said that, in the wake of the gravest human rights atrocities since the Holocaust, his

delegation wished to know how many dead Jews it would take to justify a proportionate response to a genocidal terror organization, and wondered whether 1,000, 6 million or 10 million – the entire population of Israel – would be enough murdered Jews for the High Commissioner to support his country's right to self-defence.

62. Israel was a law-abiding democracy whereas Hamas was recognized as a genocidal terror organization by the free world. By making false, immoral comparisons, the High Commissioner shared the blame for empowering barbaric savages. The High Commissioner had expressed outrage and shock, but his role was not to be a bystander expressing his emotions; Israel needed him to take action. His delegation wondered how the High Commissioner expected Israel to ensure that genocidal jihadists never committed such atrocities again.

63. The Human Rights Council had lost its moral compass by refusing to differentiate between good and evil. The High Commissioner's immoral comparison sent a clear message to the terrorists that if they hid rockets and weapons under schools and hospitals, and used the people of Gaza as human shields, the Council would give them full immunity. The world could not accept such a distorted moral standard, which guaranteed that the atrocities would continue. Israel would obliterate the terror infrastructure of Hamas.

64. **Mr. Drescher** (Germany) said that his country condemned the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel and called upon Hamas to agree to an immediate ceasefire and immediately and unconditionally release all hostages. Germany stood in full solidarity with Israel in exercising its right to self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations.

65. Given that human rights, peace and security were inextricably linked, there should be stronger ties between the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, as well as substantial and regular dialogue on the topic. Promoting and protecting human rights lay at the heart of successfully addressing mounting challenges such as conflict and war, climate change, hunger, poverty, racism and other forms of discrimination, and the increasing pressure on political and civil rights.

66. OHCHR needed to be adequately funded and resourced. Germany was proud to be the fourth-largest donor to OHCHR, leaving a significant share of its contribution un-earmarked to increase budget flexibility. As one of the co-facilitators of the Summit of the Future, Germany hoped to see a strong human rights footprint in the outcome document. His delegation

asked the High Commissioner to reflect on the current state of human rights overall and where efforts should be focused in the coming years.

67. **Mr. Viktorov** (Russian Federation) said that the use of human rights for political and economic leverage against out-of-favour Governments or simply rivals had unfortunately become commonplace. To achieve their short-term aims, certain States were deliberately bringing human rights situations to the brink of collapse, mostly through the application of unilateral coercive measures. Under the pretext of upholding the freedom of expression, they condoned the promotion of ideologies that were prohibited by international law and that had caused the deaths of millions of people in the past and were now leading to the very same consequences. They were using every means – from conducting aggressive false information campaigns and supplying weapons to “genuine” human rights defenders, to manipulating church institutions and abusing the trust of religious persons – to promote their narrow, short-term interests. Such games always led to human tragedy.

68. In that context, the role of the High Commissioner was more important and necessary than ever as an independent and unbiased representative of a global human rights organization. The High Commissioner should react to the root causes of human rights violations rather than to their consequences, taking into account all the factors and specifics of the situation. Under General Assembly resolution [48/141](#), the High Commissioner essentially had a mandate to assist all interested parties, first and foremost States, in improving their human rights situation and strengthening their national capacities in that regard.

69. **Ms. Lasseur** (Kingdom of the Netherlands) said that her country was shocked at the attack on Israel and wished to express its sorrow for the victims on both sides. Israel had the right to defend itself under international law. If elected to the Human Rights Council, the Kingdom of the Netherlands would do its part to defend all human rights for everyone, everywhere. Her delegation welcomed the plans to increase the field presence of OHCHR and looked forward to the publication of the United Nations LGBTIQI+ strategy. She asked how and where countries could best support the High Commissioner's work.

70. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China) said that it was important to promote and protect human rights through solidarity and cooperation; to fully respect each country's chosen path to human rights development; to oppose the politicization of human rights issues; to eschew double standards; and to reject the use of human rights as a

pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of States and impeding their development, including through the use of unilateral coercive measures. OHCHR and other human rights bodies should respect State sovereignty; follow the principles of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization; engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation with Member States; and implement their respective mandates in an objective and impartial manner.

71. The Committee should not be used as a forum for confrontation or pressure, or for certain self-righteous States to dictate human rights to others. His country's chosen path to human rights development was well-suited to its national circumstances and had led to remarkable and recognized progress. Once again, the United States was provoking confrontation by attacking China with lies. Contrary to the accusations made by the United States, people of all ethnic groups lived together in harmony in Xinjiang; Tibet was experiencing economic and social progress; and the people of Hong Kong enjoyed a wide range of rights and freedoms. The United States should address its own very serious human rights issues and stop using human rights to interfere with, suppress and contain developing countries.

72. **Ms. Monica** (Bangladesh) said that the protracted presence of more than a million Rohingya refugees was a heavy burden for a severely resource-constrained, climate-vulnerable country such as her own. To date, no Human Rights Council mechanism had made any headway on creating conditions conducive to their repatriation. She asked whether the United Nations should recalibrate its strategies and how Council mechanisms could better identify challenges in fulfilling human rights and suggest practical solutions. Bangladesh denounced the ongoing armed conflict between Israel and the State of Palestine and reiterated its support for a two-State solution.

73. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said that, as the targets of Russian terrorism, Ukrainians stood in horrified solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks in Israel. The reports of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine provided invaluable, ongoing documentation of the human rights impact of the Russian aggression. The extent and gravity of the violations of human rights and international human rights law underlined the urgent need to hold the Russian Federation accountable.

74. **Ms. Mousa** (Saudi Arabia) said that systemic violations by Israel of the human rights of Palestinians had created an explosive situation in the State of Palestine. Saudi Arabia called for an end to the escalation and for self-restraint on both sides. The

international community should launch a credible peace process leading to a two-State solution.

75. Saudi Arabia once again rejected the allegations of the United States, which were based on unreliable sources. Burning the Qur'an was reprehensible and incited hatred, exclusion and racism. She asked how the High Commissioner could help to combat that escalating phenomenon.

76. **Mr. Pretterhofer** (Austria) said that his Government condemned the multiple, indiscriminate attacks on Israel in the strongest possible terms and called for the immediate release of all hostages. He wondered what role OHCHR might play in addressing those dramatic developments.

77. **Ms. Rizk** (Egypt) said that her country was continuing to hold high-level discussions with international and regional actors to end the escalating attacks on Gaza and the killing of Palestinian civilians. Ultimately, peace depended on joint international action to bring about a just and comprehensive settlement based on the establishment of a Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Coordinated international action was required to end the most recent violence and ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Egypt called for the exercise of the utmost restraint and a return to negotiations.

78. Regarding the human rights economy, she would be interested in hearing more about the intersection of human rights with economic issues and the impact of the compounding crises on the human right to development. With respect to the operationalization of that right, Egypt emphasized the duty to cooperate, international solidarity and respect for the sovereignty of States. The most effective way to mainstream the right to development was through processes for implementing the 2030 Agenda. She asked what the High Commissioner could do to bridge the divide on the right to development, and what practical steps OHCHR might take to counter hate speech and incitements to violence such as Qur'an burning.

79. **Ms. Bouchikhi** (Morocco) said that her country welcomed the decision to convene a conference on promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech in Geneva in 2025 and remained convinced of the continuing need to strengthen the United Nations human rights treaty body system. She encouraged all States that had not yet done so to sign, ratify or accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

80. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that the military regime in his country was escalating air strikes against civilian populations, carrying out brutal mass killings and burning entire villages. The only way to bring justice and democracy to Myanmar was to end the military dictatorship. The Security Council should take steps to refer the full scope of the current situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court, and the Council, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Member States should provide flexible direct funding to local humanitarian organizations. He urged the international community to support the work of the National Unity Government, which was cooperating and coordinating with the ethnic armed organizations to prevent human rights violations and assist the victims. He wished to know what further steps the High Commissioner would take to save lives in Myanmar.

81. **Ms. Al-Buainain** (Qatar) said that her country hosted the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, and it would continue to provide financial support for OHCHR through voluntary contributions. Qatar worked to promote and protect human rights everywhere, including in its current capacity as a member of the Human Rights Council.

82. **Mr. Bamyá** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that his Government called on all States to reject the collective punishment and dehumanization of the residents of the Gaza Strip and to acknowledge the killing of Palestinians by Israel. Of the 850 Palestinians killed in the past three days, the overwhelming majority had been civilians, and many had been children. Israel had blockaded the Gaza Strip for 15 years, assaulting it repeatedly, in the hope of ensuring its own security and destroying the military capabilities of Hamas. It had accomplished neither; rather, it had inflicted suffering on people whom it was bound to protect under international law. Israel must end the bloodshed immediately, change the course that had led to it and abide by international law.

83. Over the years, the State of Palestine had called for a peaceful path forward, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, regardless of whether the dead were Palestinian or Israeli. In 75 years of accumulated grievances, it could have called for vengeance and war; instead, it had sought justice and peace.

84. **Ms. Zacarias** (Portugal) said that, by visiting New York and addressing the Committee, the High Commissioner was promoting synergies and complementarity between the work of OHCHR and the General Assembly. Her delegation wished to know what

human rights commitments were essential to ensure a strong human rights perspective in the outcome document of the Summit of the Future.

85. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it was difficult to understand how many Western countries could be shocked by what was happening in the occupied Palestinian territories but unphased by the killings and other flagrant violations of human rights committed by the occupying Power against the people in the occupied territories and occupied Syrian Golan over many decades. The last day of the occupation would be the first day of peace.

86. **Ms. Alameri** (United Arab Emirates) said that concerted international efforts were needed to support climate adaptation and facilitate access to climate finance in developing countries. As the host of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Arab Emirates was committed to achieving international consensus on action-oriented outcomes.

87. **Mr. Gala López** (Cuba) said that, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirtieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, many Member States still did not recognize the right to self-determination, the right to development or the universal, indivisible and interdependent nature of all human rights. Moreover, the United Nations human rights machinery continued to promote punitive approaches, selective practices and double standards. By failing to abide by the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, it undermined its own legitimacy.

88. OHCHR should provide more support for the right to development and should focus more attention on the negative human rights impact of unilateral coercive measures. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States was the primary obstacle to Cuban development and constituted a massive and flagrant violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. He asked what more OHCHR could do to promote the right to development and to address the human rights impact of unilateral coercive measures.

89. **Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan) said that his Government strongly condemned the attacks on Israel and the reported kidnapping of civilians. He asked how the High Commissioner would sustain the effectiveness of OHCHR. He would also appreciate an overview of the Office's strategies for ensuring transparency and accountability in budget management.

90. Japan spoke out against serious violations of human rights and promoted the voluntary efforts of each country through dialogue and cooperation. As a member of the Human Rights Council for the term 2024–2025, it would redouble its efforts to protect and promote human rights, particularly with respect to persons with disabilities, children, women’s empowerment and gender equality, and business ethics, in close cooperation with Member States, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and relevant entities.

91. **Mr. Hassani** (Algeria) said that it was important to respect the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity and to address human rights situations in a spirit of constructive dialogue and cooperation. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Algeria strove to promote and protect human rights, including the right to development. He asked what steps the High Commissioner was taking to collaborate with regional organizations such as the African Union on the right to development.

92. **Ms. Wainwel** (Cameroon) said that Africans and persons of African descent were severely underrepresented in OHCHR, especially at the P-5 level and above. She wished to know what measures the High Commissioner would take to redress that situation, how he thought racial biases and racial discrimination contributed to it, and what OHCHR was doing to address racial discrimination against staff. She also asked what more OHCHR could do to strengthen the right to development and what measures had been taken to provide urgently needed additional funding and human resources to the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution [76/171](#).

93. **Mr. Faiq** (Afghanistan) said that the plight of undocumented Afghan refugees required urgent attention, as they often did not have the legal status to gain access to basic services, education, health care or lawful employment. OHCHR should also investigate the arbitrary arrest, extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance and torture of former members of the Afghan security forces, as well as the widespread and systematic punishment of minority communities. He would appreciate the High Commissioner’s comments on those matters, as well as on the situation of Afghan women and girls, who were being deprived of their rights to education and employment.

94. **Ms. Sonkar** (India) said that Pakistan had once again misused the forum of the Committee to divert attention from its own abysmal human rights record. In Pakistan, institutionalized discrimination, persecution

and violence against minorities continued unabated, and women belonging to minority communities were abducted and forced to convert to Islam and marry Muslims. The union territories of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh were an integral part of India. Pakistan had no right to comment on Indian domestic affairs.

95. **Mr. Grünwald** (Slovakia) said that, 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights were under attack around the world, including as a result of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. If the High Commissioner could choose only one message for the international community on the anniversary of the Declaration, he wondered what it would be.

96. **Ms. Alexandridou** (Greece) said that her country was exploring ways to enhance its contribution to OHCHR and was a candidate to the Human Rights Council for the period 2028–2030. She would appreciate the High Commissioner’s views on how to stop the polarization of the Council and what would happen if it continued.

97. **Mr. Scalabrini-McKellar** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that, following the earthquake in Morocco, the Order had provided humanitarian assistance in collaboration with other faith-based organizations, and it would continue to do so. He asked the High Commissioner to elaborate on potential frameworks for strengthening and revitalizing global partnerships for resource mobilization and the sharing of expertise in humanitarian emergencies, as well as on strategies for encouraging collaboration in that context.

98. **Mr. Türk** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that he had been profoundly shocked by the despicable acts perpetrated against Israeli citizens and had called for the urgent and unconditional release of the hostages. While the Palestinian people had legitimate grievances, nothing justified terror. Similarly, while Israel had legitimate security concerns, its military operations must be conducted in strict compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. A solution to the 56-year-old conflict was urgently needed. OHCHR maintained a presence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and it was at the disposal of both Israel and the Palestinians for human rights issues.

99. His goal as High Commissioner was encapsulated in the slogan for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Dignity, freedom and justice for all”, with an emphasis on “for all”. In his first year, he had been struck by the growing threat of polarization, which could have dangerous

consequences for human rights. Politicization was inevitable – indeed, political leadership was essential to move forward – but polarization could and should be avoided. During that year, he had also seen the incredible potential of engagement. Working alongside human rights defenders, civil society organizations and State institutions, the field offices of OHCHR helped to prevent crises by acting as conduits for grievances and detecting early warning signs.

100. OHCHR also had an important role in monitoring and reporting on human rights situations. It was unfortunate that it did not have more resources to devote to investigation and accountability issues, because accountability and transitional justice were essential for lasting peace. He had been surprised at how underfunded OHCHR was. A large portion of the many reports requested by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly were not covered under the regular budget. The mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was a very important one, and the work of the Office of the High Commissioner should be funded commensurately. One step Member States could take to promote human rights and their mainstreaming in sustainable development would be to ensure proper funding for the OHCHR human rights adviser programme.

101. The situation of human rights in Myanmar was horrific and deteriorating. The United Nations system had made many recommendations over the years on addressing the human rights issues of minority groups such as the Rohingya, and ASEAN had proposed a five-point plan. All had fallen on deaf ears. He had therefore asked the Security Council to refer the full scope of the situation to the International Criminal Court.

102. Accountability was an important tool for combating systemic gender persecution in Afghanistan. It was essential to keep the spotlight on the situation and to ensure continued support for a human rights presence within UNAMA.

103. Without access to the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, he had been unable to report on the whole of Georgia. The Government of Georgia should make every effort to convince those responsible for denying OHCHR access to reverse their position.

104. He had been meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and a Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia over the exodus of ethnic Armenians and had offered his Office's presence and engagement. He hoped that the offer would be accepted.

105. OHCHR was monitoring the situation in Kashmir. The recommendations of his predecessors should be

taken seriously. He had asked both Pakistan and India to give OHCHR access to the areas under their respective control.

106. During his visit to Iraq in August 2023, he had witnessed the very palpable effects of climate change. There, as elsewhere, water scarcity and unbearably high temperatures were affecting the most vulnerable. He had been given very full access, including to detention centres, and had engaged in fruitful discussions with the Prime Minister on a number of issues. With government cooperation and a strong presence on the ground, official visits could be very effective.

107. Engagement with regional organizations was important. In recent months, he had participated in an African Union regional dialogue on the right to development and had met with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. He was also very much engaged with the inter-American human rights system, the European human rights mechanisms and other mechanisms around the world. In addition, regional partners were invited to participate in high-level OHCHR events.

108. The United Nations Environment Programme and OHCHR were preparing to publish a report on how to take forward the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. He was encouraged by the increasing number of court cases involving climate and environmental rights.

109. OHCHR was working with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to infuse the human rights aspect into the New Agenda for Peace. The human rights dimension was important in conflict and post-conflict situations and could be broken down into its constituent parts to advance peace and the peacebuilding process. Human rights violations should be seen as early warning indicators and trigger early action.

110. He had a clear and strong position on unilateral coercive measures. In the case of sectoral sanctions in particular, there was a need for further analysis of the impact of such measures on the enjoyment of human rights and on humanitarian issues.

111. More and more countries in sub-Saharan Africa were abolishing the death penalty. To encourage States to announce moratoriums on or abolish the penalty, it was necessary to return to the evidence, which demonstrated that capital punishment was not an effective deterrent. Civil society actors should be included in the discussions, which should be cross-regional.

112. It was essential to combat hate speech and incitement to violence, which were key factors in the

outbreak of conflicts. During the past year, he had participated in two interactive dialogues in the Human Rights Council on religious hatred and intolerance, and he was working closely on the issue with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.

113. There were several Human Rights Council resolutions on the protection of the family, and a new resolution was currently being negotiated. His predecessor had prepared a report on the rights of the child and family reunification ([A/HRC/49/31](#)) and had highlighted the role of the family in poverty reduction. The Council was planning an expert meeting on the topic.

114. Illegal warfare – the violation of *jus ad bellum* – was a human rights issue because it had human rights consequences and touched on the issues of accountability and justice. In assessing breaches of *jus ad bellum*, human rights violations were considered aggravating circumstances.

115. The Summit of the Future should lead to a strengthening of the human rights pillar and the institutions that underpinned it. He would spare no effort to make human rights a cross-cutting element in the five groups of issues to be discussed, including by ensuring that the high-level event to be held in December 2023 in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was geared towards preparations for the Summit. He was also working closely with the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology on the global digital compact. The human rights advisory mechanism proposed by the Secretary-General in his policy brief on that compact ([A/77/CRP.1/Add.4](#)) was desperately needed.

116. With respect to the right to development, the Human Rights Council was currently discussing a draft resolution on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. His mandate was to promote and protect all human rights, including the right to development. No one right trumped another, and all human rights were interrelated. He did not subscribe to the arbitrary distinction between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. Human rights should be viewed holistically through the lens of the established normative frameworks.

117. Member States could support OHCHR during the Fifth Committee discussions on the budget and by promoting the change management process which he had launched within the Office. OHCHR existed to

serve Member States, civil society and human rights defenders.

118. On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was important to remember that the Declaration had been nourished not only by the American and French revolutions, but also by the Haitian revolution, the labour movement, feminism and other human rights movements, the decolonization process and the anti-apartheid struggle. Revisiting the Declaration could provide insight into current human rights dilemmas and could draw attention to gaps, such as the lack of an international instrument on the rights of peasants. The international community should use the anniversary year as an occasion for renewal, reaffirmation and advancement.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.