



# General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
21 November 2016

Original: English

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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 21st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of human rights** (*continued*) (A/71/40)

**(a) Implementation of human rights instruments** (*continued*) (A/71/44, A/71/48, A/71/118, A/71/268, A/71/270, A/71/272, A/71/289, A/71/298, A/71/341 and A/71/385)

**(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action** (*continued*) (A/71/36)

1. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that human rights had suffered during his country's 50-year armed conflict. Ending it was thus a central priority. His President's commitment to negotiating a lasting peace signalled a parallel commitment to strengthening human rights as a part of the peacebuilding process.

2. Colombia had made significant legal progress and institutional changes aimed at recognizing the rights of all Colombians, particularly victims of the conflict. Grave violations of human rights were being investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice.

3. Colombia had ratified most of the international human rights treaties and complied fully with its obligations under them, including its reporting obligations. In 2015 it had presented its fourth and fifth reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its combined fifteenth and sixteenth reports under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It remained strongly committed to the universal periodic review mechanism and would work to strengthen it.

4. His Government was grateful to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for its help in strengthening human rights capacities and its cooperation with government institutions, civil society organizations and the international community in the field of human rights. It would continue to make human rights a priority in the context of its commitment to building peace, strengthening democracy and promoting equitable and inclusive development.

5. **Ms. Mortaji** (Morocco) said that her country had ratified most of the international human rights conventions, including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced

Disappearance, and it was one of the originators of the Convention against Torture Initiative to promote universal ratification of the Convention. It had also recently ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

6. At the national level, Morocco had strengthened its laws and institutions to combat torture, and its implementation of transitional justice was considered exemplary. Its 2011 Constitution recognized universal human rights, criminalized grave violations thereof and established national human rights institutions. It had recently adopted a new, humanistic policy on migration and asylum, and it had also taken steps to improve the legal and institutional framework in the areas of immigration, asylum and human trafficking. It had enacted a law banning the trial of civilians in military courts, and it was working to combat corruption.

7. In accordance with its commitment to economic, cultural and social rights, it promoted all linguistic and cultural expressions. In 2005 it had begun a national human development initiative for its poorest communities, and in 2013 it had launched a new development model for the southern provinces. More recently, in 2015, it had passed laws aimed at strengthening local democracy and broadening the role of regional government.

8. **Mr. Sisa** (Botswana) said that, in view of the chronic underfunding of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, which provided aid to victims of modern slavery, Botswana supported the proposed additional outreach and the idea of creating a group of friends of the Fund.

9. The work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights included popularizing human rights issues, conducting capacity-building activities and reporting human rights abuses and violations. Recently, it had spearheaded efforts to integrate human rights into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It had also begun to work with civil society and the private sector, rather than limiting itself to States and United Nations entities. In view of its broadening mandate, Botswana supported the appeal for more resources for the Office.

10. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the 2030 Agenda should help to raise the profile of economic, social and cultural rights, which received inadequate attention. His Government was concerned at the double standards, selectivity and increasing politicization evident in the Human Rights Council. The universal periodic review ensured equal treatment for all States and should be preserved. Azerbaijan had totally or partially accepted most of the recommendations from its 2013 universal periodic review and had submitted voluntary mid-term reports on their implementation.

11. His Government welcomed the improved efficiency and effectiveness of the treaty body system and encouraged the treaty bodies to step up their harmonization efforts. Azerbaijan had acceded to almost all of the core human rights treaties, was working to domesticate them and complied fully with its reporting obligations. It had extended a standing invitation to the special procedures mandate holders, and in 2016 it had hosted visits by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. During its visit in April 2015, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture had enjoyed unhindered access. His Government looked forward to productive cooperation and open dialogue with the United Nations human rights machinery.

12. **Mr. Zhemenev** (Kazakhstan) said that, in the 10 years since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, it had promoted the protection of human rights effectively and had demonstrated its ability to respond quickly to mass and flagrant human rights violations in different parts of the world. However, Kazakhstan was concerned at the Council's increasing politicization and well as the issue of implementing its resolutions and decisions. The ability to assess progress and monitor implementation was critical. Kazakhstan valued the experience it had acquired both as Vice-Chair of the Council and as an observer State.

13. Since independence, Kazakhstan had endeavoured to strengthen its national human rights system. In furtherance of its goal of joining the top 30 most developed countries, it was implementing institutional reforms designed to ensure fair competition; rule of law; high standards of legal culture; a transparent, accessible and efficient judicial system and a responsible and accountable law

enforcement system. In 2016, it had appointed its first ombudsman for children.

14. Kazakhstan had successfully completed the second cycle of the universal periodic review and regularly presented reports to the relevant convention committees. Ten special procedures mandate holders had visited in a short period of time, and in September the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture had made its first visit.

15. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that the promotion and protection of human rights equally for all citizens was enshrined in her country's Constitution and had been strengthened by recent constitutional reforms. A new law prohibited gender-based discrimination, and the amended Criminal Code provided greater protection for children.

16. Algeria welcomed the efforts of the Human Rights Council to help States build human rights protection capacity. It valued the universal periodic review system and participated in it actively. Looking to the future, it would be necessary to maintain the global nature of the Council's work, as well as to strengthen its role, improve transparency and reduce selectivity and politicization. The right to development should be at the centre of the collective efforts of the international community to promote and protect human rights.

17. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)), welcoming the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association ([A/71/385](#)), said that, as indicated in the report, those gateway rights remained inaccessible to the majority of workers and were increasingly threatened by disruptive changes in the global economy. The situation was bleakest for workers in vulnerable situations, such as migrants, women and domestic workers, as well as workers in informal and rural economies.

18. To achieve the goal of decent work for all, it would be necessary to ensure that international labour standards were applied equally across the globe through effective partnerships and innovative action. ILO research and experience had shown that freedom of assembly and association were essential for dialogue among the social partners, which was a key driver for achieving decent work, reducing poverty and

improving conflict resilience. As the globally accepted baseline for fair treatment in the workplace, they should be protected and promoted by all States, in accordance with the recommendations in the Special Rapporteur's report. People must be allowed to have a voice at work and in society in order to advocate for their interests in conditions of dignity and respect.

*The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.*