

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**



**Forty-third Session of the Human Rights Council**

**General debate under item 5**

**Statement by Javaid Rehman**

**Member of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures**

**Geneva, 11 March 2020**

Madam President,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Anita Ramasastry, the Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, regrets not to be with you in person to present the report of the 26th Annual Meeting of Special Procedures, including updated information on special procedures (A/HRC/43/64) and its addendum. As member of the Coordination Committee, she has asked me to make this statement on her behalf.

This report and the information it contains is an integral part of the efforts taken by special procedures to communicate better about their work, individually and as a system, and about how this work contributes to the overall human rights mandate of the UN.

The presentation of this report is an opportunity to explain what the system has achieved in a year, for example in terms of country visits, themes addressed in their reports, contributions to standard setting or communications sent. The addendum contains a wealth of information, including a one-page factsheet showing in numbers all the activities of special procedures.

Madam President,

2019 was marked by several positive developments related to special procedures, including in relation to cooperation with States, engagement on thematic issues and the collection of good stories.

The level of cooperation with States is broadly positive with an increase in the number of States issuing standing invitations to special procedures and a decrease in the number of States that have never received a visit by a mandate holder. The report before you aims at providing comprehensive information about cooperation between States and special procedures in relation to country visits and communications. As the report shows, this cooperation varies from one State to the other. Some have received several visits in the last five years, while others have not. Others have quite a good record of responses to

communications while others do not respond to communications. The Facts and Figures contain two tables that capture these various elements of cooperation or lack of it. Let me stress in this context that the report before you covers information as of 31 December 2019. Hence, developments that occurred afterwards are not reflected, for example the recent acceptance of visits by New Zealand or Luxembourg.

As announced earlier, an enhanced system to record the various status of country visit requests and better assess cooperation on both sides has been developed. This new system has been operational as of January 2020 and will improve the way engagement between States and special procedures in relation to visits is recorded.

Efforts to demonstrate how the implementation of the recommendations of mandate holders and constructive engagement can bring positive results continued. The webpage on good stories has been populated with a non-exhaustive compilation of examples. New examples have recently been added. We hope to make this webpage a living document of positive stories. I would therefore encourage all of you to send us examples of good stories so that they continue to be shared widely.

I would call your attention to another initiative aimed at reinforcing the positive impact of the work of special procedures. OHCHR has launched a new webpage reflecting the cross-cutting thematic engagement of special procedures. It reflects all the reports authored by mandate holders on topics such as climate change, migration, new technologies and the Sustainable Development Goals (disaggregated per goal). Other cross-cutting thematic issues could be covered in the future.

Madam President,

The report demonstrates that the system of special procedures has also been active in engaging with the other parts of the UN system and bringing a human rights perspective to the table. The report mentions in particular the engagement with the Secretary-General and other high-level UN officials, the Peace Building architecture, the SDGs related bodies and the Resident Coordinator system.

In relation to this Council, my colleagues presenting reports at the current session have once again shared in advance a one-page document highlighting the main issues raised in the reports and the elements on which they would welcome the views of States and other stakeholders. It is hoped that this initiative, combined with the de-clustering of our interactive dialogue, will lead to more substantive discussion at the Council.

Madam President,

2019 has also been a challenging year for special procedures. We observed a global retrenchment against the values and obligations embedded in international human rights law. Our system faced initiatives aiming at constraining our public and independent voice, which would, over time, undermine our ability to address human rights concerns worldwide. Financial constraints have also had a serious negative impact on our work.

Some of my colleagues have faced direct attacks in the implementation of their mandate. We encourage constructive criticism of our work, but threats to us and to the people we work with worldwide, including reprisals against those who cooperate with us, must be condemned.

Lack of cooperation or selective cooperation from some States continues to affect the ability of my colleagues to discharge their mandates fully. Our direct communications, our proposals for visits, our offers of technical assistance, and our specific recommendations following country missions are sometimes left unanswered.

Madam President,

Mandate holders are committed to meet the goals that States, through the Human Rights Council, have assigned to us. They are also committed to continuous improvement of the system of special procedures and its functioning. The report before you presents also the various initiatives taken by special procedures and the Coordination Committee in this context. The internal reflection on several aspects of our working methods and the related update of our Manual of Operations is ongoing.

In the last months, the Coordination Committee has maintained an ongoing dialogue and engagement with States, civil society and other stakeholders on these issues. We have endeavoured to create a space where all these issues could be discussed. The recent letter of the Chair of the Coordination Committee to States and the informal conversation held last December have identified several areas on which we would welcome your views. The upcoming meeting of the Committee in May will offer another opportunity for engagement on these matters.

In this context, another positive sign of engagement is the fact that an increasing number of stakeholders have approached the Committee to make proposals or raise questions or concerns, formally or informally, demonstrating trust in the Committee and the role of the Internal Advisory Mechanism. This has helped us to refine our working methods and clarify issues. Information about the use of this procedure and corresponding recommendations and outcomes is available in the report.

Madam President,

In the presentation of his Call to Action on Human Rights at the beginning of this session, the Secretary-General has stressed the importance of using all the tools and mechanisms at our disposal and building partnership to move the human rights agenda forward. Let me stress that my colleagues and I are a partner in this endeavour and are ready to play their part to ensure that human rights are effectively integrated into UN action. We count on your continued support to ensure that special procedures will continue to play their role as a vital part of the human rights framework.

I thank you.