

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 49th SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

8 March 2022

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Alexandra Xanthaki, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights** referring to the military attack on Ukraine stated, that the justification of any war must step away from rhetoric that denies the identity and the history of a nation. She continued that it was part of the well-recognised and legally-binding right to self-determination, as well as cultural rights, to decide on one's own identity and no one could do this for the Ukrainians. She further recalled that **Ukraine was home to seven UNESCO world heritage sites** and hoped that museums, schools and churches were not targeted and further destroyed by the Russian Federation. She also said it was important to ensure that cultural rights and identities were **protected in the diaspora** that would emerge as a consequence of the fleeing individuals and to ensure that Russians in the Russian Federation and around the world would not suffer from restrictions in their cultural rights. She also drew attention to the rights of **migrant artists, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex artists, and artists with disabilities**. In addition, she stated that more attention must be paid to the **cultural rights of marginalised communities** and that there was a need to address cross sections of cultural rights with other rights. Finally, the Special Rapporteur expressed the need to further unpack the **relationship of Sustainable Development and cultural rights** and that she was eager to provide such technical help in improving the policies on cultural rights and cultural diversity.

Interactive dialogue: The majority of speakers presented the policies that have been adopted in their respective countries to protect and promote cultural values. Some highlighted that cultural rights were an essential source for development, democracy and peace, and condemned acts of unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, committed during armed conflicts or by terrorist attacks. **Afghanistan** regretted the shattering of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001 and the banning of music and the lives of musicians and artists by the Taliban. **Armenia** condemned the destruction of the indigenous Armenian heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan. **China** condemned the United States, Canada, and Australia for forcing aboriginal children to undergo "assimilation" education in boarding schools, stifling their identity and national culture as well as discriminating and excluding indigenous peoples.

The **EU** highlighted their programme Creative Europe that aims to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity. **Norway on behalf of NB8** recalled that in some countries artists and cultural workers are subjected to censorship, discrimination and persecution. The **Russian Federation** urged the SR to pay close attention to the topic of systemic discrimination against the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries. The **United States** condemned the detentions of Afro-Cuban artists and activists and called for an immediate end to the harassment and unjust detentions of Cubans exercising freedoms of expression, religion or belief, and peaceful assembly. **Venezuela** expressed that illegal UCMs prevent the access of the population to the cultural and educational dynamics in the country. **Ukraine** condemned the mass shelling and air strikes by Russia on historical centres and cultural heritage of the European civilization, including the destruction of the Holocaust Memorial Centre.

NGOs denounced Israel's unlawful destruction of Palestinian cultural heritage; recalled the case of inhumane prison conditions of activist and academic Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace in Bahrain; called for the protection of the Tibetan culture and the fulfilment of the basic rights of Assam people in India; showed support for the protection of cultural advocates, such as parents or teachers, from public authorities; condemned attacks against cultural actors, particularly in Afghanistan, Cuba, Myanmar and Uganda as well as actions by Russia in Ukraine that have facilitated the repression of cultural rights at home.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (40 states delegations):

European Union, Norway (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries), Egypt, Cuba, Nepal, Israel, Israel, Fiji, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), France, Kenya, Malaysia, Iraq, India, China, Ethiopia, Viet Nam, Namibia, Marshall Islands, Armenia, Cameroon, Pakistan, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Cambodia, Benin, South Africa, Bangladesh, United States of America, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Greece, Botswana, Italy, Georgia, Bolivia, Cyprus, Ukraine, Timor Leste.

NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (9):

International Lesbian and Gay Association, Harm Reduction International, Lutheran World Federation, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture, International PEN, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Beijing NGO Association for International Exchanges, International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee.

National Human Rights Institutions (1): NHRC Commission of India

To watch full meeting please refer to UN WebTV, [part 1](#) and [part 2](#)