

Right Livelihood

Report of the 47th session of the Human Rights Council

21 June to 13 July 2021

Introduction

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is the United Nations' body responsible for the promotion, protection and support of human rights around the globe. It serves as an avenue where civil society and states can raise issues that require worldwide attention. At the end of every session, the HRC adopts resolutions on numerous subjects which acts as guidelines for human rights implementation around the world. As an organisation in consultative status to the United Nations' Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC), Right Livelihood has been attending HRC sessions since 2018, inviting laureates to sit at the heart of decision-making processes and ensuring that their fights receive global attention.

This present report relates to the 47th session of the HRC. It began on June 21 and was concluded on July 13, 2021. Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and health regulations, it was held almost entirely virtually. This format allowed multiple Right Livelihood Laureates to engage with the Council via video-message. The present report seeks to summarise relevant debates around topics directly related to the work of numerous Right Livelihood Laureates. It is divided in two sections, based on the type of debate at hand. First, **plenary meetings**, which includes relevant interactive dialogues, a form of debate which allows states and civil society to exchange views with the UN Special Procedures on a specific topic decided by the mandate holder. The second section refers to relevant **Resolutions** that were adopted during the Council which can be of interest to one or more Right Livelihood Laureates.

This report is not exhaustive in nature, as it does not report every debate that took place throughout the session, but only those attended by Right Livelihood or relevant to the work of the Laureates. Nevertheless, it provides a good overview of debates around issues closely related to their work. It highlights the recurring topics from each debate and when possible, which countries mentioned the specific issue. As civil society space decreases and what happens in Geneva seems as distant as ever, this report can be seen as a useful summary to check which issues are being taken in consideration by states.

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Presentation of the High Commissioner's annual report and interactive dialogue

21-22 June 2021

Presenting her [report](#), **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed her concerns regarding the increasing threat to societies as the pandemic continues. She highlighted the central role of the states in both the response to the pandemics and in upholding human rights. She identified women, minority groups, groups that have been long marginalised by systematic discrimination and children as being disproportionately hit by the pandemic. She called on states to take radical steps to protect economic, social, and cultural rights as well as low-income economies.

Bachelet reiterated her call for non-discriminatory, legal, and proportional emergency measures against Covid-19 and repeated that these measures should not be used as pretext to limit civil and political rights. She reiterated her concerns on the deteriorating situation of human rights and civic activities in a number of countries, including Belarus, Russia, and China. She expressed concerns about the arbitrary detention of members of the opposition, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and journalists in Belarus and Russia.

While drawing attention to the negative effects of sanctions on the peoples of the sanctioned countries, especially in this pandemic crisis, the High Commissioner called on the countries that develop and have access to the vaccines to distribute them to the international public in an equitable manner.

During the interactive dialogue 123 statements were delivered by members and observers, including 17 joint statements. Numerous states, including the **EU, Canada, Germany, Czech Republic, the U.S., the U.K.** expressed concerns on government reprisals, oppressions, and arbitrary detentions against the opposition groups, journalists, HRDs in Belarus and Russia. **Greece** drew attention to the forced landing of Ryanair flight 4978 in Belarus and raised the issue of Turkey's deteriorating outlook on women's rights and freedom of expression. Other countries, including **Canada, the EU, Germany, the U.S., and the U.K.** voiced concerns about the violence and oppression of China against the Uighur Turks and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang Region. The High Commissioner stressed that she hopes to visit Xinjiang this year. **Belarus, China and Russia**, also supported by **Egypt**, speaking on behalf of the **Arab group**, urged the High Commissioner, her office and the UN in general, to stay neutral, adhere to the principle of respect for national sovereignty and not allow Human Rights to be used as a tool for foreign interference. **Costa Rica**, speaking on behalf of a group of **Latin American countries**, as well as **Argentina**, urged Nicaragua to stop Human Rights abuses, respect freedom of expression and allow the UN office to monitor the situation in the country.

During her closing Remarks, the High Commissioner reiterated her demands to access **Western Sahara** in order to get a direct and impartial understanding of the human rights situation in the region and the Tindouf refugee camp.

Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on State response to pandemics

21/06/2021

Presenting her [report](#), **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stressed that the pandemic continues to pose an extraordinary threat to society worldwide, both as a public health emergency and a socioeconomic crisis with far reaching consequences. As such, the report highlights the central role of the State during pandemics in upholding human rights, while coordinating a robust health response. She urged states to step up investment in health and social protection systems as well as to show solidarity in their multilateral relations. On the last point, she stressed that if radical steps are not taken to protect economic, social, and cultural rights and support low-income countries, the outlook for the future remains bleak. Lastly, she concluded by stating that the world is in need of a human rights economy, and as such the report offers concrete recommendations on how to recover better with human rights-based recovery efforts.

During the interactive dialogue 72 statements were delivered, including 11 joint statements. Numerous countries took this opportunity to share their practices regarding the pandemic response. Others, including the **Nordic and Baltic countries, Germany, Ireland, and Switzerland** expressed concern about the use of emergency measures as a pretext to limit human rights. **Germany and Egypt, on behalf of the Arab states**, stated that they remain committed to a globally coordinated multilateral response to the pandemic. **Saudi Arabia** commanded the role of the UN system for coordinating the international response.

Referring to current inequities in how the pandemic is handled, **Paraguay, on behalf of the Latin American countries, China, on behalf of a group of countries, as well as the Cameroun on behalf of the African group** called for vaccines to become a global public good, distributed fairly and equitably around the world.

High Commissioner's presentation of the report on Iran and oral update on Nicaragua

22 June 2021

Ms. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, first presented the Secretary-General's [report](#) on the situation of human rights in the **Islamic Republic of Iran**, covering from March 2020 to March 2021. She first regretted that the authorities have shown no meaningful will to tackle the necessary reforms in the country. She condemned

Iran's continuing use of the death penalty, including for child offenders, and expressed deep concerns over the continuing detention and prosecution of protesters, human rights defenders, lawyers, and journalists. Among them is 2020 Right Livelihood Laureate **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, whose case remains of [serious concern](#), as stated by the Secretary-General in the report. The High Commissioner welcomed the recent law against violence against women as a step forward but stressed that it fails to repeal multiple discriminatory provisions against women in the civil code and that it contains no provision against child marriage. In addition, she condemns the continuing detention of many lawyers who have been imprisoned for fighting for gender equality. In conclusion, she stated that the human rights landscape in Iran remains disturbing.

Speaking as a country concerned, **Iran** stressed that the government respects its international obligations and that the report presented was carried with a politically motivated agenda orchestrated by a group of countries against Iran. They call upon all to recognise the imperative of the rule of law in respecting human rights.

Bachelet then turned to her oral update on the Human Rights situation in **Nicaragua**, where her office has observed a deterioration of the Human Rights situation. She regretted that the government continues to ignore all recommendations made by her. She condemned the current limitations to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including the suppression of two political parties and the hurdles imposed on civil society organisations. She was also alarmed by the rise in selective persecution of human rights defenders, journalists and others. She stressed that the authorities are implementing a climate of fear by bullying civil society and opposition members on social media, among others. Referring to the upcoming presidential elections in November 2021, she argued that there are no guarantees of a credible electoral system for free and fair elections. She also expressed concern at the attacks on indigenous communities in the North of the country and called Nicaragua to immediately free all the persons arbitrarily detained and stop persecuting dissidents. Lastly, she urged the Council to consider measures to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua, including for accountability.

Speaking as a country concerned, the Foreign Minister of **Nicaragua** stated that his country only seeks to defend its own sovereignty against countries such as the United States and referred to the oral update of the High Commissioner as "imperialist discourse". He demanded justice for Nicaragua and stressed that people coexist peacefully.

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

23-24 June 2021

Mr. Felipe Gonzales Morales, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants, presented his [report](#), expressing deep concern about the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants at sea and land borders of destination countries. He drew attention to the impact of COVID-19 on the human rights of migrants and the necessity of equitable access to vaccines for all. The Special Rapporteur highlighted some pushback activities that have become unsettlingly global trends, such as the militarisation and externalisation of border governance, the use of force, refoulement/chain refoulement risks, pushback at sea, denial of access to territory and asylum. The Special Rapporteur noted the EU's border control agency FRONTEX's impact on pushbacks and its limited accountability. He urged states to cooperate and align their legislation with international human rights laws, protect immigrants and investigate all crimes allegations.

During the interactive dialogue, 63 members and observers took the floor, including 4 joint statements. The **EU**, also supported by **Poland, Luxembourg, and Germany**, expressed their commitment to human rights values and said that the report did not mention the EU's efforts and assistance to protect migrants. As a country mentioned in the report, **Greece**, regretted that the report does not mention the responsibilities of transit countries such as Turkey. **Turkey** called on all parties to comply with their international obligations. **Morocco** expressed its concern about the Algerian government's failure to assist migrants in the Tindouf Camps and migrants pushbacks. Using its right of reply, **Algeria** stressed the illegality of the occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco. **On behalf of the Baltics and Nordic States, Sweden** expressed its concerns about the Syrian refugees, while the **U.S.** reiterated their commitment to international principles and their shared responsibilities in this regard. Lastly, **Russia** drew attention to the security problem, saying that it stems from the massive influx of unauthorised immigrants and called for the necessary measures to be taken to prevent the entry of criminals and terrorists.

In his concluding remarks, the Special Rapporteur stated that States are legitimate to have security considerations in border management, but he insisted that these measures cannot come at the expense of violating the human rights of migrants. Regarding human trafficking, he called on States not to confuse smugglers with those who provide humanitarian assistance to migrants. He reiterated his calls on States to mobilise a gender-based approach to their immigration policies.

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education

24-25 June 2021

Ms. Koumba Boly Barry, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, began by presenting her annual [report](#), emphasising that the cultural unsuitability of education

systems hinders the realisation of the right to education. She evaluated education systems as being inadequate to meet the needs of multicultural societies, and as systems which create cultural hierarchy. She urged states to have an education system with three abilities: (1) the ability to include all the actors of the society; (2) the ability to adapt to diversity, enrich everyone, and (3) fully integrate people and resources into educational life. She drew attention to full active participation in education life, through three keywords: Access, Practice, Contribute. She stressed the plural nature of the cultural dimension of education, which encompasses not only arts or heritages or multilingual-religious-ethnic education but also all diversity; those related to social, historical and socio-economic status, power and gender. She reiterated the importance of respecting Abidjan's principles of the right to education, reminding states of their obligation to prioritise the financing of free quality public education.

During Interactive Dialogue, 61 statements were delivered, including 4 joint statements. Speaking **on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, Finland** pointed that education systems must respond to and reflect learners' identities and diversities. Numerous countries, including **the EU, the DRC, Iran and Saudi Arabia** showcased their efforts towards quality education systems. **On behalf of the Arab Group, Egypt** highlighted the negative impact of the pandemic on education. The **Nigerian** representative stressed that universities were exploited to promote intolerance and exclusion in order to limit cultural diversity. **China** expressed concern about discrimination against people of African descent in different countries and regretted that the Special Rapporteur's report describes China as a country that prohibits or severely restricts the cultural dimension of the right to education. **Russia** regretted that the report did not mention the oppression to Russian speaking communities in the Baltics and Ukraine.

In her concluding remarks, she emphasised that “cultural diversity” is not just an artistic term and should be mutually understood by countries. She stressed once more the necessity of a holistic approach to education. She also drew attention the role of digitalisation for a quality education.

Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

24 June 2021

Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Independent Expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, began by presenting his annual [report](#) which analyses the current state of international human rights law in relation to the recognition of gender identity and the struggle against discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI). He stressed that the lack of legal

recognition of gender identity is a factor enabling much violence around the globe. He then outlined two fundamental duties of states: (1) preventing and prosecuting violence and discrimination based on SOGI; and (2) recognising every human being's freedom to determine the confines of their existence, including gender identity and expression. In this regard, he stressed the importance of comprehensive sexual education as a useful tool to deconstruct stigma and stereotypes about sex, sexuality and pleasure. He also recalled that in 2019, he issued a call for a world free of criminalisation based on SOGI by 2030, something on which States have to continue working towards.

During the debate 37 statements were delivered by members and observers, including 8 joint statements. Most States condemned all forms of discrimination on the basis of SOGI and showcased their efforts in combatting such acts. **Slovenia, on behalf of a group of countries**, also stressed that the fight against violence and discrimination based on SOGI is a collective effort. **Israel** reiterated the importance of focusing on intersectionality when assessing discrimination and violence while, the **UK** brought attention to the toxic and polarising debate currently happening around gender identity, especially on social media, and called everyone to protect their transgender citizens. Lastly, **Argentina, on behalf of 27 countries¹**, announced the launch of the group of friends on the SOGI mandate, that will work proactively in support of the independent expert, advocating for equal rights for all LGBTI people.

In his interim and concluding remarks, Mr. Madrigal Borloz answered questions about best practices in national legislation on the matter. He explained that all best practices, some of which he included in the report, share certain features: (1) the legislation has an intersectional approach; (2) the legislation sees the participation of concerned communities and people; (3) equal attention is given to violence and the agenda of social inclusion. He regretted that there are still far too many examples of legislation that is hampering the work of civil society. He then concluded by reiterating his 3 global calls: (1) a world free of criminalisation on the basis of SOGI by 2030; (2) a world free of conversion therapies; (3) a world accepting of gender diversity based on self-identification as a fundamental tool to combat violence and discrimination.

Interactive Dialogue with the working group on Discrimination against Women

25 June 2021

Ms. Melissa Upreti, Chair of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, presented the [annual report](#) which examines key factors undermining the Sexual

¹ Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Greece, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom, United States, Sweden, Switzerland

and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of women and girls before and during a crisis. The report identifies the non-enjoyment of women and girls' SRHR as a crisis in itself. As she underlined, women and girls' SRHR are clearly established in international law, yet 810 maternal deaths occur each day and more than 200 million women around the world do not have access to modern contraception. This only gets worse when a crisis event occurs. She thus stressed that there is an urgent need for a radical shift in the approach to dealing with crises, which must be gender-responsive and intersectional. She outlined the 5 interrelated sets of actions to enable progress towards ensuring the SRHR of women and girls at all times: (1) prioritise SRHR; (2) eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices; (3) institutionalise and strengthen monitoring and accountability for violations of SRHR; (4) ensure women and girls' participation in decision-making processes while promoting male accountability and (5) push back against conservative and anti-human rights ideologies.

During the debate 50 statements were delivered by members and observers, including 4 joint statements. Numerous states, including **Mexico on behalf of a group of countries** and the **Nordic and Baltic countries**, agreed that the failure to ensure SRHR at all times, and particularly in crises, is discriminatory. **Israel** agreed that SRHR are clearly established in international law, as specified numerous times in the report. Others, such as the **Netherlands and the European Union** were particularly worried about the interruption of SRHR services during the COVID-19 pandemic and stressed that the pandemic response should not come at the expense of a cut in funding and provision of SRHR. **Iraq** disagreed with the inclusion of abortion as an agreed human rights in the report and requested the Working Group to stick to agreed language. On similar lines, **Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC**, encouraged the Working Group to use universally accepted language. **Russia** disagreed completely with the fact that SRHR is included in international instruments, as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights refers more broadly to the right to health. They stressed that they are against any attempts to impose terminology that has not been agreed at the international level.

2012 Right Livelihood Laureate Sima Samar also delivered a statement, highlighting the already precarious situation of SRHR facilities in Afghanistan and warning that the military withdrawal of the US and other actors from the country could further reduce the resources available to such structures. She also stressed the importance of having women at the table in current peace talks to ensure that their rights do not get compromised in the peace process.

In her interim and concluding remarks, Ms. Upreti stressed that SRHR are in fact enshrined in international standards, including the right to safely terminate a pregnancy, which is linked to the right of bodily integrity. She said that an intersectional approach is fundamental to eliminating discrimination. Neglecting discrimination will, on the other hand, only lead to more discrimination. She also stated that any interpretation of religion must be respectful of human rights and shared concerns about the fragmentation of the women's rights agenda, even within the UN. Only by carrying a unified approach can the UN be most effective in advancing gender equality.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women

28 June 2021

Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, presented her [report](#) focusing on rape as a grave, systematic and widespread human rights violation. She stressed that efficient criminalisation of rape nationally requires the examination of all its constitutive elements at the international level. Through such lens, many shortcomings can be seen at the national level, with States using different definitions, protecting different persons, covering different types of penetration, and including mitigating circumstances, among others. Along with the report, she therefore launched the [“Framework for legislation on rape”](#) which is intended to serve as a harmonisation tool for comparing and aligning national laws with international standards in order for States to improve their current legislations.

During the debate, 85 statements were delivered including 7 joint statements. While most speakers shared their best practice in combatting rape, few recognised their shortcomings, including **Morocco** and **Ireland**, which stressed that all countries still have progress to make in this realm. The **European Union and Chile, on behalf of a group of countries**, stressed that it is of utmost importance that States take their responsibility to effectively ensure that rape is prevented, criminalised and prosecuted in accordance with international law. Some countries, including **the Benelux** regretted Turkey’s decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention and invited all non-signatories to sign up to it, **Liechtenstein**, on the other hand, announced its ratification. **Egypt, on behalf of the Arab Group**, agreed that all countries must take all necessary measures to combat violence against women and highlighted the role of combatting terrorism in this realm, as, according to the group, most of these violations are carried out by terrorist groups who do not recognise gender equality. **Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC**, deplored that the perspective of the Special Rapporteur excludes the Islamic perspective, and stated that the report contains a lopsided analysis of the legal interpretation of rape. Lastly, the **Russian Federation** noted the importance of the topic raised but disagreed with the framework of model legislation, as practices cannot be imposed on states unless states agreed to them in the framework of their international obligations. They also stressed that the Special Rapporteur should stop attempting to have the word “femicide” accepted by the international community.

Mozn Hassan, 2016 Right Livelihood Laureate, also delivered a statement expressing deep concerns at the situation in Egypt as the State fails to deliver justice to survivors but further subject them to re-victimisation and victim-blaming. She stressed that it is crucial for the authorities to start independent investigations on all past and present crimes and

bring all perpetrators to justice. The **Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission**, of which 2012 Right Livelihood Laureate Sima Samar was Chair, raised the attention of the lack of accountability for attacks on women and girls for which they requested a fact-finding mission.

In her interim and concluding remarks, Ms. Simonovic referred to international law as a vaccine against violence against women, which is unfortunately not being properly used. She stressed that we need to counter the current pushback against gender and women's rights by creating stronger links between international instruments, the HRC, OHCHR, UN Women and others. She called for universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

28 June 2021

Diego Garcia-Sayan, Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, introduced his [report](#) and expressed concern about the impact of the pandemic on the judicial systems, its agents, and the legal profession in general. He pointed out that the confinement measures have affected the work of the courts and caused delays in the proceedings. He stressed that the closure of courts, the extension of pre-trial detentions, and the halting of court decisions have had a negative impact on fundamental rights. He noted that although some countries have established special procedures to address the growing incidence of domestic violence against women and children during the period of confinement, these procedures have proven insufficient to address the problem. Mr. Sayan also drew attention to prison overcrowding and some of the limitations of the digitalisation of the justice system, which can impede equitable access to the justice system. The Special Rapporteur recommended states to consider justice as an essential public service and its members as essential personnel in case of a pandemic, and to bridge the digital divide that affects access to justice and creates exclusion. He also urged states to ensure due process and privacy when technology and digitalisation are used for justice services. He called on members to use pre-trial detention only for very serious crimes, especially during the pandemic.

During the interactive dialogue, 49 members and observers took the floor, including 3 joint statements. **The EU** expressed concern about the impact of preventive measures on the work of the courts and reiterated its call to provide everyone with access to legal advice and court proceedings. **China** stated that the country's courts have issued a notice asking courts to promote online litigation and perform judicial protection functions. It also expressed concern about the effects of the pandemic on women's rights and violence.

Egypt regretted that in its report, the Special Rapporteur used secondary sources and mobilised a generalised view, not taking into account the efforts and methods of the Egyptian government. The **Russian Federation** shared the rapporteur's concerns about the impact of the pandemic, and **Saudi Arabia** drew attention to the responsibility of states to ensure justice and expressed that the independence of the judiciary is a key principle of the Kingdom. **Iran** stressed the importance of the role of the judiciary for human rights. While claiming that Iran has immediately granted the temporary release of more than 120,000 prisoners in view of the rapid spread of Covid among prisoners, it assessed that claims made by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of prisoners in Iran is unfounded, and called on him to consult with the state concerned before inserting information in the report. Among the **NGOs, the International Bar Association**, presenting a joint statement, expressed concern about the effect of the pandemic on human rights and the misuse of judicial systems to intimidate voices in Belarus, India and Turkey. They paid particular attention to the targeted lawyers and highlighted the third anniversary of the imprisonment of Right Livelihood Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh.

In his interim and concluding remarks, the Special Rapporteur stressed the need for additional support to bridge this gap, particularly in the Global South. He identified prison overcrowding as an ongoing challenge. He also focused on the challenge of the vaccine for judicial personnel. He reiterated his concerns about corruption, defining it as a scourge that affects human rights and justice, while stressing the importance of judicial independence.

Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises

28 June 2021

Mr. Dante Pesce, Chair of the Working Group on the issue of Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises presented his report in which he addresses the issue of unscrupulous business activities that lead to human rights violations and mainly affect disadvantaged groups. He stated that the Guiding Principles (UNGP) have contributed to significant progress in promoting respect for human rights in the business context in their first ten years. He added that the UNGP provides a platform where States and stakeholders play complementary roles in preventing business-related human rights abuses. He stressed that the concept of corporate human rights due diligence is the most normative innovation of the UNGP and urged States to transform it into legally binding regulations. He reiterated calls for states to adopt "smarter" policies to

encourage responsible business and due diligence, while noting the lack of binding corporate due diligence laws. He stressed that the Working Group's addendum report highlighted the deteriorating situation of HRDs in all regions. The Working Group Chair reiterated the need for states to provide rights holders with access to remedies and to support human rights institutions to effectively implement the Guiding Principles on the ground. Mr. Pesce presented the Guiding Principles as a framework provider and a plan for governments and companies to protect those most at risk.

During the interactive dialogue, 30 member states and observers took the floor, including 4 joint statements. **The EU**, supported by **Ireland and Belgium**, shared concerns about the remaining challenges and obstacles highlighted by the Chair in his report, and asked the Working Group if it would consider working on the introduction of mandatory due diligence. **Denmark, on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic countries**, reiterated their support for the guiding principles to promote effective prevention of business and human rights abuses, while stressing their commitment to mobilising an intelligent mix of national and international, voluntary and mandatory measures. While **the United States** emphasised that the country is adopting laws to strengthen accountability, transparency and environmental sensitivity, **China** regretted statements made in the report and called on the Working Group to pay attention to forced labour in the United States, accounting for the use of the UNGP to try to suppress the development of Chinese enterprises and violating fair competition. **India** highlighted the steps it has taken to streamline the gender perspective in its trade policies and reiterated its commitment to the UNGP. **Russia** suggested that each state should determine for itself the model and formula for implementing the principles according to its national specificities. Rejecting the accusation of some NGOs regarding financial activities on indigenous peoples' lands, **Brazil** stressed that research, exploitation of mineral resources and use of hydraulic potentials on indigenous lands can only be carried out with the authorisation of the national congress and in consultation with the communities concerned, which will receive a share of the financial results of the enterprise. It stressed that the federal constitution establishes specific conditions for these activities on indigenous lands.

In his closing remarks, on the question of Belgium on the protection of human rights defenders and accelerating the shift, the Chair of the Working Group stressed that a clear message of zero tolerance for violence from states and stakeholders would be a good start. He reiterated that the space for dialogue needs to be strengthened to discuss different perspectives among members and stakeholders.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

1 July 2021

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, presenting his [report](#), highlighted his current concerns about the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly under three headings: access to justice, guidelines on lawyers, and internet shutdowns. Identifying access to justice as an integral component of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the Special Rapporteur called on States to establish accessible and effective complaints mechanisms and to provide access to legal assistance to detained protesters and association members. He reiterated the need for national mechanisms for the prevention of torture and the need for independent investigations on abuses of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly. Regarding the situation of lawyers, he stressed the importance of the role played by lawyers in ensuring respect for the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and reiterated his concerns about threats and harassment against lawyers who support peaceful protests. Regarding Internet shutdowns, the Special Rapporteur addressed the increasing number of shutdowns targeting the social media channels most used by protesters. He also pointed out that States that shut down the Internet are themselves losing millions of dollars in revenue.

During the interactive dialogue, 57 Member States and observers took the floor, including 4 joint statements. **The EU** highlighted the damage of lacking access to justice, which leads to a shrinking civic space and erodes trust in institutions. It reiterated its commitment to fight against unlawful restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, lack of protection for lawyers and misuse of national security laws. Speaking **on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, Lithuania** expressed concern about the increasing number of Internet shutdowns and called on all members to keep the Internet open, free and accessible. **Morocco** expressed concern about the restrictions of Algerian government on demonstrations of the Hirak movement in Algeria and drew attention to the living conditions in the Tindouf camps. **Belarus** and **Russia** called on the Special Rapporteur to focus on government reactions to protests in Western countries, particularly in the EU, saying that the Rapporteur and his office have a biased approach between developing and developed countries. **Iran** also expressed concern about the excessive use of police violence against peaceful gatherings in Western countries, and called on the Special Rapporteur to monitor these developments. It also underlined that freedom of assembly includes the peaceful nature as well as the right not to carry firearms, not to use violence against people and not to damage public or private property. It shared the view that the government strives to strike a balance between security and respect for the civil rights of individuals.

2019 Right Livelihood Laureate Aminatou Haidar, Sahrawi activist and President of ISACOM, spoke on behalf of a number of organisations, including Right Livelihood. She denounced the human rights violations recently committed by the Moroccan government against members of her organisation, and expressed her concerns about her colleague Sultana Khaya, who has been under house arrest for 7 months. She called on the Council

to demand Morocco to end the systematic violations of human rights and guarantee the right to self-determination for the Sahrawi people.

In his closing remarks, the Special Rapporteur pointed out that the enjoyment of this fundamental freedom is only possible if a legal framework is in place to facilitate the exercise of such right. Including it in the constitution is not sufficient. He called on states to put in place mechanisms that guarantee these rights during periods of health emergencies that may constitute barriers to people's access to justice.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

29 June 2021

Mr. Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, presented his [report](#) and highlighted concerns about the increasing number of people who fell into extreme poverty during the pandemic in 2020. He drew attention to informal workers who make up for more than 60 per cent of the global workforce and who have little to no access to social protection. He was particularly alarmed by the situation of low-income countries (LICs), which are already facing declining government revenues and increasing demand for social needs at the time of the pandemic. His report proposes a Global Fund for Social Protection (GFSP) to increase support for social protection policies and mechanisms in LICs, noting that it is affordable and can be funded by the OECD's ODA (Official Development Assistance) and the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). He stressed that such an investment should be seen as a potential high return, as it develops human capital. He emphasised that the scheme would enable recipient countries to build capacity and increase domestic resource mobilisation, rather than creating a new form of dependency on LICs.

During the Interactive Dialogue, 51 members and observers took the floor, including 3 joint statements. The **EU** expressed its commitment to fighting poverty and social inequality, while stating that the Treaty of the EU aims to provide social policies for all EU citizens. **Egypt, on behalf of the Arab Group**, called for enhanced multilateral cooperation against the causes of extreme poverty, including climate change, migration, and internal displacement caused by armed conflict. **China**, on behalf of a group of countries, stressed the need for global action against extreme poverty in LICs and stressed that there also exists a poverty gap in developed countries such as the UK and the US.

In his interim and closing remarks, the Special Rapporteur stressed that he and his office are working closely with the ILO, workers and employers' representatives, to initiate new proposals and discuss existing proposals on how to establish such a global social security fund. He called on the G20 and G7 to mobilise their efforts for it. He reiterated that this

fund will not replace international financial assistance or macroeconomic adjustment, stressing that recipient countries must have a national plan on how to mobilise domestic resources for social protection. He reiterated his position against conditionality to be eligible for the World Social Fund, stressing that public service cutting spending such as health or education does not reduce poverty at all. He expressed his wish to have the global fund in place by June 2022.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression

2 July 2021

Ms Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression, presented her [report](#) and shared her concerns and recommendations regarding disinformation and freedom of expression. She explained how disinformation undermines freedom of expression and democratic institutions, adding that it also has the negative effect of policing political debates, fuelling public distrust and endangering human rights and public health. She particularly emphasised its use to attack women, human rights defenders, minorities and migrants. Turning to the role of the State and its responsibilities in relation to freedom of expression and disinformation, she stressed that the sometimes disproportionate response of states to disinformation, such as internet shutdowns or laws criminalising disinformation, can be an impediment to freedom of expression and are sometimes even used by states against journalists, political opponents and human rights defenders. Regarding companies, the Special Rapporteur has identified corporate responses to disinformation as inadequate, opaque and lacking in transparency and redress mechanisms. As recommendations, she called on states to respect international human rights standards, to use third-party legal observations and proportionate restrictions where necessary. She reiterated her call for the use of criminal law only in very exceptional and blatant circumstances of incitement to violence, hatred or discrimination. While calling on states not to have regulations on social media aimed at moderating content, she stressed that companies should put in place appropriate policies and remedies and adopt a gender-based approach to ensure the safety of women on their platforms.

During the interactive dialogue, 80 members and observers took the floor, including 6 joint statements. The **EU** and **Germany** highlighted the importance of protecting freedom of expression in combating global pandemics and economic crises. **Sweden, on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic countries**, addressed the role of freedom of expression for a

democratic society and expressed concern about the growing public distrust of journalism, the media and democratic institutions. **Finland, on behalf of the Online Freedom Coalition**, composed of 32 governments, called on States to end Internet shutdowns and refrain from content restrictions. **Morocco** raised concerns about the arrest of activists and demonstrators in Algeria. The **United States** expressed concerns about internet shutdowns to suppress voices in Algeria, Hong Kong, Nicaragua and Russia, and asked the Special Rapporteur how stakeholders can work together to counter disinformation while protecting freedom of expression online and offline. Among the **NGOs, the Movement against Racism and for Friendship Between Peoples**, on behalf of the Geneva Group for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Western Sahara including Right Livelihood, addressed the human rights violations in **Western Sahara** and the disinformation carried out by Morocco on the international scene to show that there is no problem in the region.

In her concluding remarks, the Special Rapporteur called on States to work with civil society and to respect freedoms and rights. She drew attention to media freedom and the importance of protecting media pluralism and called on all parties to bridge the digital divide and promote digital literacy as an important component of today's economy and society.

Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

2 July 2021

The Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Ms. Elina Stainerte, presenting the [report](#) of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on drug policies, addressed the issue of imprisonment for drug-related offences and called on States to use imprisonment only for serious crimes. She expressed concerns about human rights violations, including interrogation of suspects under the influence of drugs, drug-testing without consent, prolonged pre-trial detention and physical or psychological abuse. While highlighting the disproportionate penalties for drug-related offences, she expressed the Working Group's concerns about the use of the death penalty for drug-related offences and the misuse of drug control to silence human rights defenders, journalists and political opponents. She noted that the Working Group recommends that States decriminalise the use, acquisition and cultivation of drugs for personal use, and release persons detained solely for personal

use or possession of drugs. She drew attention to treatment services for drug dependent persons in detention and called on States not to force persons accused of drug-related offences to choose between prison and treatment.

During the interactive dialogue, 28 Member States and observers took the floor, including 3 joint statements. The **EU**, stressed that it is pursuing a balanced approach to combat drugs, serving a proportionate and legitimate purpose. The **United States** reaffirmed that arbitrary detention on drug-related offences is a clear violation of the right to liberty and called on States to adopt drug laws consistent with human rights. **Latvia, on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries**, expressed concern about the use of anti-drug policies to silence human rights defenders. On the other hand, **China** expressed its opposite view to the recommendations of the Working Group, stating that the Chinese constitution has strict and specific regulations on drugs. It stressed that the Working Group's study conflicts with the work of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and interferes with the international community's fight against drug-related crimes. **Saudi Arabia**, rejecting the report's recommendations, reiterated its strong stance against drugs, identifying them as a danger to security, family and society. **Russia**, describing the report as promoting ultra-liberal approaches to drug control, stressed that the report contradicts the norms of international law, and rejected the report's provisions regarding Russia.

In her concluding remarks, the Chair of the Working group stressed that the so-called "war on drugs" has led to an increase in inappropriate detention and human rights violations. Drawing attention to drug rehabilitation centres, she referred to the 2012 Joint Statement on Mandatory Detention and Rehabilitation Centres for Drug Users, in which 13 UN agencies and bodies called on States to permanently close down active drug detention centres and to take into account the common position of UN systems supporting the implementation of international drug control policy. She stated that the war on drugs is generating a culture of corruption within law enforcement, regarding payments made to avoid arrests or to affect the outcome of judicial decisions in some countries.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Belarus

5 July 2021

Introducing her [annual report](#) **Ms. Anais Marin**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, regretted that the situation has worsened since she last addressed the Council. She stated that last year, more than 35,000 persons were arbitrarily detained for having exercised their right to peaceful assembly. She echoed those who call for the immediate release of political prisoners and their unconditional rehabilitation.

Belarus was not present to speak as a concerned country. During the debate 35 statements were delivered, including 3 joint statements. All speakers supported the Special Rapporteur's report and expressed grave concerns at the current situation in Belarus. **The European Union, the Nordic and Baltic countries, Germany and New Zealand** urged Belarus to end attacks against peaceful protesters and to immediately and unconditionally release all persons arbitrarily or unlawfully detained, including journalists. **Poland, on behalf of 46 states, Canada, the European Union, Germany, the United Kingdom**, condemned the forced diversion and landing of a civilian aircraft which led to the arrest of Mr. Raman Pratasevich and called for their immediate release. **Austria and Iceland** called on Belarus to reconsider its non-engagement policy with the Special Rapporteur. Lastly, the **European Union** said they support the people of Belarus in their legitimate demand for new free and fair elections.

Right Livelihood and 2020 Right Livelihood Laureate Human Rights Center "Viasna" also delivered a statement expressing alarm over the latest legislative developments which could lead to forced closure of human rights organisations and increased criminal investigations against human rights defenders. We called upon the Council to renew the mandate of the special rapporteur and to ensure continued scrutiny in Belarus. We also urged the authorities to initiate a serious and credible process for constitutional reform, as well as immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including all members of Viasna currently jailed.

Annual Panel discussion on women's rights – Gender-equal socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

6 July 2021

Keynote Speakers:

- **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **H.E. Ms. Mónica Zalaquett Said**, Minister for Women and Gender Equity of Chile

Panelists:

- **Mr. Mohammad Naciri**, UN-Women Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- **Ms. Maria Alesi**, Feminist and development practitioner, Uganda
- **Ms. Kateryna Levchenko**, Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy of Ukraine and Vice-Chair of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe

Ms. Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, opened the panel discussion by stating that for decades, countries' economies relied on precarious forms of

employment, especially in the sectors where women are over-represented, which coincidentally are also those hit the hardest by the pandemic. Nevertheless, she regretted that the majority of the the COVID-19 responses are gender blind, with about 13% of them having addressed women's economic security. She said that concrete steps are needed, such as ensuring that the maximum of resources are allocated to quality public services; recognising the economic value of both paid and unpaid care work; adopting progressive tax policies and protecting the civic space of women and sexual minorities to ensure active participation of recovery efforts. In her keynote address, **Ms. Said, Minister for Women and Gender Equity of Chile**, described the gender specific response of Chile, where the government convened the "COVID Women's Council" made up of representatives from civil society, academia, the private sector and politics to ensure that a gender perspective be incorporated in all decisions regarding the COVID-19 response.

The floor was then given to **Mr. Naciri, Regional Director for Asia-Pacif at UN Women**, who said that the world must focus not only on immediate but also long-term policies. In the short-term, he said that women care workers must be protected and recognised as essential workers and that social protection be extended to them. In the long term, a robust care economy must be created to rectify the under-valuation and unequal share of care work. **Ms. Alesi, feminist and development practitioner**, stressed that a key pillar of gender-equal recovery must be gender responsive financing, by dismantling structures that reinforce inequality. She outlined 4 measures to that end: (1) end the debt burden on middle- and low-income countries; (2) support the informal sector; (3) develop and implement progressive tax regimes and (4) ensure inclusion, accountability and transparency in governance. **Ms. Levchenko, government commissioner for gender equality policy of Ukraine**, stated that gender equality must be a principle of all government actions. For this to be a reality, women need to have a seat at the table and to participate equally in the decision-makings. To that end, quotas is an effective tool, as a temporary special measure.

During the ensuing discussion 24 statements were delivered, including 9 joint statements. Most speakers agreed that COVID-19 has challenged human rights, including the rights of women and girls and shared their commitments to women empowerment as a crucial tool to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. **Cameroon, on behalf of the African group**, resonated that "no one is safe until everyone is safe," and deplored that the continent has the lowest vaccine rollout which could lead to negative long-term consequences.

In their concluding remarks, the speakers stressed again the need to ensure women's and girl's participation in decision-making processes. They also re-emphasised the triple burden that women faced: (1) vulnerable employment; (2) unpaid care work and (3) heightened risk of domestic violence. Answering to Cameroon, **Ms. Alesi** highlighted that the imposition of the vaccine passport is rooted in colonialist and racist structures as the policy was implemented along with policies that amount to vaccine hoarding.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory

9 July 2021

Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 (OPT), presented his [report](#) in which he examined why the Israeli settlements could amount to a war crime as defined in the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). He regretted the policy of disengagement held by Israel towards his mandate. He called for full accountability of those who committed war crimes in the OPT and recommended the Council to fully support the work of the prosecutor of the ICC as he investigates into war crimes committed in the OPT.

Israel was absent to speak as a country concerned. The **State of Palestine** on the other hand, regretted the silence of some countries that are choosing to ignore to hear what is happening in Palestine. They called for economic and political sanctions to be applied to Israel.

During the debate 45 states and observers took the floor, including 5 joint statements. All speakers agreed with the Special Rapporteur that the settlements were illegal under international law. **Egypt, on behalf of the Arab group**, called for the international community to end this occupation. **Mauritania, on behalf of the African group** insisted on the importance of Israel's need to respect their international obligations. Lastly, **Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC, and Luxemburg** deplored the non-cooperation of Israel with the mandate.

In his concluding remarks, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the coercive atmosphere imposed by Israel, which regularly threatens the demolition of villages to drive Palestinians away from their homes and livelihoods. He also stressed the clear asymmetrical balance of power on the ground.

Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on systemic racism

12 July 2021

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights presented her [report](#) on Systematic Racism, Violations of International Human Rights Law against Africans and People of African Descent by Law Enforcement Agencies. Sharing concerns about the inequalities that Africans and people of African descent face, she stressed that all the barriers and inequalities are compounded by the insufficient participation and representation of people of African descent in decision-making and public life. She pointed out that her office has been informed of more than 190 murders of Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies, mainly in Europe, Latin America and North America. She cited seven emblematic cases of death, including that of George Floyd in the United States, and those in Brazil, Colombia, the United Kingdom and France. The High Commissioner made four recommendations to combat systematic racism. First, she called on states to recognise the systemic nature of racism in all areas of life in order to change all structures, institutions and behaviours that lead to discrimination. Secondly, she reiterated her calls for the accountability of law enforcement officials. Thirdly, the High Commissioner stated that States must respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, protecting organisers and participants in demonstrations against racism. Finally, States must ensure the creation of fully funded comprehensive processes with the full participation of effective communities to share truths.

During the interactive dialogue, 61 members and observers took the floor, including 8 joint statements. **Cameroon, on behalf of the African Group**, welcomed the report and shared the High Commissioner's views on the need to confront the legacies of slavery, the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism that are at the root of the causes of systematic racism. The **EU**, and **Denmark on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic countries**, expressed their commitment to combat systematic racism. **Brazil**, reiterating its commitment against racism, expressed its deep regret about the cases of deaths of African descendants in Brazil mentioned in the report. The **United States** stressed that the country is addressing challenges internally and externally in an honest and transparent manner by tackling the underlying issues of racial discrimination, noting that it is ready to work with relevant international actors on the matter. **China** expressed concern about racial discrimination against Africans, Afro-descendants and Asians in Western countries, stating that these States must review their institutions and judicial systems. It also called on Western countries to eliminate the legacy of slavery and colonialism through accountability and compensation.

In her concluding remarks, Michelle Bachelet reiterated the need for a human rights audit exercise that would focus on the systematic manifestation of racism and discrimination in law enforcement. She urged States to hold law enforcement officials accountable and to include Africans and people of African descent in law enforcement institutions.

Resolutions

During the session, 25 resolutions were considered by the Council. The following 3 are the most relevant for the work of Right Livelihood Laureates.

Civil society space: COVID-19: the road to recovery and the essential role of civil society (47/L.1)

The resolution was adopted without a vote. It reaffirms the importance of creating and maintaining a safe and enabling environment for civil society, both online and offline (OP1) and encourages States to take every opportunity to support diversity of civil society participation (OP5). It then urges states to take all necessary steps to prevent threats, attacks, discrimination or other forms of reprisals against civil society actors and end impunity where such violations have occurred (OP6). Finally, it requests the High Commissioner to prepare a report, examining in detail the key challenges that civil society face to be presented at the 51st session of the Human Rights Council (OP9).

Situation of human rights in Belarus (47/L.13)

The resolution was adopted by vote, with 21 members in favor, 7 against and 19 abstentions. It expresses deep concern about the unprecedented escalation in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus (OP2) and at the reports of systematic and widespread torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (OP3). It also strongly condemns the forced diversion and landing of the Ryanair flight in Minsk on 23 May 2021 and the arbitrary arrest and detention of Raman Pratasevich and his partner (OP4). The resolution strongly urges the authorities to fully respect and fulfill all of their international human rights obligations (OP6) and demands the immediate and unconditional release of all persons arbitrarily or unlawfully detained in Belarus and accountability in all cases of alleged human rights violations (OP7 & 8). It also strongly encourages Belarus to implement the comprehensive reform of the electoral legal framework to address long-standing systemic shortcomings in this realm (OP12). Lastly, it decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus for a period of 1 year and urged the authorities to fully cooperate with the mandate (OP 18 & 19).

Human Rights and Climate Change (47/L.19)

The resolution was adopted by vote, with 46 members in favour and one abstention (the Russian Federation), after the refusal of 5 different amendments proposed by the Russian Federation, which all seek to weaken the language of the resolution. The text calls upon all States to adopt a comprehensive, integrated, gender-responsive, age inclusive and disability-inclusive approach to climate change (OP4). It urges to better promote the human rights of people in vulnerable situations and their access to livelihoods (OP6) as well as developing policies aimed at promoting the participation of such people in the design of policies related to climate change (OP8). The resolution decides to incorporate a panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights at its 50th session and to incorporate such discussion in its annual programme of work beginning in 2023 (OP10&11).

All the resolutions and decisions can be found [here](#).

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