



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda items 2 and 5

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Human rights bodies and mechanisms**

**Activities of special rapporteurs, independent experts and  
working groups of the special procedures of the Human  
Rights Council undertaken in 2022, including updated  
information on special procedures and information on the  
twenty-eighth annual meeting of special rapporteurs,  
independent experts and chairs of working groups**

**Report of the Secretariat\***

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\* The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	3
II. Facts and figures .....	3
A. New mandates.....	3
B. Mandate holders.....	3
C. Country visits.....	3
D. Communications .....	3
E. Media outreach and public awareness .....	4
F. Thematic reports and studies .....	4
G. Contributions to standard-setting and the protection and promotion of human rights.....	9
H. Forums, consultations, workshops and other meetings.....	9
I. Engagement with other parts of the United Nations system and regional mechanisms .....	10
J. Contribution of special procedures to prevention .....	11
K. Follow-up activities .....	11
L. Cooperation with special procedure mandate holders .....	12
M. Contribution of special procedures to technical cooperation .....	13
III. Coordination Committee of Special Procedures .....	14
IV. Acts of intimidation and reprisal .....	15
V. Twenty-eighth annual meeting of special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairs of working groups .....	16
A. Coordination Committee.....	16
B. Thematic issues and working methods .....	16
C. Consultations with stakeholders .....	17

## I. Introduction

1. The present report contains an overview of the special procedures system, highlighting activities undertaken in 2022. It also contains information on the work of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures. The main points and the conclusions reached during the twenty-eighth annual meeting of special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairs of working groups of the special procedures are also elaborated upon.

## II. Facts and figures

### A. New mandates

2. At its fifty-first session, the Human Rights Council decided to create a new special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation (resolution 51/25). The total number of mandates stands at 59, of which 45 are thematic and 14 are country specific.<sup>1</sup>

### B. Mandate holders

3. The special procedures system currently includes 83 mandate holder positions. The Human Rights Council appointed 19 mandate holders in 2022. The gender balance continued to reflect more women than men: 55 per cent of current mandate holders are women and 45 per cent are men.

4. As at 31 December 2022, mandate holders came from States Members of the United Nations belonging to the following groups: African States, 21.95 per cent; Asia-Pacific States, 20.73 per cent; Eastern European States, 8.54 per cent; Latin American and Caribbean States, 19.51 per cent; and Western European and other States, 29.27 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

5. In November 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized one induction session for newly appointed mandate holders in Geneva. A list of all mandate holders for discontinued mandates is now available on the website, along with the list of current and former mandate holders for existing mandates.

### C. Country visits

6. Mandate holders conducted 69 in situ visits to 54 States and territories and one institution.<sup>3</sup> A total of 128 States and 1 non-member observer State had extended a standing invitation as at 31 December 2022.<sup>4</sup>

7. As at 31 December 2022, the number of States that had received at least one visit from a mandate holder increased to 172. However, 21 States had not yet been visited by any mandate holder, of which 4 had not yet received a request for a visit, 15 had not yet accepted a request, 1 had extended an invitation and 1 had accepted a visit that had not yet taken place as at 31 December 2022.<sup>5</sup>

### D. Communications

8. In 2022, mandate holders transmitted 654 communications, 548 of which were sent jointly, to 138 States and 109 non-State actors. The communications covered 934 individuals, 245 of whom were identified as female. A total of 440 replies (401 substantive replies) were

<sup>1</sup> [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sect. XV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. II.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. VI.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, sects. III and IV.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. VII. Information on the status of all country visits requested by mandate holders and on forthcoming visits is available at <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/Home.aspx?lang=en>.

received in 2022, which includes replies to communications sent before 2022. A total of 318 replies to communications sent in 2022 were received, of which 285 (43.58 per cent reply rate)<sup>6</sup> were substantive replies. Some communications received more than one reply.<sup>7</sup>

9. Three communications reports were issued in 2022. Communications sent and replies received are made available through a dedicated website,<sup>8</sup> through which users may access the database of all communications sent and replies received since the eighteenth session of the Human Rights Council. Communications and associated replies from Governments and others may be searched for by mandate, country, geographical region, time period and/or by the communications reports submitted to the Council since 2011. All communications are made public after 60 days, and other letters, which are related to draft or existing legislation, policy or practice not deemed to be in compliance with international human rights norms and standards, after 48 hours. Any response received is also released publicly.

10. In 2022, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances transmitted 677 new alleged cases of enforced disappearance to States, of which 339 were transmitted under its urgent action procedure. The Working Group also transmitted 5 newly reported cases of violations that were tantamount to enforced disappearances allegedly perpetrated by non-State actors in Afghanistan (1), Libya (1), Yemen (1) and the State of Palestine (2). The Working Group was able to clarify 102 cases.

11. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued 88 opinions under its regular communications procedure in 2022, thereby maintaining the increase in the number of opinions issued since 2017, which has been one of the measures taken by the Working Group to address the existing backlog of cases. In 2022, the Working Group received information indicating that at least 12 subjects of its opinions had been released.

12. Special procedures have also used the communications procedure to address cross-cutting issues affecting several States and stakeholders. They sent similar communications to various stakeholders related, for example, to lack of accountability in business practices; trafficking of persons, including children, for forced labour slavery or servitude-like conditions; and negative fallout from development projects where businesses failed to prevent, protect against, mitigate and redress situations.

## **E. Media outreach and public awareness**

13. Mandate holders issued 427 media products, either individually or jointly, of which 306 were press releases, 70 were media advisories and 51 were media statements, raising awareness and voicing concerns regarding a range of human rights issues, including on individual cases. A video has been finalized showcasing the work and impact of special procedures, to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the work of special procedures.

## **F. Thematic reports and studies**

14. In 2022, mandate holders submitted 135 reports; 89 were submitted to the Human Rights Council, including 25 country visit reports, and 46 to the General Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

15. In order to facilitate access to information on upcoming reports and related calls for inputs, the web page compiling all valid calls for inputs and questionnaires issued by mandate holders is regularly updated.<sup>10</sup>

16. Two mandate holders devoted one of their reports to taking stock of the activities undertaken to date in furtherance of the mandate: the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions offered a reflection from a historical perspective on the establishment of the mandate and the subsequent evolution of its working methods to mark

<sup>6</sup> As of 2018, the response rate includes only substantive replies.

<sup>7</sup> [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sects. IX and X.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org>.

<sup>9</sup> See [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sect. XI, for the list of reports and the themes addressed.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures-human-rights-council/reports-and-related-calls-input](http://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures-human-rights-council/reports-and-related-calls-input).

the fortieth anniversary of its establishment;<sup>11</sup> and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances submitted a study marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.<sup>12</sup>

17. Two mandate holders, reaching the end of their terms, submitted final reports providing an overview of their six-year tenures: the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons<sup>13</sup> and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.<sup>14</sup>

18. The following incoming mandate holders decided to devote their first reports to illustrating their vision and priorities for their mandates: the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change,<sup>15</sup> the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights,<sup>16</sup> the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights,<sup>17</sup> the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment<sup>18</sup> and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup>

19. The thematic reports published in 2022 addressed a wide range of human rights issues. Seven cross-cutting themes emerged in particular: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; women's rights and gender; prevention of human rights violations and abuses, security and peacebuilding; migration; climate change; new technologies; and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. All reports authored by mandate holders on climate change, migration, new technologies, the Sustainable Development Goals, disaggregated by Goal, and COVID-19 may be accessed on the web page on cross-cutting thematic issues.<sup>20</sup> Information on the themes of the upcoming reports of special procedure mandate holders is available on the OHCHR website.<sup>21</sup>

20. All special procedures conclusions and recommendations are available in the report of the Secretary General on this matter,<sup>22</sup> which provides a comprehensive overview of all the reports presented by special procedure mandate holders in 2022. In that report, references are made to Our Common Agenda and "The highest aspiration: a call to action for human rights" and how the conclusions and recommendations of special procedure mandate holders contribute to making the human rights system responsive and innovative in confronting human rights challenges and enhancing synergies between human rights and all pillars of the work of the United Nations.

21. Several reports were related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. They included the reports of: the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, in which she addressed the role of culture in sustainable development, including the cultures of development;<sup>23</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, in which he drew on the 2030 Agenda while examining the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of the right to development at the national and international levels;<sup>24</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in which he identified the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a catalyst for accelerated

<sup>11</sup> [A/77/270](#).

<sup>12</sup> [A/HRC/51/31/Add.3](#).

<sup>13</sup> [A/77/182](#).

<sup>14</sup> [A/HRC/49/50](#).

<sup>15</sup> [A/HRC/50/39](#).

<sup>16</sup> [A/HRC/49/54](#).

<sup>17</sup> [A/HRC/49/47](#).

<sup>18</sup> [A/77/502](#).

<sup>19</sup> [A/HRC/51/6](#).

<sup>20</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CrosscuttingThematicIssues.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CrosscuttingThematicIssues.aspx).

<sup>21</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Consultations-calls-for-input-reports.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Consultations-calls-for-input-reports.aspx).

<sup>22</sup> [A/HRC/52/19](#).

<sup>23</sup> [A/77/290](#).

<sup>24</sup> [A/HRC/51/30](#) and [A/77/174](#).

action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;<sup>25</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, in which he examined the challenges and outlook for judicial independence in the context of the 2030 Agenda and its reflection in Sustainable Development Goal 16, to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies;<sup>26</sup> the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in which she criticized the 2030 Agenda for failing to adequately address the systemic racism and xenophobia that remained barriers to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals;<sup>27</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, in which she addressed the vulnerabilities of children to sale and sexual exploitation within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals;<sup>28</sup> the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, in which he brought a sexual orientation and gender identity lens to the health-related commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals;<sup>29</sup> and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, in which he proposed linking transitional justice with the Sustainable Development Goals process through a people-centred and victim-centred approach.<sup>30</sup>

22. Women's rights and gender featured prominently in several reports. The Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health shed light on who was seen as a victim of violence, with emphasis on the violence experienced by women, children and non-binary persons and on conflict-related sexual violence and structural violence.<sup>31</sup> The Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples focused on the role of indigenous women as scientific and technical knowledge keepers in the context of international human rights law and identified the current threats and intersecting challenges that they faced because of their gender and identity as Indigenous People.<sup>32</sup> The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, analysed how gender shapes the experiences of climate-related disasters, displacement and migration.<sup>33</sup> The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences addressed the theme of violence against Indigenous women and girls.<sup>34</sup> She also assessed the intersecting vulnerabilities experienced by groups of women most at risk of the adverse impacts of climate change.<sup>35</sup> The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls highlighted the important contributions made by girls and young women from different regions and backgrounds to the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of human rights, along with the profound transformative potential of their activism.<sup>36</sup> The Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity examined discriminatory and often violent barriers faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual persons, transgender and other gender diverse persons, and intersex persons, impeding full and equal enjoyment of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.<sup>37</sup> He also addressed the call for greater awareness of how gender and sexual orientation and gender identity dynamics operate in the context of armed conflict and within peacebuilding and peacekeeping.<sup>38</sup>

23. Mandate holders continued to focus on the prevention of human rights violations and on peace and security issues, with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, focusing on contemporary forms of slavery affecting

<sup>25</sup> [A/77/284](#).

<sup>26</sup> [A/77/160](#).

<sup>27</sup> [A/HRC/50/60](#).

<sup>28</sup> [A/77/140](#).

<sup>29</sup> [A/HRC/50/27](#).

<sup>30</sup> [A/77/162](#).

<sup>31</sup> [A/HRC/50/28](#).

<sup>32</sup> [A/HRC/51/28](#).

<sup>33</sup> [A/77/170](#).

<sup>34</sup> [A/HRC/50/26](#).

<sup>35</sup> [A/77/136](#).

<sup>36</sup> [A/HRC/50/25](#).

<sup>37</sup> [A/HRC/50/27](#).

<sup>38</sup> [A/77/235](#).

persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minority communities and formulating recommendations with the objective of providing constructive guidance on how to prevent and address contemporary forms of slavery affecting minorities,<sup>39</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities examining the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of military operations,<sup>40</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression examining the challenges that information manipulation posed to freedom of opinion and expression during armed conflict,<sup>41</sup> the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, analysing the legal, political and practical challenges to preventing, ending and responding to systematic and deliberate mass destruction of homes during violent conflict,<sup>42</sup> the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order focusing on challenges and issues at stake in relation to the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security at the global level,<sup>43</sup> the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination examining violations of human rights and humanitarian law perpetrated by private military and security companies, mercenaries and related actors in the maritime context,<sup>44</sup> the Special Rapporteur on minority issues discussing conflict prevention through the protection of the human rights of minorities,<sup>45</sup> the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief exploring the specific needs and vulnerabilities experienced by minorities in conflict,<sup>46</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism addressing the inextricable link between the core objectives of the United Nations to maintain, build and preserve peace and promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms<sup>47</sup> and reflecting on the failure to implement the recommendations contained in the 2010 joint study on global practices in relation to secret detention in the context of countering terrorism,<sup>48</sup> the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity examining how gender and sexual orientation and gender identity dynamics operated in the context of armed conflict and within peacebuilding and peacekeeping<sup>49</sup> and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues presenting the recommendations drawn from the discussions and contributions of participants at the fourteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues and from those made at four regional forums, on the theme “Conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities”.<sup>50</sup>

24. Mandate holders also addressed migration issues, with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders analysing the situation of human rights defenders working on the rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees,<sup>51</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants examining recent developments in migration and border governance affecting the human rights of migrants<sup>52</sup> and reviewing the complex relationship between climate change, human rights and migration, as well as the multifaceted drivers of cross-border migration in the context of climate change<sup>53</sup> and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, focusing on trafficking in persons in

<sup>39</sup> [A/HRC/51/26](#).

<sup>40</sup> [A/77/203](#).

<sup>41</sup> [A/77/288](#).

<sup>42</sup> [A/77/190](#).

<sup>43</sup> [A/HRC/51/32](#).

<sup>44</sup> [A/77/268](#).

<sup>45</sup> [A/HRC/49/46](#).

<sup>46</sup> [A/HRC/49/44](#).

<sup>47</sup> [A/77/345](#).

<sup>48</sup> [A/HRC/49/45](#).

<sup>49</sup> [A/77/235](#).

<sup>50</sup> [A/HRC/49/81](#).

<sup>51</sup> [A/77/178](#).

<sup>52</sup> [A/HRC/50/31](#).

<sup>53</sup> [A/77/189](#).

the agriculture sector and addressing the rights of agricultural workers in seasonal, temporary and circular migration.<sup>54</sup>

25. Mandate holders continued to maintain a focus on climate change, with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change identifying six thematic priorities that he would focus on during his mandate<sup>55</sup> and exploring the functional arrangements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement,<sup>56</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants examining the human rights situation of migrants, especially women, children, Indigenous Peoples, minorities and other groups in specific vulnerable situations, affected by the adverse effects of climate change,<sup>57</sup> the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance highlighting the racially discriminatory and unjust roots and consequences of environmental degradation, including climate change,<sup>58</sup> the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, highlighting how the negative impact of climate change and of both sudden and slow-onset disasters was shaped by gendered inequalities and systemic discrimination<sup>59</sup> and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences exploring the nexus between the climate crisis, environmental degradation and related displacement, and violence against women and girls.<sup>60</sup>

26. The impact of new technologies on human rights was addressed in numerous reports, with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities focusing on artificial intelligence and the rights of persons with disabilities,<sup>61</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the right to education examining the impact of the digitalization of education on the right to education,<sup>62</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression focusing on reinforcing media freedom and the safety of journalists in the digital age,<sup>63</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights providing an overview and assessment of the development of cybertechnologies and their impact on the use of unilateral sanctions,<sup>64</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography focusing on online child sexual exploitation<sup>65</sup> and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls addressing offline and online harassment and violence in its report on girls' and young women's activism.<sup>66</sup>

27. Several mandate holders addressed aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises outlining ways in which various actors had addressed the COVID-19 pandemic and the business-related human rights abuses that accompanied it,<sup>67</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the right to development examining the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of the right to development at the national and global levels,<sup>68</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the right to food examining the emerging issues concerning the realization of the right to food in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on food security and nutrition,<sup>69</sup> the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association highlighting the important role social movements played in ensuring a sustainable and resilient recovery and in building back better

<sup>54</sup> [A/HRC/50/33](#).

<sup>55</sup> [A/HRC/50/39](#).

<sup>56</sup> [A/77/226](#).

<sup>57</sup> [A/77/189](#).

<sup>58</sup> [A/77/549](#).

<sup>59</sup> [A/77/170](#).

<sup>60</sup> [A/77/136](#).

<sup>61</sup> [A/HRC/49/52](#).

<sup>62</sup> [A/77/324](#).

<sup>63</sup> [A/HRC/50/29](#).

<sup>64</sup> [A/77/296](#).

<sup>65</sup> [A/HRC/49/51](#).

<sup>66</sup> [A/HRC/50/25](#).

<sup>67</sup> [A/HRC/50/40](#).

<sup>68</sup> [A/HRC/51/30](#) and [A/77/174](#).

<sup>69</sup> [A/77/177](#).

from the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>70</sup> and the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity addressing the extent to which global vaccine solidarity had been expressed by State actors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>71</sup>

## **G. Contributions to standard-setting and the protection and promotion of human rights**

28. The following mandate holders contributed to clarifying human rights norms and standards in relation to their mandates:

(a) The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions focused on forensic medicine. He offered examples of best practices in the area of medico-legal death investigations and formulated recommendations to enhance such systems, including through compliance with the standards that the mandate helped to develop, promote and implement over its 40 years of existence (the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions of 1989 and the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death of 2016);

(b) The Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises presented the road map for the next decade of business and human rights – raising the ambition, in the light of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

(c) The Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material proposed a practical checklist aimed at assisting States in identifying gaps and providing guidance to address the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

## **H. Forums, consultations, workshops and other meetings**

29. In 2022, mandate holders organized or attended more than 160 forums, consultations, expert meetings, workshops and events, in collaboration and/or engaging with Governments, the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector.<sup>72</sup>

30. The Forum on Minority Issues held its fifteenth session in Geneva, on 1 and 2 December 2022, under the guidance of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues. The session marked and focused on the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Minority Rights. A total of 580 people from 79 countries registered to participate, including representatives of Member States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and mechanisms in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, academics and experts on minority issues, and representatives of minorities and minority and non-governmental organizations. The report will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-second session.<sup>73</sup>

31. The eleventh annual session of the Forum on Business and Human Rights took place in a hybrid format in Geneva, from 28 to 30 November 2022, under the guidance of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. It focused on the theme “Rights holders at the centre: strengthening accountability to advance business respect for people and planet in the next decade”. Over 2,500 participants from 130 countries registered to attend and engage in the three-day multi-stakeholder dialogue on business and human rights. The Forum’s agenda included 27 thematic, regional and high-level sessions that addressed trends and challenges in implementing the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Over 140 panellists,

<sup>70</sup> [A/77/171](#).

<sup>71</sup> [A/77/173](#).

<sup>72</sup> See [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sect. XIX, for a non-exhaustive list of events organized by mandate holders.

<sup>73</sup> [A/HRC/52/71](#).

including rights holders, business leaders, policymakers, representatives of Indigenous Peoples, heads of international and regional organizations, and representatives of Governments, civil society, trade unions, industry associations, academia and law firms, took stock of efforts to secure accountability and access to remedies. The report will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-third session.

## **I. Engagement with other parts of the United Nations system and regional mechanisms**

32. Throughout the year, mandate holders sought closer cooperation with the wider United Nations system and agencies, funds and programmes and with regional mechanisms. A non-exhaustive list of those activities is available in the addendum to the present report.<sup>74</sup>

33. Special procedure mandate holders continued to provide short documents in advance of the presentation of their reports to the Human Rights Council, highlighting the main issues raised and the elements on which they would welcome the views of States and other stakeholders, with the objective of enhancing interaction with the Council.

34. “The highest aspiration: a call to action for human rights” and Our Common Agenda continued to offer key momentum and opportunities to integrate the work of special procedures within the United Nations system and foster engagement between these mechanisms and United Nations bodies and entities. In those initiatives, the Secretary-General calls for the fuller use of human rights mechanisms, including special procedures, to solve pressing social, economic and political challenges and to better link them to other processes to maximize their impact. He also calls for finding ways to put the human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing. Special procedures and the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures engaged with various stakeholders, in particular within the United Nations system, to contribute to the mainstreaming of human rights within the system.

35. The Coordination Committee of Special Procedures engaged with various United Nations interlocutors. Channels of communication with the United Nations system have been consolidated. The Coordination Committee met with the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council and several co-facilitators to discuss how special procedures could contribute to the processes and outcome documents leading to the Summit of the Future. Two public events were organized in New York to bring special procedures closer to the other United Nations processes. The first meeting focused on the role of special procedures in relation to prevention and to sustaining peace and was organized with the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, while the second focused on the role of special procedures in bridging the gap between New York and Geneva, and their contribution to the mainstreaming of human rights, in line with “the highest aspiration: a call to action for human rights” and Our Common Agenda. The second meeting was held in cooperation with the President of the Human Rights Council and the Chair of the Third Committee.

36. Engagement with New York-based entities continued, as did engagement with United Nations country teams. With the resumption of country visits, mandate holders have enhanced their engagement with the country teams. Engagement also took place at the global level. For example, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was invited to participate in the Resident Coordinators’ global retreat in New York and led a day-long clinic on diversity and inclusion focusing specifically on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples.

37. Some informal and formal interactions between mandate holders and members of the Security Council took place.

38. On 21 April 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food participated in an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on conflict and hunger.

<sup>74</sup> [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sect. XX.

39. On 24 May 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression participated in an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the protection of journalists.

40. On 29 October 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism participated in a special meeting held by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in Delhi, India, focused on new and emerging technologies.

41. On 2 November 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran participated in an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the ongoing protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

42. Engagement also continued with the peacebuilding architecture in the light of a joint workplan and in follow-up to the dedicated meetings held in November 2019. Progress in raising awareness and improving the work of special procedure mandate holders on prevention and peacebuilding was made through active participation in various meetings related to prevention and the preparation and dissemination of various written inputs, as well as a dedicated meeting between the Coordination Committee and the Peacebuilding Support Office to agree on the next steps following the joint workshop held in 2019.

43. Some special procedure mandate holders participated in the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

44. In relation to cooperation with regional organizations, special procedure mandate holders consolidated their joint activities with such bodies. The engagement took various forms, including participation in meetings, the issuance of joint statements and joint activities, such as joint reports, seminars and visits.

## **J. Contribution of special procedures to prevention**

45. An exchange of experiences among mandate holders about engagement with the peace and security, peacebuilding and prevention architecture of the United Nations was organized during the annual meeting, with the participation of the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. Several avenues and areas of cooperation were identified, including focusing reports on issues related to peacebuilding or prevention, the organization of joint events, the inclusion of these aspects in country visits and related recommendations, engagement with various United Nations entities and interaction with intergovernmental bodies such as the Security Council or the Peacebuilding Commission. A list of opportunities for engagement will be compiled and mandate holders' engagement with and contribution to the peace and security, peacebuilding and prevention architecture will be recorded.

## **K. Follow-up activities**

46. Efforts have been made to make the work and the recommendations of the special procedures more visible and accessible in order to facilitate follow-up. Recommendations of the special procedures continued to be used by OHCHR field presences and United Nations country teams and are available in the Universal Human Rights Index.<sup>75</sup>

47. Mandate holders continued to prioritize follow-up to, and implementation of, their assessments, conclusions and recommendations. They worked with States and with the United Nations, including United Nations country teams, to ensure the integration of their advice and recommendations into the work of the United Nations. Mandate holders issued 279 follow-up communications to cases previously transmitted to States and non-State actors, observations on communications reports and follow-up press releases. They also sent questionnaires, presented follow-up reports after country visits and convened meetings and

<sup>75</sup> See <https://uhri.ohchr.org>.

consultations. A non-exhaustive list of follow-up activities is contained in the addendum to the present report.<sup>76</sup>

48. Special procedures resort to a combination of tools and networks to foster implementation and collaborate with other mandates, human rights mechanisms and the other parts of the United Nations system, including United Nations country teams.

## **L. Cooperation with special procedure mandate holders**

49. The issue of cooperation from States, and the assessment thereof, remained a priority for special procedures, taking into account all aspects of the work of mandate holders. Cooperation can take many forms. It entails responses to communications, the acceptance of visits, responses to requests for input for annual reports, follow-up to the recommendations made by mandate holders or overall engagement with special procedures. Over the years, efforts have been made to better assess the various dimensions of cooperation by States with special procedures. While there are clear instances of complete lack of cooperation or full cooperation by States, the majority of cases present a mixed record. Specific tools to provide a comprehensive picture of State cooperation have been developed. They are based on systematizing the recording of information related to country visits and communications and the maintenance of related databases and websites. Given the multifaceted dimensions of cooperation, the approach chosen in the present report has been to present two tables containing all relevant information related to States' cooperation related to communications and country visits of special procedures. The present report contains information on the status of cooperation, including the number of standing invitations, the number of visits undertaken in 2022, the number of visits in the past five years,<sup>77</sup> States that have never received a visit from a mandate holder and the number of communications by country and responses received.<sup>78</sup> The enhanced system to record the status of country visit requests and better assess cooperation and actions taken on all sides continued to be implemented. The OHCHR web page reflecting that detailed information, including the status of country visits and related requests, is regularly updated.<sup>79</sup>

50. Available data indicate that special procedures generally enjoy fruitful cooperation from States and other stakeholders. As at 31 December 2022, 128 out of 193 Member States (66.32%) and 1 non-member observer State had extended a standing invitation to thematic special procedures.<sup>80</sup> The number of States that have never received a visit by a mandate holder is 21. The visits by mandate holders increased in 2022 owing to the easing of travel restrictions in relation to the pandemic. The geographical coverage of the visits undertaken indicates that mandate holders visit all regions in a balanced manner. Country visits are an essential part of the fulfilment of special procedure mandates, and mandate holders count on the support of all stakeholders to resume them as soon as possible. Some States received more than one visit by thematic mandate holders per year, and six States received five or more visits in the past five years (Argentina, Canada, Ecuador, Italy, Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia).

51. With regard to country-related mandates, some countries, such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia, were willing to grant access to the country-related mandate holder, whereas Belarus, Burundi, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel and Myanmar continued not to grant such access. Even in those situations, there were some differences, with some States refusing any engagement and others engaging with mandate holders outside of country visits.

52. Initiatives have also been taken to illustrate that cooperation is mutually beneficial. The collection of information on the impact of the work of special procedure mandate holders continued. More stories have been added to the web page "Making a difference".<sup>81</sup> The non-exhaustive compilation of examples collected shows that the impact can take many forms.

<sup>76</sup> A/HRC/52/70/Add.1, sect. XIII.

<sup>77</sup> Covering the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022.

<sup>78</sup> A/HRC/52/70/Add.1, sects. III–X.

<sup>79</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CountryandothervisitsSP.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CountryandothervisitsSP.aspx).

<sup>80</sup> A/HRC/52/70/Add.1, sect. III.

<sup>81</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Making-a-difference.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Making-a-difference.aspx).

Mandate holders have also carried out assessments of their work or participated in various meetings with stakeholders on assessing the impact of their work. It is an integral part of the efforts to ensure that human rights are transformative and provide solutions, as stressed in the call to action for human rights.

53. Mandate holders sent 654 communications in 2022, and the substantive response rate was 43.58 per cent.

54. While some States devoted considerable efforts to developing constructive cooperation with mandate holders, others continued to refuse their visits or accepted only a select few. A total of 82 countries had not received a visit by a special procedure mandate holder during the past five years, although 62 had received at least 1 request. Twenty countries did not accept a visit, despite having five or more pending requests during the same period. Cooperation could also be partial or selective. Some States only cooperated with a select few mandate holders or responded to communications but did not accept visits, in spite of having extended standing invitations.

55. The fact that a number of mandate holders were again subjected to public and ad hominem attacks for carrying out their work during the reporting period is of serious concern. Some of these cases are particularly worrying, as they may affect the personal security and integrity of mandate holders. This has happened in United Nations bodies, during country visits or in other contexts. It is an issue that special procedures, the Coordination Committee and OHCHR take very seriously and that requires a coherent and systematic response from all concerned. In some cases, mandate holders have faced challenges in obtaining access (as set out in the terms of reference of the visit), as well as the freedom of movement necessary during the visit and private access to victims and independent civil society, which in some cases have led to the suspension or postponement of the visit. There have also been cases in which States have exerted pressure on the programme of visits for political purposes. Some States have also announced publicly that they will boycott certain mandates.

## **M. Contribution of special procedures to technical cooperation**

56. Special procedures continued to provide advice and recommendations to States and other stakeholders using a variety of tools and processes. Thematic reports are one of them. The reports contain recommendations that provide technical advice to States and other stakeholders to help build their respective capacities to, among other things, prevent human rights violations and ensure full compliance with international human rights norms.<sup>82</sup>

57. The recommendations issued after country visits, as well as the engagement of special procedures with States and stakeholders in following up on those recommendations, also play a significant role. Communications issued by special procedures contain important advice to States and other stakeholders. Other letters address more systemic human rights issues and contain recommendations on how draft or existing legislation, policies or practices could be designed or revised to fully comply with international human rights standards. The communications are a way to provide meaningful technical advice to States, which has been identified as a successful tool for prevention. Mandate holders also engage and provide advice to businesses and international corporations, including through the communications process.

58. Special procedures also respond to requests from States and other stakeholders for advice and recommendations on a series of human rights issues, such as the development of laws and policies, the establishment of specific human rights plans or programmes or specific responses to human rights challenges. Briefings and training sessions are also organized by OHCHR at its headquarters and in the field.

<sup>82</sup> [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sect. XXI.

### III. Coordination Committee of Special Procedures

59. In 2022, the Coordination Committee continued to facilitate coordination among mandate holders and interaction with a range of stakeholders. The Committee had four one-week meetings, two in Geneva and two in New-York, and several additional virtual meetings. It had several virtual conversations with mandate holders, including those recently appointed.

60. The Coordination Committee maintained dialogue and interaction with various stakeholders, including United Nations representatives, States and civil society. The Committee also held discussions with States in different formats, including conversations with States in New York and meetings with several geographical and political groups to discuss issues related to special procedures. The Chair was also a keynote speaker in the high-level event organized by the President of the Human Rights Council to celebrate the fiftieth session of the Council.

61. Meetings took place with the President of the Human Rights Council and the Chair of the Third Committee to raise awareness about issues related to special procedures and their inputs to intergovernmental processes. In addition, the Coordination Committee engaged with the Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council regarding the selection procedure for mandate holders and sent several letters containing the views of, and inputs from, outgoing mandate holders. The Committee participated in several urgent debates and special sessions of the Human Rights Council and facilitated joint statements.<sup>83</sup> The Chair of the Committee presented the annual report of special procedures to the Human Rights Council,<sup>84</sup> which included facts and figures with regard to the special procedures and information on the achievements of the special procedures system.<sup>85</sup>

62. The Coordination Committee pursued its initiatives in relation to the continuous improvement of the working methods of special procedures, in spite of the challenges, by engaging with relevant stakeholders, soliciting input and fostering discussions on issues such as the procedures related to the issuance of joint statements or the use of social media.

63. A complete set of rules and guidelines governing the work of the special procedures system is contained in the Code of Conduct for Special Procedure Mandate Holders of the Human Rights Council and the Manual of Operations, and additional guidelines have been developed over the years. The Coordination Committee has a facilitation role in that context and has engaged with all stakeholders individually or in groups. The internal advisory procedure offers a more formal channel for complaints. The details of how to use the procedure are publicly available on the OHCHR website. Stakeholders may approach the Committee in a formal bilateral meeting or in writing. The way in which a request for advice or concern is brought to the attention of the Committee will determine how the outcome will be communicated. The requests fall in three categories: (a) mandate holders seeking advice on contemplated activities; (b) specific cases referred by States or other stakeholders; and (c) cases highlighting policy or systemic issues that need to be addressed by the system. Individual cases and questions may require a simple response or the provision of advice on the way forward, whereas requests concerning global working method issues may entail more time and consultations and may require discussion and decisions to be taken at the annual meeting. The internal advisory procedure is confidential.

64. Under the internal advisory procedure, stakeholders have approached the Coordination Committee to raise questions or concerns. This has helped to clarify and improve working methods. The main outcomes of the procedure are available on the website. The issues raised in 2022 included the following:

(a) Communications, including how stakeholders' responses are taken into account by mandate holders, related press releases and the international framework guiding communications;

<sup>83</sup> [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#), sect. XII.

<sup>84</sup> [A/HRC/49/82](#).

<sup>85</sup> [A/HRC/49/82/Add.1](#).

- (b) Conflict of interest, including in relation to receipt of support from external stakeholders;
- (c) Cooperation and coordination among mandates, be it between thematic mandates or between thematic and country mandates;
- (d) Country visits, including procedures to agree to a visit, the respect of the terms of reference for country visits and the independence of the mandate holders in deciding which countries or territories to visit, in line with United Nations rules and regulations;
- (e) Privileges and immunities for mandate holders, including in the context of participation in legal or parliamentary proceedings;
- (f) Personal attacks against mandate holders;
- (g) Use of correct terminology to refer to States and territories

65. The Coordination Committee implemented the modalities for the disclosure of external support received through OHCHR and other sources. This disclosure was decided by mandate holders in 2014 to ensure full transparency about funding received from all sources and avoid real and perceived conflict of interest. The Committee requested mandate holders to provide information on external support received in 2022. Of the 69 mandate holders who responded, 29 indicated that they had received external support. Support had mostly been in-kind in nature, including research assistance and the granting of the use of facilities by their home institutions, financial support, including for specific events or research, and administrative assistance. Financial support was, in most cases, provided by Governments, foundations or the home institutions of mandate holders.<sup>86</sup>

#### IV. Acts of intimidation and reprisal

66. Special procedures mandate holders continued to take up cases concerning acts of intimidation and reprisal, in relation not only to their work, but also to the United Nations system in the field of human rights. They implemented their internal guidelines on reprisals and intimidation. In 2022, mandate holders continued to use communications, public statements, press releases, reports and meetings with various stakeholders to express their serious concern regarding all such acts. The issue was raised with the President of the Human Rights Council and the Chair of the Third Committee of the General Assembly, as appropriate. Mandate holders held a dedicated discussion during their annual meeting, in line with their enhanced response to reprisals adopted in 2015. Yao Agbetse, focal point of the Coordination Committee on this issue, led the discussion, which allowed for an assessment of the actions taken by special procedures and the United Nations on this issue, the identification of trends and possible follow-up action by the Committee. In this context, the importance of a coherent and coordinated approach was once again highlighted, as was the importance of a systematic collection of data on actions taken by special procedures.

67. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on efforts made to address acts of intimidation and reprisal against those seeking to cooperate or having cooperated with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights<sup>87</sup> included information on new allegations from 8 communications concerning 6 States taken up by special procedure mandate holders, and follow-up information on cases concerning 15 States included in previous reports based on the continued work of mandate holders. Mandate holders also addressed issues relating to ensuring access to the United Nations and raised concerns about the role played by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in that context.

<sup>86</sup> [A/HRC/50/70/Add.1](#), sect. XIV.

<sup>87</sup> [A/HRC/51/47](#).

## **V. Twenty-eighth annual meeting of special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairs of working groups**

68. The twenty-eighth annual meeting of special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairs of working groups was held in Geneva from 6 to 10 June 2022.

69. As mandate holders progressively resumed their activities in the wake of the pandemic, the meeting offered an occasion to exchange views on their common work and objectives. The meeting focused on strategic and substantive issues, as well as on working methods.

### **A. Coordination Committee**

70. The Chair of the Coordination Committee provided an overview of the activities undertaken during the 2021–2022 cycle. Participants were informed of all the activities of the Coordination Committee and its engagement with various stakeholders, including United Nations representatives, States and civil society. Challenges and opportunities faced by the system of special procedures and possible strategic responses were discussed and priorities for the Committee were identified.

71. The meeting elected Tlaleng Mofokeng, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as Chair of the Coordination Committee for the period 2022–2023 and Sorcha MacLeod, Chair of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries, as Rapporteur of the meeting. The meeting selected three other members: Isha Dyfan, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia; Attiya Waris, the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights; and Michael Fakhri, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. The outgoing Chair of the Coordination Committee, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, will remain as *ex officio* member for the coming year.

### **B. Thematic issues and working methods**

72. In terms of strategic issues, mandate holders discussed how to respond to pushbacks on human rights issues, individually and jointly. They also explored intersectional approaches to the implementation of their mandates, stressing the importance of cooperation between country and thematic mandates and among mandates dealing with related issues, as well as of crossing traditional boundaries. The need to use well-defined and common terminology when addressing cross-cutting issues was highlighted. The discussions identified various avenues through which mandate holders could address these issues jointly, including the early sharing of information on each other's planned initiatives, especially when they concern other mandates, the creation of *ad hoc* informal platforms or the compilation of actions of special procedures on various issues, in line with what was done for COVID-19.

73. Mandate holders also explored how to ensure visibility for their work. Specific examples and practices were shared, in particular in relation to the use of new technologies and visual tools, with the objective of collecting good practices, including in relation to social media. It was stressed that the Code of Conduct applies to all activities of special procedures, including when using new technologies and social media. The good practices will be consolidated by the Coordination Committee with the aim of providing guidance to mandate holders.

74. Mandate holders also had a discussion with high-level United Nations officials and United Nations agencies on the call to action for human rights and Our Common Agenda and the potential contribution of special procedures in this context. Several provisions of the Common Agenda relate to special procedures and need to be implemented. The Coordination

Committee was tasked with continuing engagement with high-level officials on this issue and ensuring that special procedures are involved in these processes, in particular in relation to the preparation of the Summit of the Future.

75. In terms of working methods, mandate holders discussed the implementation of their mandates in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Mandate holders explored various responses to attacks against experts, both online and offline, including digital security and how to better use their privileges and immunities. Mandate holders shared experiences about the tools that some of them had developed in cooperation with OHCHR in this context. The importance of sharing information on these cases with OHCHR and the President of the Human Rights Council, where relevant, was recalled. The meeting also addressed the issuance of joint statements by mandate holders, on the basis of a paper circulated by the Coordination Committee.

### **C. Consultations with stakeholders**

76. Participants met with key stakeholders, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, United Nations agencies and regional mechanisms. They had an exchange with the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth to explore how to address youth issues in their mandates and to identify opportunities for engagement with mandate holders.

77. The conversation with States and civil society focused on: (a) the impact of the work of special procedures, at the national and international levels, in particular the sharing of experiences in implementing and following up on the work and recommendations of special procedures at the country level and the contribution of special procedures to United Nations processes and to the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations; (b) the resilience of the special procedures system in responding to crises, in particular in light of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic; and (c) cooperation between States and special procedures, in particular the continuous improvement of working methods of special procedures and dialogue with States, measures taken by States to foster this cooperation and good practices and challenges in that regard. The consultations with regional mechanisms focused on the tenth anniversary of the Addis Ababa Road Map.

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