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**Social and human rights questions: human rights**

**Economic, social and cultural rights****Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights***Summary*

In the present report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provides an update on the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in relation to the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. The report contains an overview of the diversity, depth and reach of work carried out to achieve the objective of the Office of the High Commissioner of promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights, and describes the operational environment and outlook for the future.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 48/141, by which the General Assembly established the role of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Assembly conferred an expansive mandate to the High Commissioner, including that of promoting and protecting the effective enjoyment by everyone of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; of engaging in a dialogue with all Governments in the implementation of the mandate to secure respect for all human rights; and of providing advisory services and technical and financial assistance as part of support for actions and programmes in the field of human rights. Crucially, as the Assembly recalled in the preamble to resolution 48/141, all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and should, as such, be given the same emphasis. A significant dimension of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has, consequently, been to seek to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights are advanced with the same vigour and accorded equal substantive esteem as other rights.

2. In his previous report to the Economic and Social Council,<sup>1</sup> the High Commissioner stressed the importance of economic, social and cultural rights when confronting multifaceted global crises, such as growing inequality, poverty and income and wealth disparities. Since the presentation of that report, OHCHR has consistently prioritized the operationalization of economic, social and cultural rights through its work and voice.<sup>2</sup> In line with the objectives of “all human rights for all”, the High Commissioner is promoting a human rights economy to realize rights, address inequalities and advance environmental action, including on climate, with human rights as its core.<sup>3</sup>

3. Under the development pillar of the 2024–2027 Office-wide management plan, economic, social and cultural rights are a core element of the work of OHCHR: promoting a human rights economy to realize rights; reducing inequalities, fostering inclusion and equality through a diversity approach; and advancing environmental action, including on climate, with human rights at its core have been identified as strategic priorities for the Office.<sup>4</sup> In its engagement with Member States and other stakeholders, OHCHR has strongly advocated for addressing inequality, eradicating poverty and promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights and other human rights as the priority of the Office,<sup>5</sup> bringing greater congruence between norms and policy and supporting the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights.

4. As noted above, the Office has made advancing the human rights economy a strategic priority, calling for aligning economic policies with the human rights obligations.<sup>6</sup> In the present report, the High Commissioner builds on the overview outlined in his previous report of the work of OHCHR on economic, social and cultural rights. It also contains an update of the work undertaken between May 2024 and April 2025, including operational challenges, and makes conclusions and recommendations.

## II. Strengthening the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights

5. In supporting the promotion and protection of human rights, the Office of the High Commissioner aims to ensure that human rights norms and standards form the foundation, to the greatest extent possible, of actions by States and other actors that have an impact on their fulfilment. Working towards an alignment of law, policy and practice with these norms is an

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<sup>1</sup> E/2024/13.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/09/we-cannot-stand-idly-inequality-deepens-and-global-hunger-grows>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/02/hc-turk-message-7th-intersessional-human-rights-and-2030-agenda>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/aboutus/OHCHR-OMP-2024-2027.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/54/35.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/06/human-rights-economy-concept-practical-application>.

essential focus. The technical input provided by the Office therefore seeks to assist States and other stakeholders to create or support the creation of an enabling legal and policy environment for the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. It has engaged with not only national and subnational authorities but also with a broad range of stakeholders, raising awareness of the value and necessity of incorporating economic, social and cultural rights-based approaches, supporting the operationalization of the human rights framework and working to address barriers to their realization, such as discrimination, marginalization and corruption.

## **A. Strengthening stakeholder engagement in the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights**

6. In accordance with its institutional commitment to rebuilding trust and reinvigorating a global human rights movement that offers solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges, OHCHR has made it a hallmark of its work on economic, social and cultural rights to engage a wide range of stakeholders; for instance, it has been working with local governments to help raise awareness of economic, social and cultural rights, build capacity and support local government stakeholders in creating an enabling environment for their realization and ensuring that local governments implement human rights norms and standards. Outcomes within this strategy include more cities committing to closer collaboration between the local level and United Nations human rights mechanisms.

7. In October 2024, OHCHR co-organized the fourteenth World Human Rights Cities Forum in Gwangju, Republic of Korea, together with the city of Gwangju, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.<sup>7</sup> OHCHR focused its engagement on, among other areas, social movements and inclusive participation in cities, as well as the engagement of local governments with United Nations human rights mechanisms. In February 2025, OHCHR and its partner organization United Cities and Local Governments co-hosted a consultation for local governments on a draft guidance framework for building a human rights city. Input from the consultation will inform the guidance framework to be published jointly with the organization to assist local governments in realizing human rights at the local level.

8. In November 2024, OHCHR convened a regional consultation on economic, social and cultural rights for national human rights institutions in Europe jointly with partners from the national human rights institutions of Denmark, Germany and Sweden as well as the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions. The consultations involved national human rights institutions from 23 countries and territories and focused on challenges and opportunities for increased engagement on these rights, especially in the light of the cost-of-living, health and housing crises. The discussions included contributions from stakeholders at the global and regional levels and the sharing of good practices from national human rights institutions and local level practitioners.

9. A second regional consultation was organized during the same period for the Latin America and Caribbean region, bringing together representatives from civil society, national human rights institutions, regional institutions and organizations and Member States. Participants discussed the challenges and entry points for increased work on economic, social and cultural rights in the region, focusing on both substantive rights and cross-cutting issues such as corruption, the human rights economy and the right to a healthy environment. These regional multistakeholder engagements have not only fostered dialogue but contributed to the development of operational work on economic, social and cultural rights. The opportunities created by these initiatives are significant, facilitating support for duty bearers and rights holders in promoting economic, social and cultural rights.

10. OHCHR has also continued to deepen its cooperation with national human rights institutions. For instance, in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, an online capacity-development programme on monitoring economic,

<sup>7</sup> See

[https://en.whrcf.org/whrcf\\_time/?q=YToxOntzOjEyOiJrZXI3b3JkX3R5cGUiO3M6MzoiYWxsJjt9&bmode=view&idx=127366155&t=board](https://en.whrcf.org/whrcf_time/?q=YToxOntzOjEyOiJrZXI3b3JkX3R5cGUiO3M6MzoiYWxsJjt9&bmode=view&idx=127366155&t=board).

social and cultural rights was held from 9 September to 11 October 2024, facilitated by both entities. The programme aimed at equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to effectively monitor socioeconomic policies and development plans from a human rights perspective. Its other objectives included developing a national monitoring project on reporting, advocacy and follow-up actions to influence policy and advance economic, social and cultural rights, and establishing a community of peers from national human rights institutions in the Asia Pacific region interested in monitoring economic, social and cultural rights. Three national human rights institutions that participated in the course are eligible to participate in a competitive call for proposals to implement a project in 2025 and receive a modest grant from the partnership.

11. OHCHR also actively engaged with civil society organizations in its economic, social and cultural work to foster partnerships and raise awareness of the concept of a human rights economy. For instance, civil society organizations in 16 countries identified a diverse group of stakeholders in their countries whose work aligned with the human rights economy; the Office subsequently facilitated virtual workshops with the organizations in each country to unpack and develop strategies for advancing work relating to the human rights economy. Through the initiative, which brought together 650 participants, OHCHR strengthened its support for and partnership with civil society organizations to lead in stakeholder mapping, strategic dialogue facilitation and capacity-building on economic, social and cultural rights, and contributed to empowering them to take an active role in ensuring the incorporation of human rights into economic policymaking.

12. OHCHR also continued to advance the concept of a human rights economy through public forums, referred to as the Hernan Santa Cruz Dialogues.<sup>8</sup> The Office of the High Commissioner partnered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in December 2024 to organize a dialogue on economic, social and cultural rights and the human rights economy in Hangzhou, China. Attended by participants from approximately 50 countries, the dialogue focused on the role of international cooperation in promoting economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. In its message to participants, OHCHR emphasized the urgent need for a profound transformation of economic systems to ensure that all decisions deliver on all human rights: economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, the right to development and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. As part of these efforts, in December 2024 OHCHR took part in a training programme organized by the Government of China in Beijing on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. The programme brought together senior-level government officials and heads of national human rights institutions from developing countries.

## **B. Technical support for and engagement with Governments and other stakeholders**

13. In 2024, the Office began to implement the mandate given by the Human Rights Council resolution in its resolution 54/22, namely to establish a knowledge hub on economic, social and cultural rights<sup>9</sup> to be dedicated to strengthening technical assistance and capacity-building, consolidating promising practices and know-how in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights and enhancing the Office's capacity in this area, including in research and substantive analysis and methodologies for implementation and monitoring. The online platform to be established will have the aim of facilitating the collection of good practices, examples and knowledge products, and of increasing engagement with States, human rights mechanisms, United Nations entities, Member States and other stakeholders, such as universities, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations working on economic, social and cultural rights.

14. The Knowledge Hub is designed to foster international cooperation by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experience, as well as deepening partnerships. In strengthening its provision of direct technical assistance and advisory services relating to measures to implement or claim economic, social and cultural rights across a range of stakeholders in several countries, the Knowledge Hub has boosted the capacity of OHCHR in-country

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/economic-social-cultural-rights/hernan-santa-cruz-dialogues>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/economic-social-cultural-rights/knowledge-hub>.

presences supporting States and other national partners, including in the Gambia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Regional Office for East Africa and the new OHCHR regional office for the Caribbean Community.

15. Technical assistance and capacity-building activities were carried out under the Knowledge Hub on economic, social and cultural rights to support national government actors in Egypt, the Federated States of Micronesia and other actors in other States. Through the Knowledge Hub, the Office is developing methodologies and tools to assist Governments and other stakeholders in the implementation of these rights; for instance, it is working on a conceptual and methodological framework to help Governments to assess the resources available for the realization of the right to education in accordance with article 2.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. A draft conceptual framework was developed for presentation to the joint colloquium co-organized with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in October 2024.

16. Increased financial and human resources have allowed OHCHR to establish a dedicated capacity focused on the analysis of resources for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. It provides support to national and local governments in using their maximum available resources for the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, and to other stakeholders in ensuring their full justiciability. Capacity-building, including for non-government stakeholders, tools development, awareness-raising and technical expertise are key avenues through which support is being provided. Building on ongoing work (resources permitting), the Office aims to continue to prioritize field-oriented activities to promote the realization of economic, social and cultural rights and to support and carry out all mandates established by the Human Rights Council.

17. As part of these efforts, OHCHR is assisting States with the alignment of their national budgets with the Sustainable Development Goals and their international human rights obligations. For instance, in December 2024, it provided technical assistance in the Congo on a human rights-based approach to budgeting and an economic, social and cultural rights framework. This work involved advising 38 directors of budget planning from all ministries following a request received from the Ministry of Finance, Budget and the Public Portfolio. As part of the ongoing transition from a resource-based budget to a programme-based budgeting system, the support is aimed at strengthening the integration of gender, economic, social and cultural rights and a "leave no-one behind" approach into budget planning. OHCHR plans to continue to provide tailored support in 2025 with a view to achieving deeper engagement and extension to other stakeholders.

18. OHCHR also supported States in their efforts to ensure the effective use of government budgets allocated to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the fulfilment of human rights obligations. For instance, in Jordan, OHCHR and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) supported the Cities and Villages Development Bank in analysing municipal revenues and expenditure to inform public administration reform and decentralization efforts, to address geographic inequalities and to decide on the allocation of resources to those furthest behind. Findings from the resulting study were presented in January 2025 to stakeholders, including government officials, local governments, civil society and human rights institutions, and is part of continuing engagement on how a State can use its maximum available resources for the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, with an emphasis on tax policies.

19. In the context of its work in favour of an international enabling environment that is supportive of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the fulfilment of international human rights obligations, OHCHR continued to advocate for mainstreaming the right to development in trade and investment agreements and policies, especially in relation to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area<sup>10</sup> by developing a checklist on human rights in relevant national implementation strategies, reviewing the inclusion of applicable human rights standards, particularly the rights to work, social security, an adequate standard of living, food and development. OHCHR will pilot the checklist in coordination with the Economic Commission for Africa and other external partners in 2025.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://au.int/en/treaties/agreement-establishing-african-continental-free-trade-area>.

20. In order to support the mobilization of international means of implementation, OHCHR finalized a research project entitled “Good Practices in Operationalizing the Right to Development in South-South Cooperation” in June 2024.<sup>11</sup> The project comprised an analysis of case studies on transformative development initiatives between India and Antigua and Barbuda, South Africa and the Comoros, and Brazil and Angola, including those focused on rebuilding healthcare facilities following natural disasters, access to water and sanitation and other economic, social and cultural rights.

21. Recognizing the important role that the private sector has to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, OHCHR also continued to work with business enterprises to advance the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. It continued to support progress in policy and regulatory development and to advance accountability for human rights in business through such initiatives as the Joint Project on Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>12</sup> and the Business and Human Rights in Africa project.<sup>13</sup> It worked to strengthen awareness of and access to effective remedies, including through training, consultations and other outreach activities and through the promotion of the guidance on the Accountability and Remedy Project,<sup>14</sup> which was developed to promote understanding and implementation of the third pillar of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Africa and Latin America. OHCHR supported the integration of relevant human rights elements relating to access to an effective remedy into the development of national action plans on business and human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, and on the implementation of national action plans in Kenya and Liberia.

22. As part of its broader support for Governments when mobilizing the maximum of resources available for human rights and development, OHCHR has supported States in their efforts to fight corruption and illicit financial flows. It continues to implement its office-wide strategy on anti-corruption and human rights, which is aimed at ensuring that policies, laws and anti-corruption responses are victim-centred and consistent with human rights obligations. To that end, OHCHR has provided technical assistance in the form of workshops and other training events.

23. In response to a request made by the Commission of Integrity of Iraq, in August 2024 OHCHR partnered with the United Nations Development Programme to deliver a training package on a human rights-based approach to anti-corruption. The training was conducted for Commission officials, other government institutions and civil society organizations in order to support the Commission in its preparation of a new anti-corruption strategy for the period 2025–2030. OHCHR also organized two one-day regional workshops on strategic advocacy on corruption and human rights and enhancing the use of United Nations human rights mechanisms: in November 2024 for Latin America and the Caribbean; and in January 2025, in Lund (Sweden), for Europe. The workshops saw the participation of representatives of civil society, human rights defenders, international civil society organizations, think tanks and academia. Workshop outcomes included a road map for future engagement and the creation of a regional network in Latin America and the Caribbean to continue the exchange of experiences and the building of a regional anti-corruption and human rights community.

24. Following the adoption by the Human Rights Council of its resolution 54/22, OHCHR was able to establish dedicated leads on specific areas relating to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, thereby allowing it to both deepen existing areas of work and broaden its engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. Since 2024, OHCHR has moved into focused workstreams built around tailored strategies for key rights, developing communities of practice, fostering more systematic collaboration and knowledge-sharing and helping to further develop expertise across its network in a sustainable and effective way.

<sup>11</sup> study-good-practices-operationalizing-rtd-ssc.pdf (ohchr.org).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-business/joint-project-responsible-business-conduct-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/business/bhr-africa>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/business/ohchr-accountability-and-remedy-project/phase3-non-state-based-grievance-mechanisms>.

25. With its enhanced capacity to address economic, social and cultural rights, OHCHR has been able to deepen its field facing work on social protection and the right to work; for instance, in September 2024, the Knowledge Hub partnered with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to design and deliver training modules for the Office of the Ombudsperson in Turkmenistan.<sup>15</sup> With its focus on economic, social and cultural rights and particular attention to the rights to work and to social security, the initiative sought to explore possible avenues for further engagement with critical national stakeholders to strengthen their capacity in economic, social and cultural rights, providing knowledge and tools to monitor them in the country. Other participants included representatives of the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Labour and the Lawyers' Association of Turkmenistan.

26. In October 2024, OHCHR held a workshop on monitoring the situation of human rights of workers in the informal economy in Rwanda from the perspective of economic, social and cultural rights, in the light of the grave challenges that more than 90 per cent of the Rwandan workforce currently face. Timed to harness the momentum generated by the adoption by Rwanda of its Vision 2050 project and the National Strategy for Transformation, the preparation of a national action plan on business and human rights and the State's upcoming review by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in February 2025,<sup>16</sup> the workshop was designed to enable stakeholders to monitor the situation of workers and to highlight their concerns to relevant policymaking bodies. The participants subsequently created a collaborative network to follow up on the training and conduct a situation analysis.

27. With the strengthening of its capacity with regard to economic, social and cultural rights, OHCHR has also been able to focus its work on housing, land and property rights; for instance, in 2024 it established a community of practice on housing, land and property rights with the aim of bringing together OHCHR teams working on housing, land and property rights at the local, national, regional and global levels and external experts. The community of practice facilitates the sharing of legal guidance, good practices and challenges relating to housing, land and property rights issues, including those relating to homelessness, forced evictions, land-related conflicts, returns and resettlement. OHCHR has emphasized the importance of cross-sector collaboration to address ongoing housing, land and property rights challenges, particularly in conflict zones, and has been successful in connecting participants to global processes while advancing local and national solutions. Similar communities of practice are being planned in other areas of health and anti-corruption.

28. OHCHR provided technical assistance to Member States on housing, land and property rights through United Nations country teams, including through the review of a raft land law in Mozambique in April 2024 and a draft national land policy in the Gambia in March 2025, both of which included recommendations for more human rights-compliant provisions. Since 2024, OHCHR has supported efforts being made in Honduras to sustainably address conflicts related to land, territory and natural resources, including by providing technical assistance for legislative and judicial reform and establishing dedicated mechanisms to investigate such conflicts and provide reparations.

29. In February 2025, the *Handbook on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons: Implementing the Pinheiro Principles in the Middle East and North Africa*<sup>17</sup> was launched at the third Arab Land Conference<sup>18</sup> in Rabat. Co-published by OHCHR and partner organizations, including UN-Habitat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration and the Norwegian Refugee Council, the handbook showcases the regional adaptation of the principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons (referred to as the "Pinheiro principles"). OHCHR and its partners will continue to promote the

<sup>15</sup> <http://en.centralasia.news/31707-turkmenistan-discusses-aspects-of-cooperation-with-un-ohchr-and-ilo.html>.

<sup>16</sup> See E/C.12/RWA/CO/5.

<sup>17</sup> <https://unhabitat.org/housing-and-property-restitution-for-refugees-and-displaced-persons-implementing-the-pinheiro>.

<sup>18</sup> See [https://arablandinitiative.gltm.net/sites/default/files/2025-01/docs/-en-final-full-with-closed-sessions-programme-3rd-arab-land-conference\\_29.1.25.pdf](https://arablandinitiative.gltm.net/sites/default/files/2025-01/docs/-en-final-full-with-closed-sessions-programme-3rd-arab-land-conference_29.1.25.pdf).

implementation of the principles enshrined in the Handbook through capacity-building and training initiatives.

30. With regard to cultural rights, in March 2025 OHCHR co-organized a virtual consultation with Nhimbe Trust, a Zimbabwe-based civil society partner, attended by cultural rights defenders in Africa to discuss efforts to advance cultural rights, the challenges they face and how they can engage effectively with United Nations human rights mechanisms.<sup>19</sup> The consultation was part of efforts by OHCHR to advance its work on cultural rights by reaching out to those who advocate for these rights on the ground, as indicated by the High Commissioner in his report.<sup>20</sup> The discussion covered a wide range of cultural rights-related issues, including the role of the library and information and archiving sectors in preserving cultural identities and heritage, the restitution of African heritage objects held in European museums, the need to amplify the voices of victim communities in that process, and the promotion of linguistic diversity through data-driven platforms. Based on the feedback received and the general lack of stakeholder information submitted on cultural rights, OHCHR plans to hold information sessions on how to prepare and submit information on cultural rights violations to human rights mechanisms.

31. With regard to climate change, OHCHR published the “Guide for Integrating Human Rights and Sustainable Development in the Global Goal on Adaptation”, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring access to safe drinking water, sanitation, adequate food, health services and resilient infrastructure in climate adaptation policies.<sup>21</sup> The guide highlights links between the global goal on adaptation, human rights and relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets, such as reducing water scarcity, improving agricultural production, enhancing health services and protecting ecosystems. It references the rights to, inter alia, health, adequate food, safe drinking water and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and aims to promote inclusive, participatory and transparent adaptation plans that address the needs of people in vulnerable situations and integrate Indigenous and local knowledge systems.

32. OHCHR also provided technical advice and support to Member States and other stakeholders on mainstreaming the right to development at the fourth and fifth sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution. In order to provide knowledge and tools, OHCHR continues to develop tools and guidance for policymakers and other stakeholders.

33. OHCHR is supporting a project in Brazil to analyse the potential effect of the new national bioeconomy strategy on human rights. It advised on designing the national bioeconomy development plan and the national socio-bioeconomy plan, raising awareness of the process among civil society actors and strengthening the capacity of Indigenous Peoples, *quilombolas*, traditional communities and family farmers to participate. Recommendations included the need for action to ensure that human rights and the human rights economy vision inform the development of bioeconomy frameworks and projects and action to reinforce sustainable development with human rights considerations, ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition to more sustainable societies. OHCHR collaborated closely with rights holders and ministries of the environment, agrarian development and science, technology and innovation to identify the most useful ways to support the implementation of both plans.

## C. Human Rights Council

34. Over the past three years, the Human Rights Council has continued to facilitate dialogue on economic, social and cultural rights and has supported the efforts by OHCHR to mobilize resources, facilitating the augmentation of the number of posts and increasing resources to deliver concrete programming, keeping its work on the Council’s agenda. In its resolution 49/19, the Council requested the High Commissioner to present the vision of the Office for reinforcing its work in promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/events/2025/online-consultation-cultural-rights-defenders-africa>.

<sup>20</sup> A/HRC/54/35.

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/information-materials/20241012-gga-table-revised-4-with-hyperlinks.pdf>.



rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby providing an opportunity to set out that vision and how it was anchored in the broader strategic direction of the Office. OHCHR continues to engage with member States in the Council and beyond in order to advance the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights across multiple areas, as outlined below.

35. In relation specifically to the right to education, OHCHR organized, in September 2024, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 54/5, a panel discussion on ensuring quality education for peace and tolerance for every child. During the fifty-sixth session of the Council, OHCHR provided technical support to member States that sponsored resolution 56/5, in which the Council decided to establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group to explore the possibility of drafting an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child with the aim of recognizing that the right to education included early childhood education, and stating that States should provide free pre-primary education and free secondary education. The intergovernmental working group will hold its first scheduled session in September 2025, with OHCHR serving as its secretariat.

36. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 49/7, OHCHR presented a report to the Council on the third intersessional workshop, held on 1 December 2023, on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage.<sup>22</sup> The report focused on the implementation of the human rights framework on cultural heritage, the development of tools for mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to the protection, restoration and preservation of cultural heritage, and the protection of cultural rights defenders in the field of cultural heritage. Participants in the workshop underscored the vital role of culture and cultural rights, and their connection to people and to their identities and survival, stressing the need to recognize cultural heritage as a human right, to integrate it into broader human rights and development discussions and to make more effective use of existing international instruments and mechanisms.

37. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 55/9, OHCHR organized in March 2025 a panel discussion on the rights to work and social security in the informal economy. The event provided a platform to explore the challenges that informal workers faced in the enjoyment of their rights, particularly as the world of work evolves in response to technological advances and climate change. The participating experts highlighted the precarious conditions that informal workers faced, in particular in such sectors as agriculture, mining and construction, where they are often subjected to exploitation and forced labour. The discussion also focused on practical solutions for improving access to decent work opportunities and expanding social security coverage. It will inform an analytical report on the realization of the right to work and social security in the informal economy that OHCHR will submit to the Council at its sixtieth session.

38. OHCHR organized on behalf of the Human Rights Council a panel discussion on ensuring livelihood resilience in the context of the risk of loss and damage relating to the adverse effects of climate change. At its fifty-sixth session, the Council held an interactive dialogue on the Secretary-General's analytical study on the impact of loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights, exploring equity-based approaches and solutions.<sup>23</sup> At the same session, the Council held an enhanced interactive dialogue on technical assistance and capacity-building to address the human rights implications of the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands. In its resolution 57/28 on biodiversity and human rights, the Council requested OHCHR to provide technical assistance and support for human rights-based biodiversity action at the regional level. In carrying out that work, OHCHR has explored and illustrated the interdependence of all human rights, including the interlinkages between the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and economic, social and cultural rights.

39. On 21 January 2025, OHCHR held a virtual expert workshop on new developments and pathways to ensuring access to medicines, vaccines and other health products.<sup>24</sup> The workshop addressed current challenges, such as the increase in attacks on healthcare,

<sup>22</sup> A/HRC/58/35.

<sup>23</sup> A/HRC/57/30.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/events/2025/expert-workshop-new-developments-ensuring-access-medicines-vaccines-and-other>.

antimicrobial resistance, the discussions on a comprehensive review of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and the potential for leveraging regional cooperation to improve access. A report on the outcomes of the workshop will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-ninth session.

40. Within the scope of OHCHR work on health, the High Commissioner, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 56/20, convened a panel discussion at the fifty-eighth session of the Council on the realization of human rights in sustaining and increasing the gains made in the HIV response (a report on the discussion will be submitted to the Council at its sixtieth session). The panel reaffirmed the view that the fight against HIV is a human rights and justice concern, as well as a health challenge. While emphasizing the need for increased political commitment and funding for global, national and local efforts in the HIV response, the panel called for a holistic approach that integrates HIV care into broader health and social systems. The discussion highlighted the needs for the urgent removal of legal and social barriers to HIV services, systemic inequalities, stigma and discrimination, with a focus on eliminating punitive laws, strengthening protections for women and girls and vulnerable groups, and ensuring meaningful community engagement. The discussion will inform the report of the High Commissioner, to be presented to the Council at its sixtieth session.

41. As part of its efforts to advance gender equality, OHCHR has promoted sexual and reproductive health and rights, including through work mandated by the Human Rights Council. These activities have involved coordinating with United Nations and civil society partners, providing technical advice and advocacy tools and supporting the implementation of recommendations made by human rights mechanisms. OHCHR is currently updating its technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, which will be presented to the Council at the sixtieth session, together with a report on adolescent pregnancy and menstrual health. These reports will provide valuable opportunities to advance progress on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

42. The seventh intersessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held in February 2025, focused on the theme “Leaving no-one behind: the role of human rights in reforming the sovereign debt architecture and going beyond GDP”, with the objective of building on the outcomes of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Pact for the Future adopted in 2024.<sup>25</sup>

43. OHCHR organized the Social Forum on 31 October and 1 November 2024, focusing on the contribution of financing for development to the advancement of all human rights for all. States, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, trade unions, academics and youth representatives, among others, engaged in interactive dialogues on the areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including with a focus on financing economic, social and cultural rights, such as health, education and social protection. The Chair of the Social Forum presented a report thereon to the Council at its fifty-eighth session.<sup>26</sup>

#### **D. United Nations system-wide collaboration in the realization of economic, social and cultural rights**

44. OHCHR actively contributed to United Nations system-wide efforts to support the Summit of the Future and has continued to collaborate in the implementation of the Pact for the Future,<sup>27</sup> including the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations annexes thereto, to ensure integration of human rights across all areas of the Pact in accordance with the commitment of Member States in this regard. In doing so, OHCHR is leveraging its partnership with United Nations agencies, such as under the Secretary-General’s Gender Equality Acceleration Plan and the ILO Global Coalition for Social Justice, to amplify key human rights commitments from the Pact, particularly on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/seventh-intersessional-meeting-human-rights-2030-agenda>.

<sup>26</sup> A/HRC/58/71.

<sup>27</sup> See Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.

45. OHCHR is also engaged in United Nations system work on the forthcoming fourth International Conference on Financing for Development,<sup>28</sup> to be held in Sevilla, Spain. It submitted three policy briefs – on reform of the sovereign debt architecture, international development cooperation, and financing for the environment – in response to the call for inputs in the lead-up to the drafting of the conference outcome document. In addition, OHCHR issued key messages for the process, reinforcing respect for all human rights, including the right to development, and made recommendations on the zero and first drafts that were shared with the co-facilitators of the process and Member States.

46. In the run-up to the second World Summit for Social Development, OHCHR has been contributing to advocacy for human rights norms and standards in Summit processes and outcomes, including on rights-based care and support systems, addressing the root causes of poverty and inequalities, gender equality and inclusion. It has participated in the inter-agency task force created to support Summit co-facilitators and, jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, it co-led the synthesis brief on social inclusion.

47. OHCHR also substantively engaged in the intergovernmental process towards the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation. In contributing to the efforts of Member States and the Secretary-General to reform the international financial and tax architecture to create a more inclusive, equitable and effective international system, OHCHR provided technical assistance and input to Member States and other stakeholders during the intergovernmental negotiation process. Its efforts included support for Member States relating to inclusion of international human rights law among the guiding principles articulated in the draft terms of reference for the Framework Convention, a contribution that helped to move towards more representative governance of global tax policy and fairer rules, including to address tax evasion and avoidance, which limit revenues for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The General Assembly adopted the terms of reference in its resolution 79/235, thereby laying the groundwork for the next round of intergovernmental negotiations.

48. In line with its leading role in human rights within the United Nations system, OHCHR has worked with United Nations country teams to deepen analyses on leaving no-one behind, connect human rights recommendations to poverty reduction and sustainable development strategies and ground economic advice in human rights recommendations. Between June and December 2024, OHCHR supported country teams with human rights analyses and operational advice for 25 common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks; for instance, in North Macedonia, OHCHR supported a “leave no-one behind” analysis that identified groups of concern, reviewed the structural and root causes of their marginalization and made recommendations on action needed.<sup>29</sup> In Armenia, OHCHR contributed to the analysis of the draft common country assessment, aiming to introduce a human rights lens to its economic and environmental analysis and to address gaps in the attention given to economic, social and cultural rights, the right to development and the right to a healthy environment.

49. In November 2024, OHCHR held a second strategic engagement dialogue with ILO, at which the High Commissioner and the ILO Director-General reaffirmed the close cooperation between the two entities. They committed to deepening joint work in operationalizing the human rights economy as a critical intervention for social justice in the realization of labour rights and social security under the Global Coalition for Social Justice. They recognized the importance of joint messaging on issues of common concern, particularly leading up to the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Summit on Social Development. Joint work streams would include engagement with international financial institutions, initiatives to promote universal social protection, and collaboration on business and human rights, care and support, and the platform economy.

50. In 2024, OHCHR contributed to the inclusion of the Roadmap for Integration of Human Rights in Water and Sanitation<sup>30</sup> as a key component of the Collaborative

<sup>28</sup> See <https://financing.desa.un.org/ffd4>

<sup>29</sup> See Leave No One Behind Analysis | United Nations in North Macedonia.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/water/unwater-roadmap-hr-watsan.pdf>.

Implementation Plan of the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation. As a member of UN-Water, OHCHR is committed to working with States, all United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that human rights norms and principles inform the Strategy's implementation in order to accelerate action on eliminating discrimination and inequalities in access to water and sanitation. OHCHR will continue to advocate for the integration of human rights in the agenda and outcome of the 2026 UN-Water Conference.

51. OHCHR currently chairs, jointly with ILO, a working group on culture and human rights as part of the Interagency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development, established by UNESCO. Several United Nations entities, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Intellectual Property Organization and UN-Habitat, participate in the activities of the working group, which aims to promote culture and cultural rights in development discourses, such as by advocating for the inclusion and promotion of culture and cultural rights in the post-2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future. The working group is currently developing a training module on culture and human rights, which may be used to complement the Sustainable Development Goals common learning package on a human rights-based approach.

52. OHCHR further supported the organization of a regional dialogue on new types of cooperation and agreements on the return and restitution of cultural property to Africa in January 2025, led by the UNESCO Liaison Office to the African Union in partnership with the African Union Commission. It emphasized a human rights-based approach to cultural heritage and its return, ensuring that restitution is guided by human rights principles, such as participation, accountability, non-discrimination and equality. This approach places communities and individuals at the centre of decision-making, recognizing them as rights holders in the preservation and restitution of cultural heritage, which OHCHR stressed was both a human right and a development imperative, highlighting its role in sustainable development and the necessity for States to establish an enabling legal, institutional and policy environment to facilitate the return of cultural property to source countries and communities.

53. In February 2025, OHCHR organized a briefing to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. The Task Force, of which OHCHR is a member, was represented by the Task Force secretariat (WHO), ILO and UN-Women. With the objective of raising awareness of the urgent need to galvanize action on mental health and the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, the briefing focused on women in the workplace and the gendered impact of non-communicable diseases on human rights. The Task Force and the Committee explored avenues for potential cooperation in addressing the human rights-related dimensions of such health challenges. In this way, the briefing was part of an effort led by OHCHR as the coordinator of the human rights work stream to engage with United Nations human rights mechanisms in accordance with the Task Force's 2022-2025 strategy.<sup>31</sup>

54. The human rights team within the Task Force continued to support and advise on integrating human rights norms and standards into Task Force outputs and processes related to the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases. The team has a mandate to support the effective integration of human rights as an overarching principle into the task force by the WHO Global action plan for preventing and controlling noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020 (extended to 2030). During the reporting period, it reviewed a number of draft mental health policy briefs aimed at protecting and promoting mental health and well-being from the perspective of certain government sectors, such as the military, education, labour and health. Human rights input was also provided to support the International Dialogue on Sustainable Financing for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, held in June 2024, particularly by reviewing the technical background papers prepared for the dialogue. The dialogue forms part of the preparation for the fourth high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases to be held in September 2025.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://uniatf.who.int/publications/i/item/our-2022-2025-strategy>.

### III. Conclusions and recommendations

55. With additional resources received pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 54/22 and voluntary contributions, OHCHR has been able to significantly enhance its capacity to advance economic, social and cultural rights. This progress has been somewhat slowed by the current liquidity constraints within the United Nations system and the limited financial and human resources available. Facing these challenges, OHCHR developed a strategy that included a focus on assisting Member States in mobilizing their maximum available resources. The strategy has also helped to make significant progress in thematic work, including the development of targeted strategies across a broader range of rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Additional resources have allowed OHCHR to broaden its reach, to engage with non-traditional stakeholders and to increase its work. OHCHR has been able to strengthen its analysis, improve the quality of technical assistance and contribute proactively to United Nations system processes. The increasing demand for its support, especially at the country level, reflects the growing recognition of the practical value and relevance of its work. Looking ahead, further work on the knowledge hub will strengthen its ability to deliver support and training, and to share best practices effectively.

56. OHCHR efforts to focus attention on economic, social and cultural rights within the Office and with duty bearers, including through the Surge initiative launched in 2020, have informed its work and extended attention to economic, social and cultural rights at the global, national and subnational levels. Bringing human rights norms and standards more intentionally into the discourse relating to, for example, the resourcing of economic, social and cultural rights, development priorities and the economy has facilitated cooperation with less traditional partners and strengthened existing alliances. OHCHR plans to reinforce and consolidate its work in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights. The growing demand for support highlights the importance of expanding the regional footprint of OHCHR as the most effective path forward.

57. Following up on the conclusions and recommendations made in his previous report, the High Commissioner:

(a) Calls for greater international cooperation in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, as these rights remain at the central of human dignity and help to guide Governments and societies towards equality, eliminating poverty and creating an inclusive and sustainable future for all;

(b) Requests States and other stakeholders to provide political and financial support for OHCHR to continue to enhance its support for States, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to strengthen the realization of economic, social and cultural rights;

(c) Suggests that States and other interested stakeholders consider strengthening the work of OHCHR with its regional and country presences to allow it to provide context-specific and tailored support;

(d) Calls upon States to commit mainstreaming human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, in national development strategies and financing strategies for the Sustainable Development Goals as part of their broader commitment to promote economic, social and cultural rights.