

Consolidated Report on High- Level Segment of the United Nations Human Rights Council

27 February - 2 March 2023

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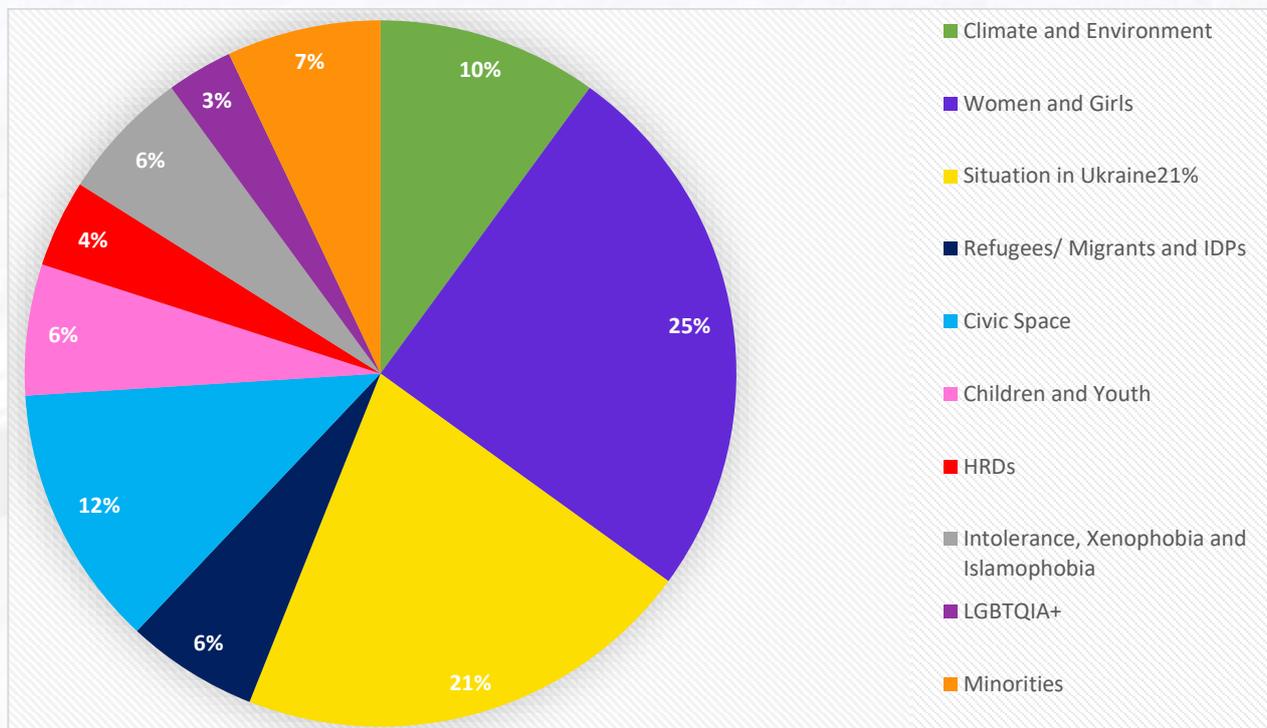
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Introduction

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is a body of the United Nations that serves as the primary international body for promoting and protecting human rights. It is composed of 47 Member States and is responsible for addressing violations of human rights and providing guidance and support to member states. The HRC held its high-level segment meeting in the 52nd regular session from 27 February to 2 March 2023. This analytical report provides an overview of the thematic and country-specific topics that have been addressed by the dignitaries.¹ The report covers nine thematic areas and one country-specific situation.

The themes include 1) Women and Girls, 2) Environment and Climate Change, 3) Youth and Children, 4) Civic Space, 5) Refugees/Migrants and Internally Displaced People (IDPs), 6) Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), 7) Intolerance, Xenophobia, Islamophobia, 8) LGBTQIA+² and minorities. The country-specific situation that has been addressed by most dignitaries was the situation in Ukraine.

As indicated in the chart below, the most discussed topic was the rights of women and girls, which were addressed by (25%) of dignitaries across all regions followed by the situation in Ukraine (21%), civic spaces (12%), climate change and the environment (10%), minorities (7%); immigrants/refugees and IDPs, intolerance, xenophobia, and islamophobia as well as youth and children received equal attention (6%) while HRDs and LGBTQIA+ issues received the least attention as they were discussed by (4%) and (3%) of the dignitaries respectively.



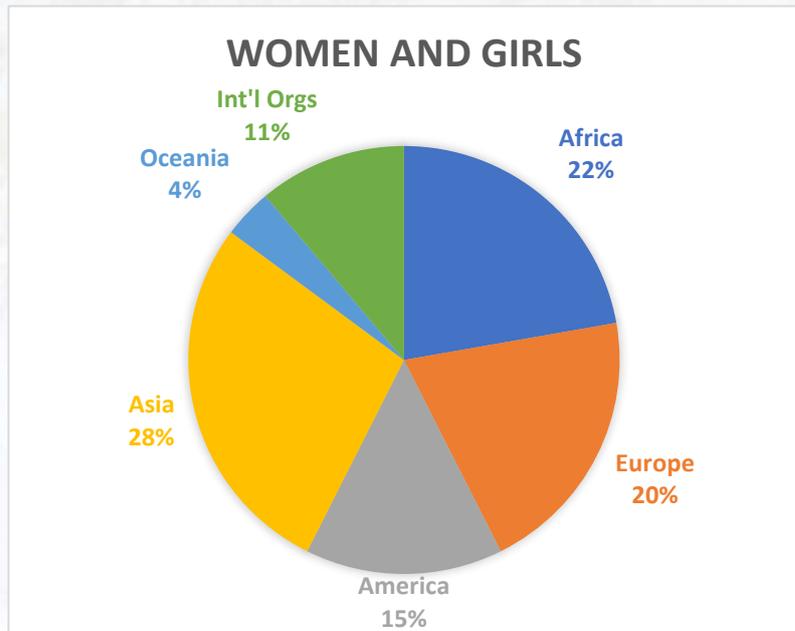
¹ The report covers only those dignitaries who have made explicit reference to the thematic topics. The dignitaries who merely made a general reference to these topics remain out of the scope of the report. Also, for the purpose of this report, only the situation in Ukraine is covered.

² The acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual, and the + holds space for the expanding and new understanding of different parts of the very diverse gender and sexual identities.

Women and Girls

The 52nd regular session saw several dignitaries from around the world come together to discuss the issue of women and girls. While some dignitaries reported on the progress of women and girls' rights in their home countries, some others, especially European countries, focused on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran. A total of 63 dignitaries raised the issue at hand. As shown in the chart below dignitaries from Asia constitute the highest percentage (28%). Africa takes the second largest share (22%), followed by Europe (20%), the Americas (15%), International Organizations (11%), and Oceania (4%).

Several dignitaries reported on the measures taken to strengthen women's rights and enhance their participation in the socioeconomic and political spheres of society. For instance, **Nepal** reported an increase in the representation of women at federal and provincial as well as local levels, which amounted to (33%) and (40%) respectively. **The Republic of Korea** reported on enhancing the women, peace, and security agenda and providing a global platform for dialogue to uphold the rights of women and girls in this regard. Some other dignitaries such as **Namibia, the Democratic Republic of Congo,**



and Cuba reported on the implementation of preventative and rehabilitative measures for victims and survivors of violence and on providing compensation and treatment for such victims. **Costa Rica** reported on the promotion of the right to health, reducing the gender gap in health, eliminating gender stereotypes and roles, and access to education for women as some of the priorities for the country.

A notable development: **Costa Rica** and the **Democratic Republic of Congo** called upon Members States to join them, along with **Sierra Leone**, to commence negotiations on a new global treaty on violence against women and girls.

A significant number of dignitaries raised the plight of women in Afghanistan and the shocking deterioration of human rights after the Taliban takeover, as well as in Iran. Member States such as **Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Slovenia, the U.S., Australia, and Cyprus**, inter alia, referred to the deteriorating situation of Afghan women who have been banned completely from public life i.e., access to education, work, as well as the discrimination and violence against the women protesters in Iran.

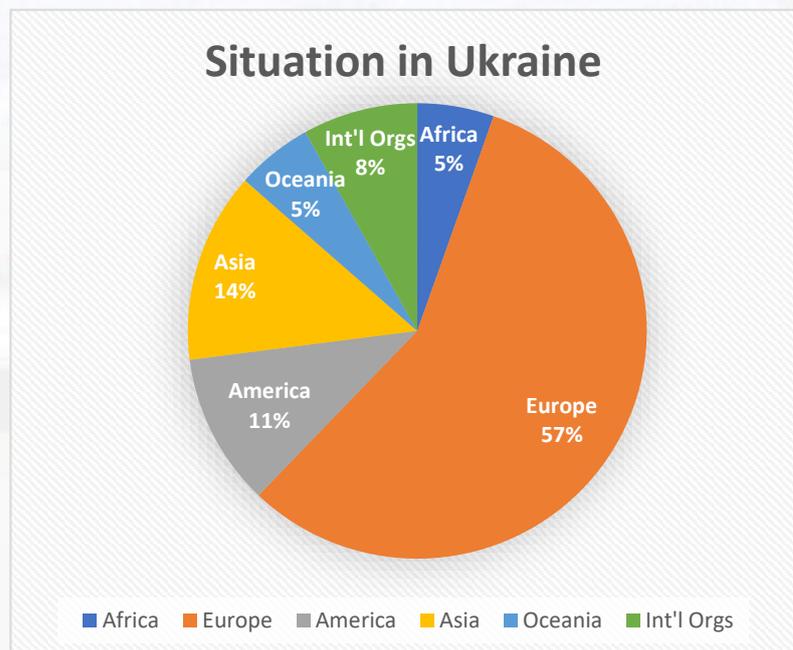
Sierra Leone was the only country which raised the claim that criminalization of female genital mutilation was highly “aspirational” and in contradiction with the country's customs and national laws. As such, it could not accommodate the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in this regard.

Situation in Ukraine

A significant number of dignitaries opened their speech by referring to the situation in Ukraine. A total of 53 dignitaries across regions raised their concerns over the humanitarian crisis and the need for a diplomatic solution to the situation. The dignitaries from Europe represented a majority of speakers on this issue (57%) followed by Asia (14%), the Americas (11%), International Organizations (8%), and finally Oceania and Africa (5% each).

Dignitaries from various countries i.e., **Germany, Norway, the U.S., Belgium, France, Slovenia, Sweden, Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea**, among others, spoke out against the aggression of Russia in Ukraine. They highlighted the violation of human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine and the need for international intervention. They expressed their concerns about the ongoing conflict and the need for a peaceful resolution. The speakers also noted the importance of respecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine, further urging the international community to take action to protect the rights of the people of Ukraine and to end the conflict. Member States called for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from the country. **Sweden** also noted the importance of reports of the International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the High Commissioner’s contribution to accountability and ending impunity. While many countries have taken a distanced stance on the aggression of Ukraine, the issue remains the most galvanizing in the Council.

Hungary strongly urged the decision-makers to focus on the de-escalation of the situation in Ukraine and called for an immediate end to the war. It noted that the war had caused immense suffering and displacement of people and had resulted in the loss of many innocent lives. It called on the international community to take decisive action to end the conflict and to ensure the safety and security of the people of Ukraine. It highlighted that the impact of the war is imminent on it as a neighbouring country and that it will not support military solutions to the situation. The country made it clear that it will not deliver weapons nor will allow the transit of weapons and their delivery through its territory to Ukraine.

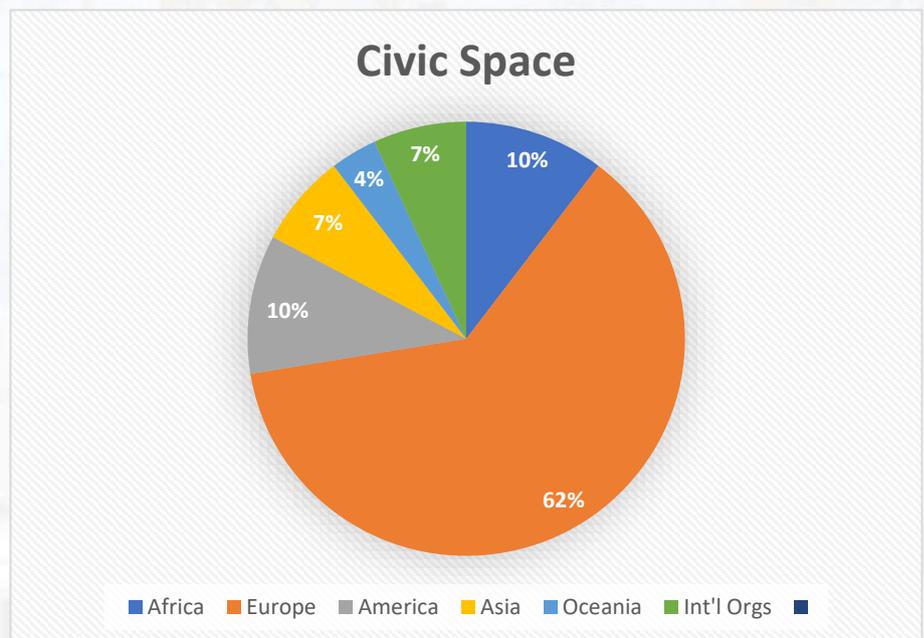


Civic Space

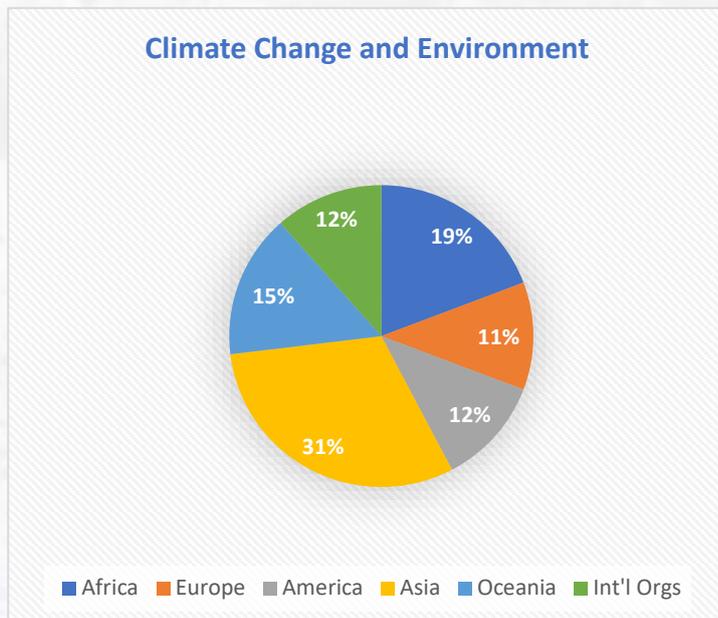
Civic Space was the second most discussed thematic topic in the 52nd regular session of the HRC and highlighted the importance of civic space in enabling citizens to express their opinions and participate in decision-making processes. The majority of speakers (62%) were from European members States, followed by Africa and the Americas (10%), Asia and International Organisations (7%), and finally Oceania (4%).

Member States such as **Germany, Norway, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Australia, and Latvia** raised serious concerns over the shrinking civic space in Iran, Belarus, and Russia. They highlighted the systematic and widespread restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, as well as the use of excessive force to suppress dissent. Countries also called on the aforementioned governments to ensure the safety of human rights defenders and to allow civil society organizations to operate without fear of reprisal. They urged the governments to take immediate steps to protect the rights of their citizens, including the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. They also called for an end to the use of torture and execution (in Iran) and the release of political prisoners (in Russia and Belarus).

Timor-Leste reported on laws and policies as well as programs that increase the freedom of expression and opinion. Similarly, **Iran** reported on the establishment of a National Committee to investigate protesters' allegations levelled against law enforcement officials. **The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** raised concerns over the shrinking civic space and the increasing threat against journalists, civil society leaders, and HRDs in different parts of the world, creating more instability.



Climate Change and Environment



The 52nd session also saw several dignitaries tabling the issue of climate change and the environment. The issue was brought up by dignitaries from Asia (31%) in majority, followed by dignitaries from Africa (19%), Oceania (15%), the Americas and International Organisations (12%), and Europe (11%).

Member States, including **Nigeria, Monaco, Philippines, Maldives, Costa Rica, Panama, Australia, Mauritius, and Vanuatu** inter alia, asserted the need for urgent action to address the climate crisis and the importance of protecting the environment. They highlighted the need for global cooperation to tackle the climate crisis and

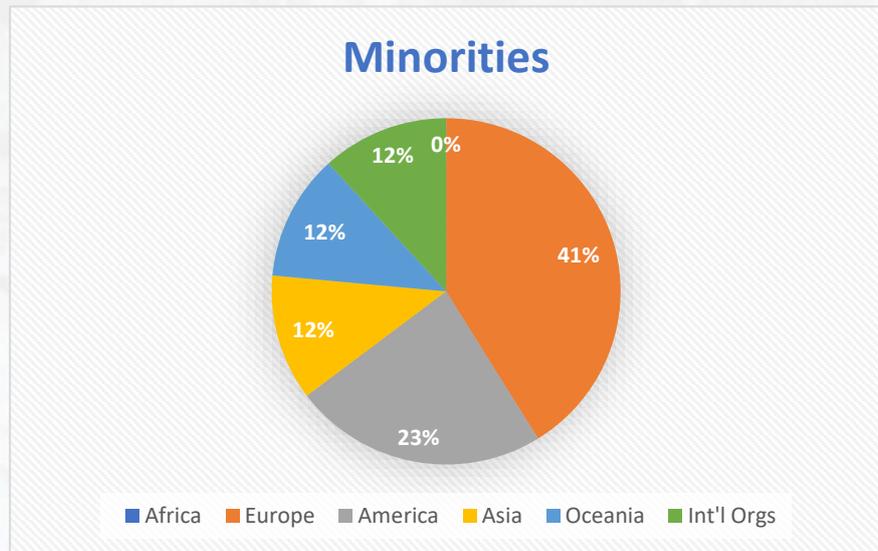
urged all countries to take decisive action to reduce emissions and build a more sustainable future. They also discussed the need for greater investment in renewable energy sources and the need to protect vulnerable populations from the impacts of climate change.

Nigeria reported on practical steps to adopt a National Climate Change Strategy, as part of efforts to address Global Net-Zero environmental and ecological challenges. **Maldives** emphasized addressing the root causes of climate disasters and reported experiencing the most severe consequences of climate change, despite being responsible for less than 0.01% of global carbon emissions. **Costa Rica** pledged to promote the right to a safe, clean, sustainable environment. **Mauritius** put greater emphasis on prioritizing adaptation measures as opposed to mitigation ones. **Egypt** indicated putting water at the center of climate action which was highlighted at the Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Conference. This initiative is intended to decrease water loss and improve Egypt's capacity to adjust to the effects of climate change related to water, by recognizing its essential role in sustaining life and guaranteeing the enjoyment of all human rights.

Paraguay highlighted its advocacy for the recognition of the difficulties faced by the landlocked countries reiterating the urgency of adequate financing for mitigation and adaptation policies. Similarly, **Monaco** highlighted its contribution to the development of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which promotes a human rights-based approach to preserving nature. It also affirmed its commitment to environmental protection and the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Minorities

A total of 17 dignitaries discussed the importance of protecting the rights of minorities and ensuring that they are not discriminated against or excluded from society. Almost half of the dignitaries were from Europe (43%) followed by dignitaries from the Americas (13%) and Asia, Oceania, and International Organisations (12%).



A significant number of the dignitaries such as **Denmark, the UK, Türkiye, Japan, New Zealand, and Finland** expressed concern about the situation of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and called for an end to the discrimination and abuses. They also urged the Chinese government to allow independent monitors to visit the region and investigate the allegation. They called on the Chinese government to take concrete steps to protect the rights of the Uyghur Muslims and to ensure that their rights are respected. Similarly, the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** expressed concern over the situation of the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar.

Serbia reported on having a strong national mechanism for the protection of minority rights and affirmed its commitment to effective multilateralism and constructive dialogue on the matter. **Guatemala** declared support for the promotion of measures that support the universal recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as strengthen their participation in the United Nations, particularly in the HRC.

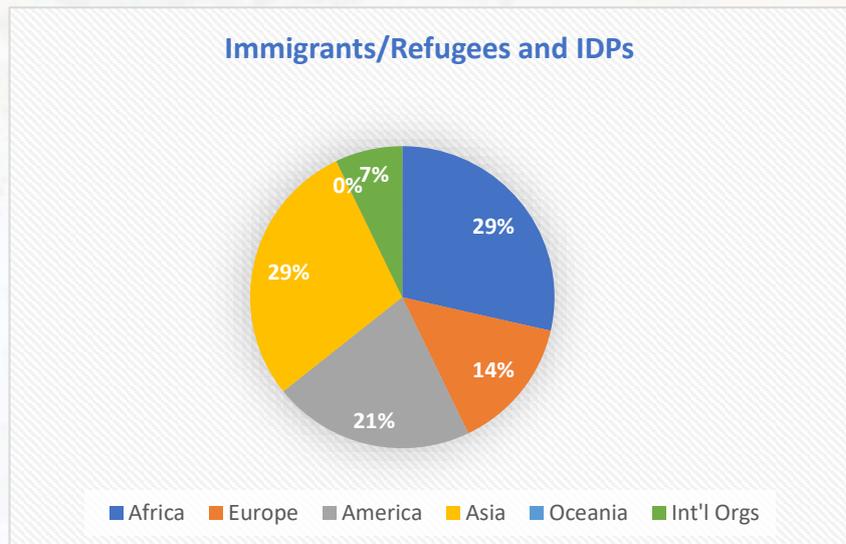
Hungary expressed concern over the situation of the Hungarian minority (a sizable Hungarian community of around 150 000 people living in the western part of Ukraine) in Ukraine. The Hungarian minority in Ukraine experiences a continuous and systematic violation of their rights. It called on Ukraine to put an end to the discriminatory policies.

Immigrants/Refugees and IDPs

Several dignitaries raised the issue of refugees, migrants, and IDPs. The dignitaries from Asia and Africa each represented 29% of the speakers, followed by the Americas (21%), Europe (14%), and **the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** (7%). The **UNHCR** highlighted the plight of vulnerable populations and the need for greater protection and assistance.

Bangladesh and Türkiye highlighted the discriminatory and systematic human rights violations of migrants. While **Bangladesh** noted the importance of providing access to basic services and opportunities for employment, **Türkiye** described having an enabling political process that ensures the voluntary and dignified repatriation of Syrian refugees.

Nepal emphasized the safety and well-being of migrants and reported on engagement in the bilateral regional and multilateral fora for the protection of their human rights. **The State of Palestine** referred to the demolition of the refugee camps by Israeli authorities in the context of new occupation settlements. **Libya** called for greater international cooperation to address the root causes of displacement and to ensure that the rights of refugees and migrants are respected. **Chad** expressed concern over the major influx of migrants from neighboring countries that affects its national budget.



El Salvador reported on steps taken to address the root causes of irregular migration of the population. It also referred to the Labour Mobility Program, which seeks to promote the inclusion of the population where decent employment opportunities are provided.

Serbia emphasized providing options between local integration and voluntary repatriation for long-term IDPs and called on the competent authorities to continue finding a permanent solution. **Georgia** expressed concern over the situation of the IDPs in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and their deprivation by the **Russian Federation** of their fundamental right to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

Burkina Faso reported that the attack by armed forces caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the country, which resulted in the displacement of more than one million and nine thousand, among which 58.43% are children and 53.96% are women.

Intolerance, Xenophobia, and Islamophobia

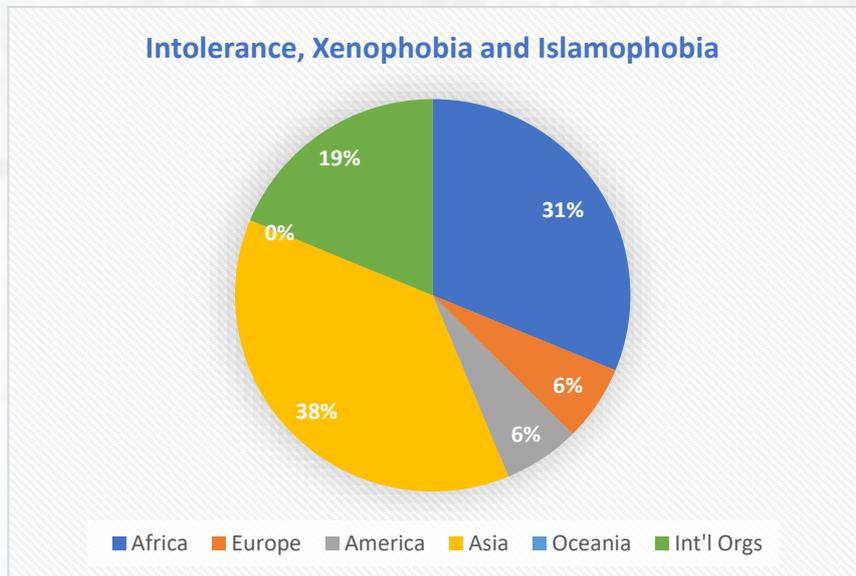
A total of 16 dignitaries explicitly spoke on the issue of intolerance, islamophobia, and xenophobia. As indicated below, dignitaries from Asia comprised 38% of the speakers followed by Africa (31%), International Organisations (19%), the Americas, and Europe (6%).

Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan, among others, spoke out against the rising tide of islamophobia and the recent public burning of the Holy Quran. They noted that this type of discrimination and violence was unacceptable and called on the international community to take action to combat it. They asserted that this will hampers efforts for the peaceful coexistence of communities of different faiths.

Iran referred to the attack on the Holy Shrine of Shah-Cheragh in Iran which resulted in the death of 13 Iranians including women and children.

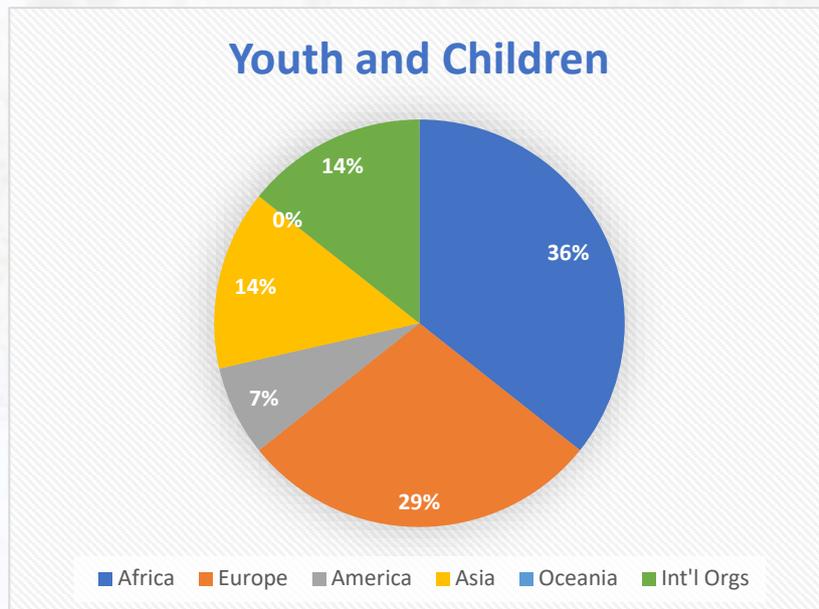
Nigeria affirmed its commitment to the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPPA) and called on Member States to condemn all manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia in their countries.

Serbia referred to the discrimination against Serbs and non-Albanian populations based on ethnicity and religion in Kosovo and Metohija.



Youth and Children

Several dignitaries spoke about the rights of children and youth. Some dignitaries reported on initiatives taken to improve the situation of youth and children while some other emphasized promotion and protection of their rights. Dignitaries from Africa comprised (36%) followed by Europe (29%), Asia and International Organizations (14%), and America (7%).



Colombia highlighted the advocacy of youth for the advancement of their rights and structural changes to address embedded social inequities. **Kazakhstan** reported on the establishment of a National Fund and special savings account for children until the age of 18. It also asserted that National Youth Development Index aims to create conditions for the full participation of youth in the development and decision-making processes. **Saudi Arabia** highlighted the initiative of Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin

Abdulaziz in collaboration with international organizations to protect children from the increasing threats that they face in cyberspace. It also reported on the development of a national policy for the prevention of child labor.

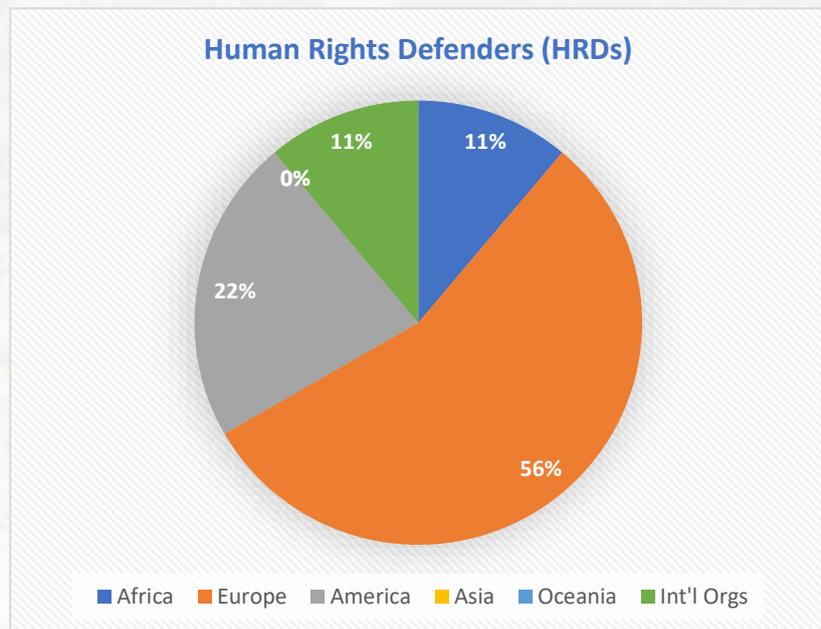
Finland referred to the creation of a "Students-at-risk" program in support of young student HRDs. **Malta** noted the importance of a safe and enabling environment for children's education and referred to the plight of children in armed affected areas while also emphasizing the protection of their rights. **Bulgaria** affirmed its continuous efforts to protect children's rights and provide inclusive education to all children, especially those in disadvantaged positions such as migrant children and children with disabilities. **Morocco** reported that the royal project for social protection enabled the family allowances for children of school age, as such 7 million children will be benefited from this initiative by the year 2024. **Mozambique** referred to the legislative measures taken to strengthen the protection of children's rights, and **Zimbabwe** reported on outlawing child marriage and creating a separate juvenile justice system.

Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

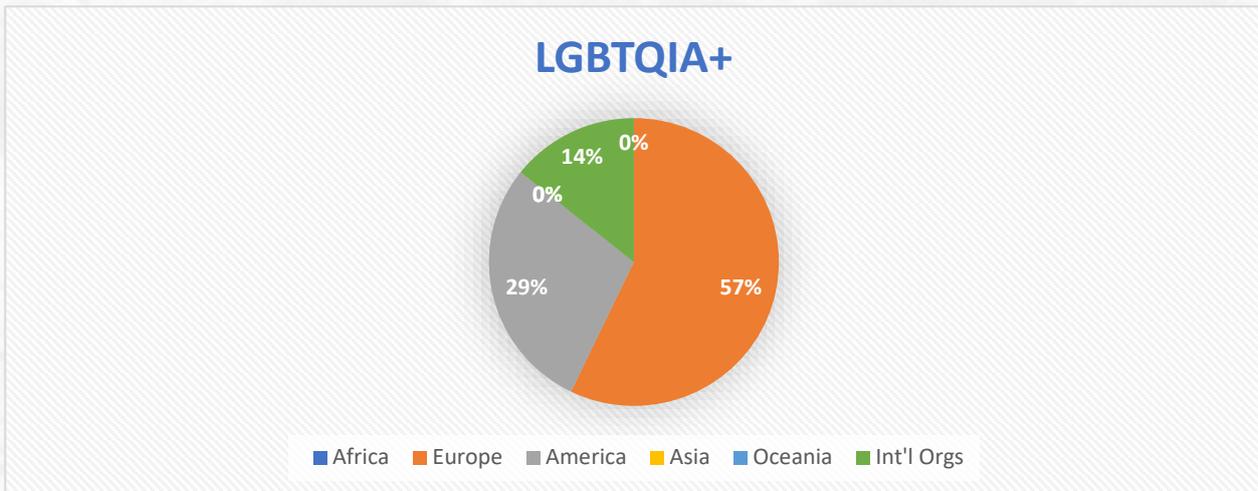
Several dignitaries spoke about the importance of protecting HRDs. Over half of the dignitaries were from Europe (56%) followed by America (22%) and Africa and International Organizations (11%). They highlighted the importance of the work of HRDs and emphasized their support and protection to create an enabling environment for their work.

Canada and Norway highlighted the need to ensure that HRDs can carry out their work without fear of reprisal or intimidation. They also called for increased support for those who are at risk of being targeted for their work.

Norway presented a resolution for the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. **Belgium** noted the shrinking space for HRDs and increasing attacks and reaffirmed its commitment to defend and protect them. **Costa Rica** affirmed its commitment to support HRDs. **Poland and Canada** raised concerns over the shrinking civic space in Russia and Belarus. **Togo** reported on the legislative measure to protect HRDs.



LGBTQIA+



A few dignitaries from Europe (57%), America (29%), and International Organizations (14%) raised the LGBTQIA+ and highlighted the need to end discrimination and violence against them while also protecting their rights. **UNDP** asserted that in the Asia-Pacific region, they support institutions to protect the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Malta and Costa Rica affirmed their commitment to advocate further strengthening the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons and support initiatives that seek to combat inter-sectional discrimination.