

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 55th SESSION

Item 5¹: General debate

(21 March 2024)

Contents

Member States: Joint Statements	4
Observers of the Council.....	6
List of NGOs that took the floor:.....	8

This is a Summary Records report of the General Debate under Item 5 that took place on the 21 of March 2024 at the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The report includes the statements made by the Member States of the Human Rights Councils, Observer States, and other Observers. The statements are presented in the order of speaking and are not exhaustive.

. Please refer to the **recordings of the General Debates on the UN WebTV** for full statements:

- 21 March: [UN WEB TV](#)

¹ Human Rights bodies and mechanisms

Mr Nicolas Levrat, Special Rapporteur on minority issues, presented a comprehensive overview of the Forum on Minority Issues, underlining its pivotal role since its inception in 2007 by the HRC through Resolution 6/15, reaffirmed in 2012 by Resolution 19/23. The 16th session of the Forum, convened in November-December 2023, held significant importance in addressing the multifaceted challenges encountered by minority communities worldwide, with a particular focus on bolstering their socioeconomic participation, promoting equality, and fostering social inclusion. Throughout the deliberations, a consensus emerged regarding the imperative need to amplify the voices and agency of minority groups, who often grapple with systemic inequities and discrimination, hindering their access to essential resources and equal opportunities across various spheres, including education, employment, and healthcare.

The Forum's discussions underscored the integral role of genuinely cohesive and inclusive societies in creating conducive environments where the dignity and potential of all individuals, irrespective of their ethnic, religious, or linguistic identities, are not only recognized but also valued. As minority communities navigate persistent challenges, particularly those stemming from structural and systemic barriers, the imperative for states to adopt inclusive policies, legislation, and public goods and services that uphold the rights of minority groups to equality without discrimination became increasingly apparent. The Forum emphasized the importance of equal access to technology, including digital literacy programs within minority communities, to bridge existing gaps and foster more equitable opportunities. Furthermore, the recommendations emanating from the Forum underlined several key priorities for states and the United Nations, including the recognition of minority inclusion as a fundamental component of valuing societal diversity, the urgent need to address destabilizing inequalities, and the imperative to develop a human rights-centric economy that prioritizes the meaningful participation of marginalized groups, including minorities, in economic decision-making processes. Additionally, proposals were put forth to enhance the engagement and representation of minority groups in UN forums, strengthen the Forum on Minority Issues through structural improvements, and allocate resources to support the active participation of civil society and minority representatives. As the Forum continues to evolve, discussions on potential enhancements, including its format, duration, and funding, will be crucial to ensure its continued efficacy in advancing the rights and well-being of minority communities globally.

Mr Ali Barani, Chair of the Forum of the Human Rights Council, presented the report of the Social Forum 2023 by highlighting its focus on the role of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in promoting human rights amidst post-pandemic recovery. The forum showcased diverse perspectives from nearly 50 speakers representing governments, international organizations, civil society, and academia, emphasizing the pivotal role of equitable access to STI in realizing fundamental human rights and fostering sustainable recovery. Discussions emphasized the importance of strategic investment in STI, global knowledge sharing, and digital literacy to address challenges posed by the digital revolution, while advocating for ethical development and protection of human rights principles in the digital space. Furthermore, the Chair outlined forward-looking recommendations emerging from the forum, including efforts to promote accessible scientific information, advance digital literacy, and support diversity in STEM education to bridge technology access gaps, particularly for marginalized groups. Mr Barani called for increased international cooperation and solidarity measures, regulation of artificial intelligence to prevent human rights threats, and consideration of disability dimensions in recovery plans. Lastly, the Chair expressed his gratitude to all stakeholders for their contributions and announces the focus of the 2024 HRC social forum on the contribution of financing for development to the advancement of human rights for all, emphasizing the importance of incorporating the forum's conclusions and recommendations into future actions and sessions of the council.

Ms Isa Divan, Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, presented a comprehensive report on the activities of special rapporteurs, independent experts, and working groups throughout 2023, emphasizing their collective and individual efforts to advance the global human rights agenda. Mandate holders demonstrated commitment to addressing emerging issues impacting human rights, such as armed conflicts, development, climate change, and

the economy, stressing the relevance of human rights across the UN system and beyond. For Ms Divan, it is crucial to have annual engagements with the HRC, fostering substantive interactive dialogues and trust with stakeholders to promote effective cooperation and impactful outcomes.

Moreover, she shed light on the multifaceted impact of special procedures beyond the council, showcasing interactions at national, regional, and international levels and contributions to legislative and policy changes. Despite commendable cooperation from many states, challenges persist in accessing certain countries or engaging on critical human rights issues, with some states exhibiting none or selective cooperation. Additionally, Ms Divan expressed serious concern over attacks and intimidation faced by mandate holders, stressing the need for evidence-based disagreements expressed in a respectful manner, while condemning any personal attacks. Furthermore, she highlighted the adverse impact of the UN liquidity crisis on special procedures, urging sustainable funding to ensure the system's capacity to deliver mandates, especially during challenging times.

In conclusion, Ms Divan called for unity, solidarity, and strengthened support for the UN human rights system, emphasizing the commitment of special procedures to continue their vital work despite resource constraints. She echoed the High Commissioner for Human Rights' call for collective action, underlining the pivotal role of human rights in guiding solutions and advancing the global human rights agenda.

Main Points Raised (thematic issues, country and/or territorial concerns)	
Member States: Joint Statements	
Netherlands on behalf of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Netherlands	Important to protect human rights defenders worldwide. Raised names of those who have been silenced. Called for the release of Bahrain Protestor Abdulhadi al-Khawaja who was sentenced to life in prison for his involvement in peaceful protests. Called for the release of Li Qiaochu who is in prison in China, also called for her to be given prompt access to medical care. Called on all states to put an end to all forms of reprisal against human rights defenders.
Portugal on behalf of 29 members of group of friends of national mechanisms on implementation, reporting, and follow up	Paraguay, Morocco, and Portugal pledged to create an international network of NMIRFs to share international experiences with a follow up of implementation to occur at the next conference. Encouraged all states to participate in the following dialogues taking place in Marrakech in October 2024.
European Union	Special procedures play an important role in the human rights ecosystem. Mandate holders must be able to act without interference, intendent, impartial, and without any barriers, they condemn all attacks and lack of cooperation with mandate hodlers. All EU member states had extended a standing invitation to the special procedures, called on all remaining UN states to do the same and called on all other states to collaborate with the UN human rights system and its mechanisms and treaty bodies. The EU was concerned with the adequate funding for the UN human rights bodies and mechanisms and called on UN Secretary General to ensure sufficient funding for this pillar. Called on all UN member states to fulfill their requirements on funding to the UN.
Pakistan on behalf of the organization of the Islamic cooperation	All special procedures must adhere to UN conduct. Highlighted the importance of timeliness of publications of SPMH reports. Reaffirmed its call on the reflection of the diversity of legal systems and equitable geographic balance during the selection of the mandate holders.
Egypt on behalf of Arab states	Importance of special procedures to guide member states and to support efforts to develop the human rights system and to spread human rights in the wider procedure. The principles of impartiality, independence, cooperation are the preconditions to achieve goals and create a positive climate to create an enabling environment to promotion and protection of human rights. Considered the use of innovative measures (technical or capacity building). Encouraged special procedures to verify credibility of reports and to have them published in original language pending a translation to prevent any interpretation or unilateral views – Arabic is an official UN language. Should be more vocal about occupied Palestine.
Uganda on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement	Highlighted necessary enhanced/improving human rights mechanisms, including the bodies and special procedures. Expected the high commissioner for human rights to consider existing challenges and national challenges to execute principles during their actions. Mandate holders should strictly adhere to the principles of the special procedures and UN official documents (Security Council and General Assembly). Press releases by special procedure mandate holders do not present allegations as already established facts. Need to ensure human rights mechanisms enhance the capacity of member states to implement their obligations on the promotion and protection of Human rights.
Laos on behalf of Southeastern Asian Region	Supported ongoing efforts to enhance efficiency of treaty bodies and the OHCHR. Called for UN human rights bodies and mechanisms to fulfill their respective mandates guided by UN principles. Importance to capacity building of human rights

	institutions to help strengthen domestic mechanisms in support of their respective national development programs. Called for mandate holders to exercise due diligence in evaluating claims in sharing communications to ensure they are based on facts.
Lesotho, Beneficiary countries of the LDCC trust funds	Recognized the value of science, technology, and innovation in advancing human rights and encourage further advancement in these areas. Capacity building is also important to further human rights especially for the most vulnerable groups. Called upon the international community to create a more equitable and inclusive technological landscape to allow all to enjoy their human rights.
Iran on behalf of a group of countries	Trust and cooperation are the two key elements to ensure the effectiveness of the special procedures to the promotion and protection of human rights. Crucial for special procedures to carry out mandates while adhering to the principles. Supported the mandate for the special forum to bring together various people to further human rights. Investment in technology, science and innovation are key.
Germany	Called on all member states to pay their regular budget assessments to the UN in full and without delay. Special procedures are important; however, they inspire everyone to improve their human rights at home. Independence of the high commissioner remains key. Called for immediate end for any reprisals and intimidation.
Georgia	Special procedures play an important role in ensuring states fulfill human rights goals. Established a comprehensive national reporting process including all stakeholders including civil society. OHCHR are prevented from entering Russian occupied regions of Georgia despite the many attempts to enter. Importance of immediate access of OHCHR to both Russian occupied regions of Georgia.
United States of America	Committed to assisting survivors of torture in all forms. Supported the UN mechanisms created and designated to torture. The committee against torture works to hold states accountable for torture and investigates reports of torture to stop and prevent these human rights violations. Proud to be the largest contributor to the voluntary fund for torture and encourage other states to join.
Cuba	Wished to maintain dialogue on human rights mechanisms. Concerned at the multiple positions arising that are not aligned with the code of conduct or the special procedure mandate holders. Specifically, the use of social networks to issue interference criteria without checking the source of information or hearing the opinion of the consent country. It is vital to ensure the verification of information from various sources and to check responses. The UN cannot be used to promote interference agendas against sovereign states. Vital need of compliance with the UN charter. Advocated for the initiative for the social forum. Rejected any initiative that goes against the UN charter or the mandate of the council.
South Africa	Committed to the mechanisms of the UPR and its role in promoting and expanding human rights at the national level. Made an effort to address the backlog in the request for visits given the high demand. Continued to engage in special procedures in accordance with the mandates. Welcomed the joint press release of special procedures of January 31, 2024, issued after the ICJ ruling in the case brought about by SA on the acts of Israel in Gaza that plausibly fall under the provisions of the genocide convention. Called for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian aid, release of hostages, and talks on a just solution.
Malaysia	In 2019 issued a standing invitation to special procedures to mandate holders to visit the country and have benefited from the constructive recommendations. Committed to enhancing regional human rights mechanisms. Committed to enhancing its cooperation with international human rights mechanisms for the benefit of all. Constructive dialogue and synergy state cooperation are at the core of promoting and protecting human rights.
China	Called for further attention to the fundamental measures to promote the rights of minorities. Opposed certain countries

	calling criminals human rights defenders and stigmatizing law enforcement of other countries as retaliation – called for states to stop abusing UN mechanisms to serve their own agendas.
Bangladesh	Facilitated country visits by special mandate holders. Complete adherence to the principles is essential to preserving the independence status of the special procedures. Wanted all bodies of the UN to be involved directly in promotion and protection of human rights and committed to cause and compliance of special mandates. Must rely on objective and dependable facts on information shared from valuable sources.
Algeria	Renewed its commitment to special procedures. Urged special procedures to attach due consideration to national and regional efforts and to identify measures to complement these measures. Supported recognition of the important recommendation in the Social Forum report of 2023 (science, technology, and innovation). Special procedures should highlight the situation occurring in Gaza. Called on special procedures to prioritize the language under the occupation.
Albania	Condemned intimidation or reprisals against human rights defenders they deserve dignity. The UN human rights council, Secretary general and high commissioner cooperation is essential to act in a timely manner and their inaction would be against human rights.
India	Noticed disturbing tendencies of countries coming to conclusions from disinformation undermining the special procedures work and effectiveness. Must consider information given by member states and verify it and recognize the due challenges experienced by the states and not allow personal prejudice and biases to cloud this principle.

Observers of the Council	
1. Israel	Witnessed special procedure mandate holders conduct themselves in a manner not fit for the offices they hold and released reports that are based on unchecked unreliable information. Special procedures have not released communications that focused on the gender and sexual based accounts of October 7, others have dismissed it as disinformation or others have legitimized accounts of terrorism on October 7 th . Countries such as Cambodia, Afghanistan have signed statements concerning Israel going beyond their mandates. They must adhere to the scope of their mandates and ensure they rely on factual and credible sources.
2. Armenia	Unfortunate when findings and conclusions do not receive the required attention and follow up like during human rights violations during armed conflicts.
3. Libya	Special procedures should consider innovative approaches when it comes to technical cooperation and capacity building. Need to consider the challenges faced by countries and avoid non-consensual issues. Called to focus more on the Palestinian people as they suffer occupation.
4. Egypt	Stressed the importance of independence of mandate holders and appropriate representation of legal systems when choosing mandate holders. Important to consult countries that are concerned, ones introducing country specific mandates and to enhance the capabilities of member states to reach their mandates while respecting the code of conduct. Importance of not imposing concepts that could lead to controversy within/ between states.
5. Iran	If special procedure mandates are carried out under misinformation, they will fail to establish trust for cooperation with states. Mechanisms and bodies must be structured in a way to represent all states and address human rights challenges, concerns, and progress in an impartial way. If bodies act impartially, Iran considers itself committed.

6. Pakistan	Encouraged and expected mandate holders to adhere to the principles in the code of conduct. Emphasized the need for prudence and objectivity in undertaking public communications.
7. Austria	Supported former minority issues and encouraged others to join. Also encouraged others to join OHCHR emergency fellowship program.
8. Russian Federation	Special procedures are straying from the principles, best example in the context of the reaction to Ukraine. Decision by the ICJ for Ukraine's case against Russia with anti-Russian documents prepared by council mechanisms have been discredited as they are coming from insinuations by Kyiv and misinformation from human rights NGOs. Also applied to information in OHCHR reports – phony testimony fabricated by UN human rights monitoring mission to Ukraine. In light of the ICJ and the west and allies to bring to consideration anti-Russian resolutions is a farse. Called on special mechanisms to abide by its principles and remain impartial to the actions of sovereign states.
9. Iraq	Reiterated commitments. No legal basis for sexual orientation or sexual identity. Experts have no right to ask states about this during reviews of reports. Called of special procedures to attach importance to monitoring and reporting of violations by the occupying power in the Palestinian people.
10. Tunisia	Had an open initiative with special procedures since 2011 and will be submitting reports in due time. Stress the Importance of the special procedures to abide by the principles.
11. Afghanistan	Called for an independent and investigative mechanism from relevant treaty bodies and their mandate holders are required to effectively monitor situations and their human rights abuses.
12. Bolivia	Called to think of new forms to address challenges that we confront as a group such as the right to development. Important for protection bodies to focus their efforts on inequality.
13. Ethiopia	Believed strong cooperation between special procedures and states must be strengthened and continue to adhere by the principles. Free from polarization and politicization is key.
14. Azerbaijan	Emphasized the importance of the selection of appropriate candidates for the positions of special procedure mandate holders.
15. Uganda	Important for the mechanisms to depoliticize and work on offering technological advice.
16. Panama	Supported the work of the Advisory Committee that provides specialized knowledge through studies and research on issues relating to human rights. Headway made in the study mandated by resolution 51/22 by the Human Rights Council. Calls on the importance of removal of plastic products. Planned to submit a draft decision granting the advisory committee with a mandate to prepare a study on plastics at the 56 th Session of the Council.
17. Democratic Republic of Korea	Expressed concern of mandate holders that are extended because of their politics. The special procedures serves only as an instrument and political weapon to overturn the social systems in the DPRK. Reject of any initiatives and special procedures contradicting the UN Charter.
18. Venezuela	Appreciated the social forum (2023) address the importance of science, technology, and innovation but stresses the inequality within these areas as access is limited. There continues to be violates of special procedures principles. State willingness to cooperate on the basis members continue to abide by the principles.

List of NGOs that took the floor:

Minority Rights Group, Khiam Rehabilitation Centre for victims of torture, China Ethnic Minorities for External Exchanges, The Internal Humanitarian Society for Development without Borders, AKAHATA, ECO-FAWN, Conselho Indigenista Missionario CIMI, Al Baraem Association for Charitable Work, International Service for Human Rights, International Service for Human Rights, Jose Marti Cultural Society, YouChange China Social Entrepreneur Foundation, World Barua Organization, African Green Foundation International, The Regional Centre for the Welfare of Ageing Persons in Cameroon, Reseau Unite pour le Developpement de Mauritaine, China Association for Preservation and Development, Le conseil universal des droits de l'homme, Mother of Hope Cameroon Common Initiative Group, Citoyens en action pour la democratie et le development, International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, United for Human Rights, Villages Unis, Global Srilankan Forum United Kingdom, International Muslim Women's Union, Platform for Youth Integration and Volunteerism, Associazione Comunita' Papa Giovanni XXIII, Amnesty International, Conectas Direitos Humanos, Human Is Right, Comite CIRAC, Association pour La Diffusion des Droits de L'homme dans L'universite de Lyon, Association caritative etudiante pour la jeunesse, Asociacion Cubana de las Naciones Unidas, Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan, Baha'I International Community, Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme, World Muslim Congress, Internatioanl Action for Peace & Sustainable Development.