



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Biennial Panel on Unilateral Coercive Measures

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BACKGROUND

The biennial panel discussion on unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) and human rights is held pursuant to UNHRC resolutions 27/21 and 58/3, in which the Council stressed that UCMs and legislation are contrary to international law and expressed its concern at their **negative impact on human rights, development, international relations, trade, and investment**. The Council has further recognized that these measures, in the form of economic sanctions, can have far-reaching implications for human rights, **disproportionately affecting the poor and the most vulnerable** populations, and may result in social problems and raise humanitarian concerns in the States targeted. In its resolution 58/3, the UNHRC requested OHCHR to organize a biennial panel discussion on the **impact of unilateral coercive measures and overcompliance on the right to food and food security**.

OPENING REMARKS

H.E. Mr. Volker TÜRK, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Targeted sanctions against individuals and companies and other entities consistent with international law can be important tools in exerting pressure for peace, enhancing the protection of civilians and protecting human rights. These may include arms embargoes on governments whose armed forces commit gross violations of human rights and travel bans, asset freezes and



other targeted steps against individuals credibly accused of serious human rights violations. But unilateral coercive measures that are **inconsistent with international law** pose serious risks to the enjoyment of human rights. Where sanctions are imposed on entire sectors of an economy with sweeping impacts, they can prevent people from accessing the essentials of life.

In **conflict and crisis situations**, they can hinder the provision of humanitarian aid by halting the purchase or import of goods or the payment of fees. They can interfere with the proper functioning of essential health and education systems. They can undermine the right to work, to housing and to social security. They can disrupt the provision of basic goods and jeopardise the availability, quality and affordability of food and clean water.

Overcompliance is the application by third parties of sanctions to an extent that goes beyond the formal legal requirements of the sanctions regime. It may be a result of the complexity of rules around sanctions or the desire to avoid penalties and reputational risks. But it has real effects on people. The **impact of overcompliance** can include reducing or preventing the import of essential goods, including raw materials, supplies for the agriculture sector, food and medicine. Overcompliance can also prevent people from receiving lawful funds. It is critical to develop proper tools and guidelines to address over compliance.

Turning to the theme of today's meeting, **sanctions can directly affect the right to food** by disrupting imports, production, distribution and sales. Sanctions on agricultural products, inputs and supplies can cause price increases that put a nutritious diet out of reach for many. They can also have an indirect impact by making even locally produced food inaccessible and too expensive for some parts of the population. Such sanctions have disproportionate effects on the most vulnerable people, including women and children. In some cases, they can contribute to large scale food insecurity, which means people may struggle to know where their next meal is coming from and may become malnourished.

Any imposition of sanctions must be **fully compliant with international law**, including human rights law. Sanctions processes must be fair. They must take human rights impact assessments into account. They must be subject to monitoring and independent review. They must also provide for the prompt lifting of sanctions when no longer justified. Sanctions should never be used to influence or harm the operation of accountability mechanisms in fulfilment of their mandates. On the latter, the High Commissioner calls on the **Russian Federation** to withdraw the arrest warrants it has issued against senior officials of the International Criminal Court. Mr. Volker Türk repeats his call on the **United States** to lift the sanctions it has imposed on senior ICC officials and on the UNHRC Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Coercive measures such as these against international officials performing their functions are **completely unjustified**.

All states have an obligation to ensure **access to enough nutritious food** for everyone under their jurisdiction. They should ensure that the steps they take do not violate enjoyment of the right to food in their own states or beyond. They should therefore refrain from any steps that jeopardise conditions for food production and access to food. The High Commissioner urges all countries that impose sanctions to **establish clear and effective humanitarian exemptions** that explicitly protect essential food imports and agricultural goods including seeds, fertilisers and associated



equipment. Mr. Volker Türk calls on them to **lift sectoral sanctions** that restrict access to essential food supplies and which have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable.

Mr. Volker Türk urges all states to ensure that food is available, adequate, acceptable and affordable for people in their territory and subject to their jurisdiction. He calls on states to develop and implement **special protection measures** for vulnerable groups including children, black pregnant women, elderly people and people with disabilities who face **higher health risks from food insecurity**. In closing, he urges all states to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law by insisting on the provision of sufficient food to all people affected by crisis and conflict. Sanctions must never be used to impose collective punishment on a population.

Ms. Alena DOUHAN, the Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights

The SR is honoured to participate in this panel dedicated to the impact of unilateral sanctions, means of the enforcement and growing overcompliance to the right to food and food security. Today, the rapid expansion of various forms of unilateral sanctions has taken place in the face of intensive political debate with very little attention paid to the **illegality and humanitarian impact**, especially as regard the right to food and food security.

Reports received as well as country visits demonstrate that usually the **whole population** of the **country** under unilateral sanctions becomes subjected to the negative impact of them and also for the compliance with the most vulnerable groups facing the most dramatic effects. Unilateral sanctions regimes are usually pretending to introduce humanitarian exceptions to deliver in particular food as a survival good. At the same time, this allegation is generally misleading. **Humanitarian exceptions are not effective**. Additionally, as the SDG 2 Zero Hunger aims to ensure not only food availability, but rather food sustainability, that is not possible when UCM means of enforcement or implementation and overcompliance affect access to water, electricity, transportation, gas, gasoline, infrastructure and accessibility. Due to the limited time, the SR addresses only some key aspects of the impact.

In particular, UCM means of enforcement and overcompliance create **impediments** in delivery of food, seeds, agricultural machinery, spare parts, fertilisers, livestock vaccines and many others - which has serious transborder effects, decreases the effectiveness of agriculture and makes people step back to hard and low effective hand food cultivation. Insufficiency of fuel and sanctions on transportation affect agricultural machinery, food proceeding and storage, delivery of food to remote areas, thereby **multiplying costs of food and goods** necessary for agriculture. Transportation costs make it unaffordable for the most vulnerable groups and in some countries for the majority of population.

All the above results in growing poverty rates, unavailability of food basket, reduced rations, unavailability of proper nutrition. Impediments to the access to the newest knowledge prevent countries from developing more effective agriculture and obliges them to use old environmentally unfriendly agricultural technologies, resulting in a **deteriorating working environment**, which violates *inter alia* the right of everyone to **enjoy the benefits of academic progress**. The unavailability of livestock vaccination undermines disease prevention capacities. Reduced access to clean water and sanitation, transportation, use of sewage for irrigation purposes



increases risk of waterborne diseases. Sanctions imposed on the **fertiliser industry** have deteriorating effect over the population of the countries in many parts of the world, especially those which already face hunger elimination problems due to multiplied costs of fertilisers, risks of punishment for circumvention of sanctions regime or the absolute unavailability. Even the delivery of food as such, which is claimed by sanctioning states to be fully exempted from any limitations - is usually very problematic and very expensive.

Due to the transportation, financial insurance sanctions as well as fear of food producers to get subjected to penalties in the face of **unclear sanctions regimes** and possibility of extremely severe punishments. The same reasons impede the implementation of the UN Security Council humanitarian resolutions requesting to **release frozen assets** to ensure basic needs of the population and to deliver food.

The combined aspects exposed above increase **moderate and severe malnutrition** and hunger, resulting in unbalanced food baskets and sufficiency of proteins and vitamins, growing mortality rates and reduced life expectancy. This violates fundamental human rights under the ICCPR, including the right to life, freedom from torture, and the prohibition of discrimination. In turn, Zero hunger and the right to the **highest attainable standard of health** are violated as well, as food is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the realization of the right to health.

Noteworthy to stress that it also severely affects **vulnerable groups** such as children due to unavailability of baby formulas; people dependent on health-related diets; and women as they sacrifice food to the benefit of their men and children. In a context of food insufficiency, women are most likely exposed to home violence. These combined aspects increase the level of poverty and dependence on governmental support and humanitarian assistance, which is also reduced due to the general economic impact of unilateral sanctions. Poverty and hunger are viewed by the UN General Assembly as conditions conducive to terrorism and other types of transboundary crimes as well as involvement into grey economy.

The **right to food is vital for the survival** of and a life in dignity for every individual. It cannot be postponed to the next year or even the next month. The right to food has two components, namely the **availability of food** and **food sustainability** for every person. Due to the crucial importance of this right, no unilateral measures shall affect the right to food both today and continuously. As the right to food and **SDG 2** are directly dependent on the proper delivery of electricity, water, transportation, gas and other infrastructure in a given country, the SR calls once more on states to lift any measures which can negatively affect the functioning of critical infrastructure and the availability of goods necessary for agriculture and food sustainability.

The SR further reiterates that states cannot justify the negative impacts of UCMs as unintended due to **overcompliance of private actors**, as it is a state obligation under international law not to violate human rights as well as other international obligations. Furthermore, under the principle of due diligence, states must ensure that all subjects acting within their jurisdiction do not violate human rights. On this point, the SR converges with the position of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, according to which if the **right to food is violated by action of private actors**, states under the jurisdiction of which these businesses are registered are equally responsible for the violation.



STATEMENTS BY PANELLISTS

Ms. Attiya WARIS, Independent Expert on Foreign Debt, Other International Financial Obligations and Human Rights

In Somalia, there is a proverb that says ‘*If you throw a stone in the market, you might hit your neighbour.*’ Where are these stones landing? Why are they landing there? Do we really need these stones to be thrown out into the marketplace? The reasons for this is because **food is big business**. There are probably five or more big companies in the world that manage most of the cross-border food movements across the different spaces. Looking specifically at the African continent, 90% of its carbohydrate sources come from off the continent and these are necessities for that particular region.

This conversation comes at a point when **the world is going through an economic crisis** alongside the added layer of unilateral coercive measures coming in with the debt crisis, with the **debates on increasing of taxation**, not only with the UN tax conversations at the UN General Assembly, but also within the International Maritime Organisation adding maritime taxes. The Independent Experts warns those states that are importing food products into their continents of the fact that the prices of those products are going to go up very soon.

At the same time, in a market marked by **reducing overseas development aid**, this increased regulation is spreading not only beyond treaties and laws at the global level and regional levels, but is also trickling down into guidelines and recommendations. This is where the biggest impact on finance is showing itself. Alongside sanctions imposed at the UN Security Council level, a **series of unilateral measures** are being rolled out from different parts of the world, including regional blocks. These economic blocks are making decisions to close down on the ability of many countries - some of which are extremely fragile and low-income countries - to receive food products because they are unable to make financial transactions and to complete those process.

These layers of finance that are affecting domestic needs are also adding to limitations, not only on the right to food, but also other human rights, including the **right to survive**. When reflecting on the impact of unilateral coercive measures and overcompliance on the key aspects of the right to food, issues of **availability, accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability** have already been highlighted by the SR on UCMs. Turning on finance, Ms. Attiya WARIS highlights four key issues.

Firstly, during the FFD negotiations in Seville in June 2025, there was a positive steps towards the **creation of a debtors club**, as well as conversations around the setting up of a task force to take the financing conversations forward. However, more needs to be done in legal **regulation of finance using the lens of human well-being** to be truly assessed, to ensure that any unilateral actions - which of course fall outside international law - do not undermine human life and survival.

Diverse stakeholders, whether corporations or individuals, are now more and more finding themselves **obliged to implement unilateral measures or face consequences** in the country issuing this measure should they fail to comply. Blocking of their businesses, drops in profitability, and then also firings of labour staff. Access to goods and services is then also reduced. When this affects the value chain of food, what one starts to see now very often, is that there is blood



on the budget lines. When these decisions are being made on financial transactions, we see more and more that food is leading to issues around survival.

Secondly, the **reform of the global financial and fiscal systems** does need to advance an international law regime that does not condone the use of UCMs to undermine the ability of corporations and individuals to operate truly globally if that is the shared intention as an international community. Laws must be anchored in not only mutual beneficial practises of international cooperation and assistance, but must align with the international human rights framework, standards and norms that will oblige states to take necessary measures of survival.

Thirdly, the letters that Ms. Attiya WARIS has addressed to the US government, to the New York State Senate, BlackRock on Zambia, the IMF on various technical issues, including surcharges, show clearly that regulation, taxation being withheld - as for instance by the Israeli government most recently - debt being blocked, or any type of financial transactions are being used to **hinder the ability to fund** not only policies and services that are essential, but also disproportionately affect the poorest. The world is already seeing two cases of clear famine in both Palestine and the Sudan.

Thirdly, the report that Ms. Attiya WARIS presented to the UN General Assembly in 2024 on a **global fiscal architecture** is an extremely important issue because one needs to ensure that all member states on an equal footing are exploring effective and fair mechanisms to use public resources to grant human rights for all by tackling uncontrolled growth of the wealth of a few. **Inequality is at its highest ever point** currently. Governments cannot tackle these issues alone, and therefore require meaningful participation, cooperation, and assistance to address the issues of global tax abuse, all of which are principles of human rights under a multilateral and inclusive rights-aligned fiscal framework. The **IMF**, under the Pact of the Future, was also tasked to reform the international financial architecture. It is important that member states continue to push for this report to be released.

Lastly, her upcoming report to the UNGA in October 2025 looks at issues of **financing peace**. When reflecting on issues of food, one must take into consideration the fact that whereas we normally talk about economies that are **socialist or capitalist**, we are living in an era where we are speaking about war and peacetime economies. For this, we really need to sit back and reflect.

Mr. Robert HUIZH, Associate Professor, Department of International Development Studies, Dalhousie University

Unilateral coercive measures seek the product of total destruction that comes from war, all in order to prevent actual war, allegedly. The underlying purpose and original design of sanctions or other unilateral coercive measures dating back to antiquity has always been to inflict hunger, pestilence, and suffering on civilian populations. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, **economic weapons** were the ultimate weapons. Up until World War II, hundreds of thousands of deaths by economic isolation were the chief man-made cause of civilian death in conflict.

United States **President Woodrow Wilson** said that economic weapons like sanctions are infinitely more a terrible instrument of war than war itself. Wilson's comments drew on the horrors of the Persian famine of 1917 to 1919, which claimed two million lives through military



occupation and economic blockade. As famine emerged during World War II, this reinforced the belief that the threat of isolation from the world was in fact so great that no nation would dare break international protocols for fear of inflicting pestilence on its own population.

Before the atomic bomb, economic weapons were the most feared deterrent to conflict. Now, throughout the 20th century, **ham-fisted sanctions**, better described as blockades, have been routinely applied to promote regime changes. **Cuba** has faced, and continues to face, relentless unilateral coercive measures that are meant to create isolation, stagnation, and deprivation, even by specifically targeting food and medicine. Many nations banned trade with **Iraq** in the 1990s, causing a grinding breakdown of sanitation and health services in that country. The country was very dependent on imports that saw its economy shrink by two-thirds. As a result, sanitation, health, and education infrastructure nearly collapsed.

With such lessons in mind, the 21st century has witnessed a rapid increase in the use of unilateral coercive measures, sometimes referred to as **smart or strategic sanctions**. This method targets individuals within a government or assets a person in a targeted government may possess abroad. Unlike the first wave of seeking destruction or the second wave of threatening total destruction, this third wave of UCMs is threatening isolation from global markets. But the hope, instead of causing pestilence, is just to cause **financial ruin for individuals**. Today, there are over **70,000** unique sanctioned persons and entities worldwide, a 370% increase since 2017. Over 16,500 are aimed directly at the Russian Federation in response to the war in Ukraine.

The purpose of even the allegedly smartest sanctions continue to inflict **unnecessary and often unintended harm against civilians**. Food security is both the victim and the bellwether for understanding how economic weapons harm the innocent and vulnerable communities in both targeted and in non-targeted nations. While sanctions may appear smarter, more targeted, or even softer, they continue to hold to their original purpose, which is to harm civilian populations. Pursuing peaceful global protocols through unilateral coercive measures is tantamount to a glassblower reaching for a sledgehammer to craft his work. They just do not work. As smart as sanctions are supposed to be, there will always be unintended consequences and, as a result, humanitarian harm. These **consequences occur in three ways**.

First, as mentioned, **overcompliance by the private sector**. It leads to a noticeable deprivation of imports as companies withdraw entirely from areas targeted by UCMs. The United States and the EU sanctions against Russia did not block food or fertiliser outright for export, but they did disrupt the movement of those goods globally, and at a significant cost. Since Russia controls a third of the world's phosphate fertilisers, and companies struggled to export after being cut off from global financial networks, and shipping insurers also avoided Russian assets, fertiliser prices jumped by 50% since the beginning of the war. Farmers in the Global South paid that price. Likewise, Russia's blockade of Ukrainian grain exports pushed the United Nations' food price index to an all-time high in March of 2022. As a result, 8.2% of the global population, or some 673 million people, experienced hunger in 2024.

Second, humanitarian harm shows up directly on **people's dinner plates**. Broadly speaking, UCMs make hunger worse. Even targeted sanctions against government officials and the affluent will quickly trickle down to the broader population. It involves higher prices for food and fuel,



broken trade links, and job losses. Heavily sanctioned nations like Venezuela, Iran, Syria, and Sudan all face limited food and fertiliser imports, and often empty shelves as a result of it. Professor Robert HUIZH and his assistants have shown that UCMs cause an immediate decline in imported proteins. Targeted countries scramble to find local alternatives, which increases vulnerability in what food is available, how it is consumed, and the labour required to obtain it. Women often dedicate more hours to acquiring food through local networks, and a lack of fertiliser and climate shocks further destabilise production.

Third, targeted nations often rely on so-called **pressure valves** of acquiring foreign resources outside of central banking systems. Recently, targeted nations have turned to gold and cryptocurrency for that. But those items do not have the same mechanism as central banking platforms do to help respond to shocks or crises that happen internally.

In closing, UCM-issuing nations often fail to understand that **humanitarian harm may not be the intention of a sanction, but it is always the consequence**. Professor Robert HUIZH draws to a close by stressing the simple realisation that UCMs are the wrong tool for behaviour change writ large.

H.E. Ms. Anayansi RODRÍGUEZ-CAMEJO, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba draws the Council's attention to the fact that, for over six decades, the Cuban people have faced the consequences of an **unrelenting economic, commercial and financial blockade** imposed by the US government, which has seen an upsurge in recent years with new pressure-based measures, extraterritorial actions and financial restrictions. This policy, which is unilateral in nature, is a mass, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. It directly affects national food security, restricting access to inputs, technologies, funding and international cooperation.

During the period between March 2023 and February 2024, the **harm caused by the blockade** in the agri-food sector in Cuba rose to over \$441 million. This figure is not simply an economic loss, but rather it reflects the human impact of a policy, which attacks the food security of the Cuban people, given that it prevents the acquisition of fertilisers, agricultural machinery, fuel, chemical products and essential technologies to guarantee national food production. The blockade hampers and interrupts the arrival of supplies that have already been paid for, affecting the availability of commodities such as rice, beans, powdered milk, oil, meat, bread and coffee.

The **intimidating effect of the blockade** has, in fact, reached entities within the United Nations system. In 2024, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), sought to acquire tractors for small Cuban producers at a value of \$1.5 million. However, the manufacturer refused to take the risk to trade with Cuba as a result of U.S. coercion. The blockade has also restricted Cuba's access to **multilateral foreign financing** for agricultural development programmes, the modernisation of rural infrastructure and the strengthening of climate resilience. This restriction affects the Cuban state's ability to guarantee an appropriate and adequate standard of living, particularly within a context marked by global crises, economic volatility and environmental challenges.



Various mandate holders of the UNHRC have been categorical in pointing out that UCMs, such as the blockade, breach international law, the principle of non-intervention and interference in the internal affairs of states and the purposes of the United Nations Charter. In January 2024, the Special Rapporteur Alena DOUHAM, jointly with the Special Rapporteurs on the right to food, the right to development, and extreme poverty, sent a **joint communication to the US government** in which they described the blockade as a serious violation of the human rights of the Cuban people, including the right to life.

In spite of all of this adversity, the Cuban state has undertaken **many efforts to guarantee equitable access to food**, to protect the vulnerable sectors and to promote the local production of food. One of the pillars of this strategy is the Law on Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Education, which was adopted in 2020 and is coordinated with the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Economic and Social Development Plan running up until 2030.

Furthermore, the Urban, Suburban and Family Agriculture Programme has been revitalised as a strategic tool to ensure self-sufficiency at the municipal level. Together with the **World Food Programme**, Cuba has implemented actions to bolster mother-child nutrition, food at school and care provided to the elderly. The World Food Programme supports the Self-Supply Programme, the Plan for the Prevention and Monitoring of Anaemia and the Life Plan, which is a programme of the Cuban state and it addresses the impacts of climate change on food security.

The government of Cuba restates its appeal for **the immediate and unconditional cessation of the blockade**. This demand is not only a question of justice for the Cuban people. It is an ethical, legal and humanitarian requirement which questions the credibility of the international human rights protection system. The Human Rights Council must continue to foster events such as these, which raise the profile of the effects of UCMs on the enjoyment of the human rights of millions of people across the world.

To conclude, Cuba urges OHCHR to continue to follow up on this important topic. In this regard, Cuba highlights the very rigorous and professional work done by SR Alena DOUHAN in the discharge of her mandate. Cuba will continue to defend its right to live without a blockade, to produce its own food, and to build a development model which is fair, sustainable and based on solidarity.

REPLIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms. Attiya WARIS emphasizes that the point in time when **financial conversations enter into UCMs** is literally at the point when two or more member states are unable to come to an amicable solution. At this point in time, countries have the opportunity to either continue negotiations or to implement unilateral coercive measures. They are illegal under international law, this, is settled.

From a **fiscal perspective**, it is really important that these are placed at the centre of the response. **Debt, tax and aid**, as well as all cross-border transactions, should not be used as a tool under unilateral coercive measures. What is needed is a potential solution of a **do-no-harm principle** to ring-fence issues around survival, should unilateral coercive measures be taken into account. Recently, the world has been faced with a global challenge of a unilateral coercive measure, when one member state withdrew from multiple treaties. That has affected almost



every single country in the world. The effect of a unilateral measure which is seeking to coerce a renegotiation of a treaty is palpable. This particular challenge has caused a lot of problems across the world, not only in food but in multiple other industries.

There is a **potential solution** when we come to issues of fiscal challenges. The answer is to ensure that it is an international fiscal authority that is tasked with the protection of financial transactions. These cross-border financial transactions and the survival-related goods and services that they engage with can be ring-fenced and protected. It is a building block. The SR remind member states that the IMF has been tasked with preparing the report on the **creation of this international fiscal authority**.

Lastly, the SR points to is that there are entities such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) where peer-to-peer assessment of countries has resulted in an agreement to set aside how they are going to be dealt with and when they do not comply. There are economic blocks in the world that apply unilateral coercive measures which are illegal based on their understanding of whether these countries are compliant or not, which the SR finds unacceptable under human rights law.

Mr. Robert HUIZH, on the humanitarian impact of UCMs, explains that the critique of sanctions and unilateral coercive measures is not a suggestion that anyone should do business with regimes that intend to abuse human rights. But nor is the issue of sanctions and unilateral coercive measures **not a licence to avoid humanitarian responsibility**. The enthusiasm to issue unilateral coercive measures is enormous in these days, which is why decisive upstream research is required to identify and pre-empt any humanitarian consequences from them, especially for those who are already vulnerable to food insecurity.

If through such research and compliance to such research, those nations who do issue unilateral coercive measures should be then **compelled to respond with humanitarian measures** - which may include subsidies or direct food aid to populations and vulnerable groups who are indirectly and unintentionally targeted by these measures - such research may just indeed demonstrate **how poor a tool unilateral coercive measures are** for resolving conflict. For those countries having issued UCMs, one can ask if they feel such UCMs have worked. Those on which UCMs were imposed could record the impacts they have had on their civilian population.

In this vein, Professor Robert HUIZH highlights again how important the **case of Cuba** is in this panel discussion. No other country has received such an enormous broadside of sanctions over 60 years, and it continues on. The final message on the issue of sanctions and food security is that the **world is interconnected**. As for countries under sanctions it will be much harder to respond to any shocks for food security that may relate to climate or conflict, the UNHRC and the global community should bear this in mind to help each other ensure food security.

Ms. Alena DOUHAN explains that the issue of **legality of UCMs**, from an international law perspective, is extremely clear. Measures can be taken by states unilaterally only if they stem from the direct implementation of UN Security Council sanctions; they do not violate any single international obligation of these states; or they fully conform to the standards of countermeasures. All other measures are unilateral coercive measures, and they are illegal.



The SR is glad to note support for idea of **monitoring and assessment**, which she has been promoted since several years, and expresses hope that organisations like the FAO and the WFP, focussing on the impact on the right to food, will start carrying out precise monitoring and assessment. For the moment, the SR invites everyone to support her in the ongoing development of a monitoring tool. While deploying all her best efforts, the SR is not able to collect country cases and information without state cooperation. Hence, state contributions are encouraged.

The issue of **accountability and responsibility** is very important and that is the reason why the mandate took the initiative to develop the guiding principles on accountability, responsibility and redress, whose first draft has been already shared with delegation. The SR invites all delegations to contribute to the drafting, thereby stressing her openness to all proposals. Lastly, the SR announces that, given the crucial importance of the issue, she is planning to dedicate her next thematic report before the UNHRC to the impact of UCMs on the right to food.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Armenia acknowledges that ensuring the right to food and achieving food security are fundamental elements of realisation of human rights and SDGs. It is undeniable that UCMs and particularly over-compliance may create unintended barriers to trade in food and agriculture goods, hinder financial transactions and disrupt supply chains. These effects often extend beyond the states directly concerned, impacting third countries as well. For small landlocked and or conflict-affected states, such disruption can exacerbate existing vulnerability, heighten cost of imports and place additional pressure on households and vulnerable communities. Armenia underlines the importance of direct transparency and careful assessment of humanitarian and human rights impacts before and during implementation of UCMs. It further emphasises how crucial it is for being guaranteed that measures targeting states never obstruct access to food, agriculture inputs or products and distribution critical technology. To support global food systems, humanitarian exceptions must be implemented clearly, effectively and consistently and international collaboration must be maintained.

Belarus conveys its gratitude to all the panellists for highlighting the negative impact of UCMs on food security and for the historical overview on the use of sanctions as an economic weapon. Belarus is a major global producer of potassium fertilisers. Before 2022, more than a third of potassium was supplied to Africa from Belarus. The ban by EU countries in 2022 on the transit of Belarusian fertilisers through its territory and the blocking of the Baltic ports aimed at denying access to foreign farmers of Belarusian products have caused a sharp growth in food prices, food shortages and worsening nutrition quality in developing countries. This is precisely how these unlawful sectoral sanctions against Belarusian fertilisers impact African farmers who may seem so far away from Europe. Belarus calls on OHCHR to maintain its focus on the negative impact of UCMs on food security and to take systemic and decisive measures to counter this phenomenon. Belarus supports the views expressed by the High Commissioner and many other speakers of the need to assess the full scope and impact of sanctions on human rights and to monitor it. In closing, Belarus trusts that UN agencies will meaningfully take part in this process.



Bolivia promotes the right to food and food security with sovereignty. The Plurinational State believes that adequate food for peoples also requires actions involving cooperation and coordination at the international community level. Noting with concern the backsliding that the world has experienced as a result of the multidimensional crisis, Bolivia stresses this has increased levels of extreme poverty, hunger and food insecurity. As outlined by the panellists, the countries which have experienced UCMs have had their possibilities of addressing the basic needs of their peoples seriously affected, such as the right to food. Economic sanctions restrict their possibilities of developing trade relations with other states, with cooperating with organisations and international institutions normally. These UCMs isolate states, affect their economies and very often become devices of political pressure. Bolivia rejects all unilateral coercive measures and expresses its support and solidarity with the peoples of the countries affected by these measures. In closing, Bolivia restates its preference for diplomacy over sanctions, which have a widespread negative impact on human rights.

Brazil is seriously concerned by the impact of UCMs on the right to food, food security and nutrition, especially among vulnerable groups. Brazil has consistently condemned UCMs as they violate international law and have a detrimental impact on the enjoyment of human rights. In particular, UCMs should never undermine the functioning of critical infrastructure related to food, agriculture, water supply and irrigation, nor should they restrict access to seeds, fertilisers or other essential agricultural inputs. In 2024, Brazil launched the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, bringing together governments, international organisations and other partners to advance concrete measures to eradicate hunger. According to the United Nations, more than 670 million people still suffer from hunger, while 2.3 billion experience food insecurity worldwide. UCMs must not become an obstacle to global efforts aimed at eliminating hunger. Looking ahead, Brazil observes with concern that unilateral coercive measures are increasingly diverging from the international obligations of sanctioning states as well as from the requirement to exercise due diligence by fully taking into account humanitarian considerations and the protection of fundamental rights. UCMs often undermine human rights and have recently even targeted democratic institutions and the independence of the judiciary. They are not only unlawful, but they also pose a threat, serious threat to the international order grounded in international law and to the effective functioning of the multilateral human rights system.

Burkina Faso commends the panellists on the relevance of the impact analysis of UCMs on the right to food and food insecurity. In a global context marked by food systems which have been made fragile by security and economic crises, UCMs simply deprive vulnerable peoples of their livelihoods. Burkina Faso has always voiced its concerns vis-à-vis the use of famine as a weapon of war or restraint measure. During the High-Level Policy Forum on Development in April 2025, Burkina Faso called for the lifting of UCMs which are a violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. For these reasons, jointly with Mali and Niger, Burkina Faso has denounced the illegal, illegitimate and inhumane nature of sanctions handed down by ECOWAS against some countries of the Alliance of the Sahelian States. To conclude, Burkina Faso calls upon the international community to demonstrate further commitment to counteracting the implementation of UCMs.

Cameroon welcomes the convening of this panel and thanks the panellists for their informative contributions. Remaining deeply concerned at the devastating effects of unilateral coercive



measures, including on the right to food and food security, Cameroon stresses that these measures run counter to the UN Charter and international law, and mostly affect the most vulnerable populations. UCMs can significantly undermine agricultural production systems, disrupt supply chains and aggravate humanitarian crises. The situation is all the more concerning, given that over-compliance by some economic actors denies targeted countries of basic commodities such as seeds, fertilisers and conservation technologies, thereby seriously hampering the achievement of these sustainable development goals. For this reason, Cameroon calls for greater mobilisation by the international community to ensure that the right to food is fully guaranteed without discrimination and that UCMs are lifted instinctively when they compromise the survival of civilian populations. It is imperative that hunger cease to be used as a political lever. Food cannot be a weapon.

Chad welcomes the timely convening of this panel at a time when the world is going through troubled times - a time of global uncertainty, marked by a slowing down of economic growth, with inflationary pressures and geopolitical tensions, conflicts, climate change and rapid technological change, against the backdrop of the rise of artificial intelligence. In such a climate, it is understandable that people are being deprioritised and that perfectionism is taking hold. The effects of unilateral budgetary cuts are palpable on the humanitarian situation, especially in vulnerable countries such as Chad which hosts about 2 million refugees in its territory. Unilateral coercive measures threaten to roll back some hard-won agricultural achievements and make the vulnerable even more vulnerable. This is why the response to these challenges must be international cooperation, multilateralism and a mutually beneficial partnership. Unilateral coercive measures on food security can only lead to worrying outcomes for everyone. Chad therefore calls for continued in-depth discussions on measures that could, *inter alia*, allow to address structural vulnerabilities and infrastructure problems, which in turn could bolster the country's resilience in the face of today's crises and those of the future.

China states that UCMs are pure and simple hegemony, a policy denying rights which openly runs counter to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, undermining the foundations of multilateralism and the international role of law, attacking the fundamental rights of the peoples concerned, including their rights to life and to development. Some countries, in spite of their many human rights misdeeds, do not hesitate to adopt UCMs based on domestic law or on the pretext of democracy running against the spirit of multilateralism. This is a serious obstacle to global governance and international cooperation. As a significant member of the Global South and a victim of UCMs, China will always stand by multilateralism, justice and equity and the common interests of the international community. Recently, President Xi Jinping proposed an initiative on global governance calling on all parties to promote sovereign equality; to respect the international role of law; to practise multilateralism; to place the human being at the heart of concerns; and to focus on action so as to build together a fairer and more reasonable global governance system. China seeks to step up cooperation with all parties, including the human rights mechanisms, to eliminate at the international scale the negative impacts of UCMs and to promote together the cause of healthy development and human rights.

Cuba stresses that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the US government is one of sustained hostility and it is the most prolonged UCM applied against any country in the contemporary world. This blockade, which has in recent years seen an upsurge,



has devastating effects on all sectors of Cuban society, in particular on the right to food, which is an essential human right for life and dignity. As a result, Cuba is unable to acquire over 214,000 tonnes of corn or 17,000 tonnes of soya. Cuba no longer produces hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fruit and vegetables and over 26,000 tonnes of refrigerating capacity was lost, affecting the conservation of basic foods. Of the \$42 million planned for pork production, scarcely 41% was used as a result of the cancellation of contracts, the rise in the prices of shipping companies, the lack of availability of ships, which risk reaching Cuban ports because of the risks entailed by trading with Cuba and the fear of receiving fines running into the millions. In spite of those conditions, the Cuban government is undertaking extraordinary efforts to ensure that the usual family basket is supplied. The blockade is an act of unilateral aggression. It is a constant threat against national stability and a mass flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans. It is an act of cruelty. Cuba demands the blockade be lifted without any conditions and immediately.

Egypt supports the efforts deployed by the SR in assessing the impact of UCMs and reiterates the need for any UCMs to be in compliance with international human rights law. Egypt categorically rejects the use of these measures for political pressure, as there is a need to distinguish between UCMs and country decisions based on national security considerations that are in line with the Constitution and international conventions, especially if the latter are aimed at combating terrorism, preventing crime or preserving national security. In closing, Egypt asks the panellists to elaborate on the latest trends for the implementation of these measures; to which extent they run counter to international conventions; and ways to address such inconsistencies in line with international law.

Eritrea points out that unilateral coercive measures and their over-compliance have weaponised foods, undermining the most basic of rights. They disrupt access to seeds, fertilisers, technologies and finance, while over-compliance by banks and shipping lines blocks even lawful trade. Humanitarian exemptions exist only on paper, leaving millions vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. These measures affect every aspect of the right to food, availability by restricting agricultural inputs, accessibility through inflated costs and blocked markets, advocacy by limiting nutritious imports, and sustainability by strangling investments in food systems. The result is declining productivity, weakened preservation and broken distribution chains. Eritrea has lived this reality. These politically motivated sanctions without legal basis have constrained our efforts to modernise farming, secure trade and strengthen food security. The adversity imposed was never a result of scarcity, but of deliberate external restrictions. The deeper question is, how can the UNHRC move beyond condemnation to establish binding mechanisms, legal, institutional and reparative, that not only deter the future use of food as a tool of coercion, but also deliver justice and redress to populations already harmed by these unlawful measures.

Ghana on behalf of the African group remains deeply concerned at the persistent use of the universal coercive measures which disregard the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and undermine the promotion, protection, and full realisation of human rights. Socioeconomic sanctions remain one of the major impediments to the successful implementation of both the African Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. African Heads of State have on several occasions expressed concern over the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of the right to



development as well as their detrimental effects on international relations, trade, investment, cooperation, and overall pursuit of peace and stability across the continent and globally. The African Union (AU) has firmly condemned the continued unilateral application and enforcement of coercive measures by certain countries, particularly when used as instruments of political or economic pressure against any state. The African Union has expressed particular concern over such actions directed at AU's member states as they undermine the sovereign right of nations in self-determination and violate the principles of international law and multilateral cooperation. In closing, the African group stresses the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation not only to mitigate the negative impact of UCMs on human rights, but also to eliminate UCMs themselves.

Indonesia reaffirms its principled opposition to UCMs, which are a symbol of double standards and run contrary to the UN Charter and international law. After decades, they have not proven effective in achieving their unilateral politically motivated objectives. What they do is they change the price of food, fuel and fertilisers. Restrictions on trade, access to financing and distribution channels, as well as targeted measures against companies and individuals, severely limited the availability, accessibility and affordability of food and other essential goods. Above all, essential goods such as food and medicine must never be used as political pressure. These measures and policies have undeniable grave impacts on the enjoyment of human rights, including on the right to food. The heaviest burden invariably falls on the most vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities. Indonesia firmly believes that human rights concerns must be addressed through dialogue, cooperation and constructive engagement, not coercion. Indonesia asks to the panellists to share their views on the persistence of states or groups that insist on safeguards in unilateral measures, though these safeguards clearly fail and harm human rights.

Iran praises the panellists for their thoughtful contributions in this panel discussion, which provides a timely opportunity to assess the humanitarian and human rights consequences of UCMs. Iran reiterates that UCMs, particularly in the form of financial and trade sanctions, are unlawful and contrary to the UN Charter. They directly undermine the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights with the right to food among the most seriously affected. In practise, such measures block access to agricultural inputs, fertilisers, machinery, technology and financial transactions, necessity for the production, process, storage and distribution of food. This creates shortages, inflates prices and disproportionately harms vulnerable groups including children, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Overcompliance by private sectors further worsens the situation, restricting even goods nominally exempted. Such dynamics illustrate how sanctions erode availability, accessibility, adequacy and sustainability of food systems, violating states' obligations under international human rights law. In this regard, Iran asks the SR to clarify how standardised methodologies could be developed to document sanctions violations of the right to food, ensuring accountability under international law.

Iraq stresses that UCMs have a negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to food and food security. These measures compromise the fundamental dimensions of the right to food, namely availability, accessibility and sustainability. They also disproportionately affect women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. The phenomenon of overcompliance leads to difficulties in civilians having access to essential goods. Even though they are formally exempt from



exception regimes, they lead to the hampering of SDGs and attack economic, social and cultural rights. Their repercussions are not only limited to a single country, but also to third countries who have dealings with them. By way of conclusion, Iraq calls upon all countries to refrain from opposing such measures and to lift those that already exist. There is a need to exempt foodstuffs and supplies because they must guarantee the right to food. This is a collective responsibility which requires international firm commitment in terms of a peaceful cooperation.

The **Lao PDR** is of the view that the imposition of unilateral cohesive measures is contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. It creates not only serious impact on the full realisation of human rights and development in the affected countries, but also hinders the international trade, investment and cooperation, as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance. The rights to food are fundamental human rights, recognised under the international law, which guarantees every person's physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food necessary for an adequate standard of living and for a life with dignity. The Lao PDR reiterates that multilateral systems remain a key to enhancing cooperation in order to address the root causes of global hunger. The Lao PDR also calls for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the universal coercive measures so that all citizens can enjoy the rights to food and food security and no one is left behind.

Malawi notes with concern that, to date, the negative impact of UCMs and overcompliance on the enjoyment of human rights remain deeply rooted. This is despite numerous calls and recommendations made in council-mandated panels and workshops in previous years. Malawi shares the concern over the negative impacts of targeted coercive sanctions on the right to development of innocent people, especially on their rights to food, food security, as well as other related economic, social and cultural rights. Reiterating the position of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) on unilateral coercive measures, Malawi calls for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe, as the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe continue to have far-reaching effects on the country and the entire SADC region.

Malaysia is deeply concerned that unilateral coercive measures and overcompliance directly undermine the right to food and food security. By disrupting supply chains, restricting access to essential goods and inflating food prices, such measures exacerbate inequalities and place heavier burdens on vulnerable groups, denying millions their right to adequate and nutritious food. For Malaysia, food security is a national priority. Under the Madani Vision and the 13th Malaysia Plan, the National Food Security Policy and Agro-Food Policy 2.0 aim to ensure availability, accessibility, affordability and sustainability. Among Malaysia's initiatives are the strengthening of rice reserves and the diversification of imports, empowering smallholders and SMEs, advancing climate-smart agriculture and expanding social safety nets for households. Malaysia underscores that humanitarian consequences are severe when access to food and essential supplies is deliberately restricted. Reiterating that food must never be weaponised as a tool of political coercion, Malaysia reaffirms its principled opposition to unilateral coercive measures and calls for disputes to be resolved through dialogue and cooperation, consistently with the UN Charter and international law.

Pakistan underlines that the link between coercion and starvation has become increasingly clear in the face of the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Pakistan is witnessing the



instrumentalization of the right to food to create conditions untenable for continued existence. The genocidal campaign to drive the Palestinian people from their land is unfolding before the world's eyes. The right to food, drinking water and health are curtailed with direct linkages on the right to life and the right to safety and security of the person. The resort to unilateral measures restricting access to essentials such as food and water must cease, both in occupied Palestinian territories and elsewhere. As regards unilateral coercive measures, Pakistan has consistently maintained that they contravene the UN Charter and entail considerable human rights risks. The resort to UCMs in pursuit of foreign policy goals remains a matter of concern, especially with increasing evidence indicating that such measures undermine enjoyment of several interrelated human rights by affected peoples. Sanctions must only be implemented upon authorisation by the UN Security Council with adequate safeguards for people's humanitarian needs and fundamental rights.

The **Russian Federation** states that the large-scale and uncontrolled use by Western countries of unilateral coercive measures in pursuit of their policy goals and to obtain economic advantages is becoming a global challenge for the sovereign development of states and the prosperity of their citizens. These restrictive actions by the West contradict the UN's fundamental human rights conventions. According to Russia, there is an ongoing practise in international relations consisting of collectively blaming the inhabitants of some countries and whole regions for seeking to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms, especially the rights of peoples to sovereignty and self-determination. The countries of the collective West continue to develop norms in their national legislation to criminalise the violation of sanctions regimes. There is an increasing number of prosecutions for attempts to circumvent restrictions by natural and legal persons, including in third countries. The blacklists include the family members of political, cultural and public figures and entrepreneurs. Some countries and their citizens are artificially shrouded in an atmosphere of toxicity which cannot help but negatively impact their enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. The practise of using UCMs exposes the true colours of the Western so-called champions of human rights, their hypocrisy and unscrupulousness, and this should be categorically condemned by the international community.

Sudan agrees with the recommendations formulated by the panellists on the impact of UCMs on the enjoyment of human rights, especially the right to food. These unilateral measures denied nations such as Sudan enjoyment of basic rights, including the right to food, by not implementing major projects on agriculture. This also hinders the performance of economic sectors. It also affects financial transactions and the importing of tools for agricultural projects and also delays the delivery of main commodities. Sudan also refers to measures that are indirectly imposed by third countries or through trade or financial institutions to avoid sanctions from the states imposing these sanctions.

Tanzania states that unilateral coercive measures have serious adverse effects on the targeted economies and innocent lives, especially of women and children and older persons. They also hinder the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. Tanzania stands against the imposition of unjust economic sanctions and other unilateral coercive measures that undermine sovereignty and prosperity for all. In closing, Tanzania calls for the lifting of unjust sanctions and end to unilateral coercive measures that are inconsistent with the principles of international law.



Uganda on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) believes that this panel discussion will further contribute to a better understanding of the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. The NAM firmly believes that UCMs and over-compliance impacts on the key aspects of the right to food, including availability, accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability. This further compounds the challenges in food production, processing, preservation, and distribution, which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable. The 19th NAM Summit, held in Kampala in 2024, reiterated its objection to all UCMs, including those measures used as tools for political or economic and financial pressure against any country against developing countries, which violate the UN Charter rules and principles of international law. NAM leaders reaffirmed that under no circumstances should people be deprived of their own means of subsistence and development. They expressed concern that such measures hinder the well-being of populations of affected countries and create obstacles to the full realisation of their human rights. The NAM underlines that UCMs are one of the obstacles to the full enjoyment of the right to food, and calls upon all states to avoid the unilateral imposition of economic coercive measures and the extraterritorial application of domestic laws that likely affect developing countries and access to basic human rights.

Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter appreciates the fact that the UN General Assembly proclaimed 4 December as the International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures - an initiative promoted by the Group of Friends. Addressing the structural causes of food insecurity, hunger and widespread poverty is vital, not only to understand the phenomenon in its entirety, but also to develop effective and efficient actions which would put an end to the scourge of hunger and save the lives of millions of people. Guaranteeing the food security means that states need to seek out comprehensive, sustainable, coordinated and effective solutions. This needs to be done by the international community, as the emanation of all measures which distort the market are applied by developed countries. The Group of Friends requests the immediate elimination of UCMs, which run counter to the United Nations Charter and international law, and are applied as weapons of war. These have a direct effect on the enjoyment of all human rights of entire peoples, including the right to food.

Venezuela thanks the panellists for their valuable contributions and presentations. Since 2014, Venezuela has been a victim of the cruel implementation of UCMs by the US government, which declared Venezuela to be a threat to its foreign policy. This was the beginning of the economic, financial, diplomatic and trade blockade against Venezuela, whose aim is to cause an internal collapse, which through force allows for a change in a political regime in the country. To date, 1042 UCMs have been imposed on the Venezuelan people, which constitute crimes against humanity. The food system has been one of the damaged sectors by these measures, which affects the imports of goods and inputs, the development of national production and funding of plans and programmes in that field. In spite of this, to guarantee fully the right to food of its people, the Venezuelan government has developed a policy to combat these illegal UCMs. The FAO certified in its last report the reduction of the prevalence index of undernourishment in Venezuela, standing at 5.9% in the last quarter. Venezuela energetically rejects the imposition of UCMs and requests the unconditional and immediate cessation of this policy, which violates the UN Charter and the human rights of entire peoples.

Zimbabwe, as one of the countries affected by the imposition of unilateral cohesive measures, its agriculture - a backbone of the national economy - has suffered from diminished export competitiveness and reduced foreign exchange earnings, jeopardising national food security. International banks have been hesitant to engage with Zimbabwean entities, making it difficult to conduct normal transactions, leading to reduced support and declining foreign direct investment in the agricultural sector, hindering the ability of Zimbabwe's farmers to finance their business. UCMs also interfere with the movement of food, leading to shortages and higher prices, placing food out of reach for many in targeted countries. Zimbabwe calls for the lifting of all UCMs and reiterates the need for UN agencies to monitor and report on the impact of UCMs, secondary sanctions and over-compliance on the enjoyment of human rights in targeted countries and on the weakened capacity of those countries to effectively respond to their human rights obligations.

Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union** recalls that its own sanctions are used to defend universal values and international law, preserve peace, security and human rights in line with the UN Charter. They are reversible, proportionate, targeted and calibrated. The EU carefully designs its sanctions to avoid unintended consequences, including for food security around the globe. EU sanctions do not target the trade in agricultural and food products, including grain and fertiliser, and there is no ban on transit to third countries via the EU on such items. In addition, EU sanctions have no extraterritorial application. They do not create obligations for non-EU persons or organisations which have no link to the EU. In order to prevent over-compliance and de-risking activities, extensive guidance on the implementation of sanctions are available to economic operators. The EU and its members are the world's largest donors of humanitarian and development assistance, including to countries under sanctions. In addition, the EU has introduced broad humanitarian carve-outs in the autonomous sanctions regimes, thus underlining our strong commitment to humanitarian principles. Food should never be used as a weapon of war, as it has a greater negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to food and on food security.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

Jameh Ehyagaran Teb Sonnati Va Salamat Iranian emphasizes that the right to food is not only a basic human right, but also a precondition for the realization of life and dignity. Yet, unilateral sanctions and the overcompliance they generate are directly undermining this right for millions of people. UCMs disrupt agricultural production, block access to seeds, fertilizers, and technology and restrict international trade and banking channels necessary for importing food and medicine. Overcompliance by private companies and financial institutions worsens the situation by denying transactions even where humanitarian exemptions exist. According to General Comment No.12 of the CESCR, 'food should never be used as an instrument of political and economic pressure.' However, limitations imposed on food have severe consequences specifically on children, women, the elderly, and persons with chronic illnesses. As Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan highlighted, such practices amount to collective punishment violating human rights law. Therefore, the organization urges states to demand the immediate lifting of unilateral sanctions that endanger food security; to establish effective monitoring of overcompliance; and to reaffirm that no political interest can justify depriving civilians of food, medicine, or other essentials for survival. The right to food must remain beyond politics.



The **Cuban United Nations Association** points out that no serious, in-depth and exhaustive analysis on development and human rights is possible without bearing in mind the barrier that these multidimensional measures are of pressure and asphyxia for countries. When it comes to Cuba, for over six decades Cuba has suffered the imposition of the broadest and most complex UCMs in history, which affects all spheres of social, economic and cultural life of the country and its people. The US blockade against Cuba is a flagrant violation of human rights and the main barrier for the development and attainment of the SDGs. Cuba has witnessed an upsurge in extreme levels with the current administration. When it comes to food, not only is there hampering when it comes to purchasing food and energy sources as inputs for industry, but also all commercial financial transactions of countries with third states. The blockade prevents the normal functioning of civil society organisations in Cuba and their exchanges with international counterparts. On behalf of civil society living and working in Cuba, the Cuban United Nations Association calls once more for the immediate lifting of the blockade and the removal of Cuba from the list of states sponsoring terrorism. The Cuba's inclusion in this list is an additional tool used by the US government to justify and to increase to extreme levels the genocidal blockade against Cuba. It is vital to report and have awareness raising of experts on human rights mechanisms as to the devastating and cruel human impact of UCMs.

The **Medical Support Association for Underprivileged Iranian Patients** denounces that UCMs severely undermine the right to food and global food security. Sanctions disrupt trade, finance and supply chains, leading to food shortages, inflated prices, and malnutrition in affected populations. A 2025 report has documented the food inflation rates to have alarmingly increased in sanctioned regions and reached 32% in Iran in a one year period. In Yemen, about half of the population were facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 2024 due to sanctions. Overlaps of sanctioned regimes, threats of secondary sanctions and zero risk policies lead to over compliance by banks, producers of foodstuff, transportation and delivery companies and limit access to food. The Association calls on panellists to use their academic capacities to continually raise awareness on the negative human rights impacts of UCMs and discuss the inequalities in global systems caused by UCMs. It urges the panellists to advocate for international collaboration and address inequalities in food distribution and access. Furthermore, the Association calls on UN member states for sharing knowledge, experiences and innovative strategies to combat hunger and malnutrition, emphasising that the global food crisis is primarily a distribution issue rather than a lack of resources.

The **Organisation for Defending Victims of Violence** insists upon the devastating impact of UCMs on global food security. The Global Report on Food Crisis 2025 highlights the worsening humanitarian crisis with millions facing acute food insecurity. Unilateral sanctions inflict severe harm on people's access to food and other necessities by disrupting supply chains, reducing household purchasing power, inflating import costs and crippling national infrastructure. Even when directed at specific individuals or entities, their consequences ripple across entire economies, worsening hunger and poverty on a massive scale. This is deeply concerning as many people face poor nutrition and rising health risks. As UN human rights experts emphasise, in March 2022, access to food, water, sanitation, medicine, vaccines and other services essential for survival and the functioning of critical infrastructure must never be obstructed by unilateral sanctions. The SR's latest report underscores the human cost of these measures. In countries



such as Iran and Venezuela, sanctions have intensified food insecurity and deepened dependence on humanitarian aid. Under the worn-out excuse of targeting governments, they deprive civilians of medicine, food and dignity, violating the fundamental right to live free from hunger.

The **Charitable Institute for Protecting Social Victims**, drawing on its field experience, emphasises that UCMs and the over-compliance of banks and companies directly restricted the right to food and food security, endangering livelihoods and access to adequate nutrition for vulnerable groups. These measures, contrary to the UN Charter, the Declaration on the Right to Development and other international treaties have limited people's access to essential necessities of life, including food and adequate nutrition. Field evidence shows that financial restrictions and fear of secondary sanctions have disrupted food supply chains, reduced the capacity of civil society organisations to provide support services and increased poverty and food insecurity. Women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities bear the heaviest burden. The Charitable Institute recommends that the UNHRC, in cooperation with relevant Special Rapporteurs and civil society, establish an independent mechanism to monitor the human impacts of sanctions on the right to food and food security and hold the state accountable for the social and humanitarian consequences of such measures. Compensation and reparation for victims of sanctions are only part of the action needed to restore the human agency and dignity of communities under sanctions. The Institute stands ready to provide field-based data and documentation to strengthen relevant Council's mechanisms.

United Nations Watch laments that this panel discussion is premised on the idea that the greatest threat to human rights today comes from Western sanctions. In truth, the gravest assault on human dignity comes from authoritarian governments that oppress, jail and torture their own people. Therefore, UN Watch asks this panel whether it is right that the SR Alena DOUHAN, has travelled to Qatar, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Iran, Syria and China not to defend the victims of these dictatorships but to lend a UN imprimatur to the propaganda of the oppressors. UN Watch asks whether when the people of Venezuela cried out under Maduro's misrule, when Syrians were bombed and slaughtered by Assad, when Iranian women were beaten for showing their hair, what was the response of the SR - to blame the West and excuse the despots? Why did the Office of the SR get \$50,000 from Qatar? Why \$265,000 from Russia? Why \$980,000 from China? Who believes that Sheikh Tamim, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping gave \$1.3 million to help human rights victims? According to UN Watch, sanctions are not the cause of hunger in Cuba, but they are the result of a one-party system that for decades has denied its people freedom, choice and prosperity. Ordinary Cubans know it is not sanctions that prevent them from growing food freely or importing without state control. It is their rulers in Havana. The UN should be defending victims, not enabling their oppressors. By turning the UNHRC into a platform against the West, today's discussion betrays its mandate. If the UNHRC cares about human rights, it should first demand accountability from the governments that oppress their own people.

The **Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health (GIWEH)** remains gravely concerned by the devastating impact of unilateral coercive measures and external interference on the enjoyment of human rights in both Palestine and Sudan. In Palestine, decades of blockade and collective punishment have denied an entire population access to food, water, healthcare and development. Such coercive measures are not about security, they are about control and they



perpetuate cycles of suffering and despair. In Sudan, foreign interference and the use of mercenaries supported by external actors have fuelled conflict, displaced millions and deepened the humanitarian crisis. These practises undermine sovereignty and directly obstruct the Sudanese people's right to peace, justice and development. GIWEH urges the UNHRC and member states to move beyond condemnation and take concrete steps to end coercive measures and external support to conflicts. The people of Palestine and Sudan deserve dignity, self-determination and a future free from imposed suffering.

The **Bachehaye Asemame Kamran Rehabilitation Institute** expresses its deep concern over the severe impact of UCMs and overcompliance on the right to food and food security. Such measures, contrary to international law and obligations under the UN Charter and international human rights treaties, restrict access to essential food, agricultural inputs, and distribution channels, undermining the availability, accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability of food. Field evidence demonstrates that overcompliance by financial institutions and private actors, often motivated by fear of secondary sanctions, has exacerbated food insecurity, disrupted supply chains, and limited the capacity of humanitarian and civil society actors to respond effectively. The Institute recalls that the UNHRC, in its resolutions 27/21 through 58/3, has repeatedly affirmed that essential goods, including food, must never be used as tools of political coercion and that such measures impede the full realization of economic, social, and cultural rights. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are critical to assess and mitigate the human impact of these measures. The Institute urges states, the UN, and relevant stakeholders to ensure that humanitarian exemptions are effectively implemented to safeguard access to food; to strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms to document violations and impacts on food security; to promote accountability for the adverse consequences of sanctions and overcompliance on vulnerable populations.

The **Indian Council for South America (CISA)** commends the SR's work and states that Alaska, Hawaii and Indigenous peoples as subjects of international law lodges diplomatic protest against the application of domestic law to annex our territories in violation of Article 73 and 1.2 of the UN Charter. The Equal Rights and Self-Determination Principle makes it clear that unilateral coercive measures cannot be applied for peoples under colonialism and foreign occupation. The peaceful settlement of our international dispute has been denied. In no case may native peoples be deprived of the right to subsistence, a fundamental principle of self-determination. The Council rejects all attempts of unilateral coercive measures including enactment of laws, national laws and extraterritorial application not in conformity with international law. Yet UNGA resolution 1469 is weaponised as a unilateral coercive measure devoid of UN monitoring or arbitration by member states making territories of Alaska the 49th and 50th states respectively. The Royal Hawaiian Kingdom, the family, were not informed or invited to participate as a free political institution nor were the sovereign Alaska Indigenous authorities.

The **Human Rights Research League** notes that in 2014, the UNHRC adopted resolution 2721 expressing grave concern that in some countries the situation of children and women is adversely affected by unilateral coercive measures. Though the negative impacts on the quality of life for ordinary citizens in countries that are affected by sanctions are a relevant concern for any international body engaged in the issue of human rights, the Human Rights Research League draws the Council's attention to the fact that many such countries spend much of the country's



wealth not on improving its standard of living for said women and children, but rather spend billions of dollars on advancing their military capability. One such example is Iran, which has been subjected to international sanctions due to its nuclear programme. The representatives of the Iranian government lament the plight of civilians suffering under crippling sanctions imposed by Western countries. All the while, Iranian authorities have spent billions of dollars of their national wealth not on improving the standard of living for women and children, but on advancing their ballistic missile programme, showcasing vividly how little concern the authorities have for the welfare of their citizens. The UNHRC should not be fooled by the crocodile tears shed by authoritarian governments, but rather question their misuse of funds and widespread corruption.

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) affirms that UCMs are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and constitute an obstacle to the implementation of the Right to Development and the 23rd Agenda for Sustainable Development. UCMs significantly impact the right to food because these measures, which may include economic sanctions and trade restrictions, can disrupt food supply chains, increase food prices, and limit access to essential resources. In many developing nations, where food imports are critical, UCMs can lead to skyrocketing food prices and limited access to vital resources, resulting in increased malnutrition and hunger. Moreover, the phenomenon of overcompliance further complicates these issues. When businesses and organisations pre-emptively adhere to UCMs, even beyond their legal obligation, they may restrict access to food and agricultural products. The right to food enshrined in international human rights law obligates states to respect, protect, and fulfil this fundamental need. UCMs over-compliance undermine these obligations, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities and exacerbating existing inequalities. To uphold the right to food, it is crucial for the international community to clearly denounce and reassess the use of unilateral coercive measures. Dialogue and cooperation should replace coercion, ensuring that humanitarian exemptions are effectively implemented.

The **Shaanxi Patriotic Volunteer Association** states that UCMs violate international law and hinder the right to development and safeguarding of people's livelihood. World Bank report shows that US sanctions have driven up Iran's food import costs, leading to a significant rise in child malnutrition rates. Sanctions imposed by the US have led to a shortage of agricultural equipment and a sharp decline in wheat production. Excessive compliance by enterprises has plunged 25 million people in Africa's Sahel region into a food crisis. In 2024, the global reduction in food aid due to excessive compliance is equivalent to the annual food ration for 12 million people, which is a typical example of political gains at the expense of human rights. The Association calls upon all countries to ensure humanitarian channels within the framework of law and prevent food from becoming political weapons. At various UN meetings, the Association has repeatedly called for replacing unilateral sanctions with multilateral cooperation; supporting the monitoring of impact of sanctions on the right to food; and establishing a human rights assessment mechanism. The Association calls upon the United Nations to give attention to the Shaanxi International Patriotic Pact, which prohibits the use of food for political coercion. Loving one's own country is not a zero-sum game that sacrifices the interests of other countries, but a responsibility. Therefore, the Association calls for joining hands to put an end to political abuse.



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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