

**Check against delivery**



**Fifty-fifth Session of the Human Rights Council**

**General debate under item 5**

**Statement by Isha Dyfan**

**Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures**

**Geneva, March 21, 2024**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,

I have the honor to present the report on the activities of the Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups in 2023, during which we continued our collective and individual work.

The report reflects the extensive contribution of special procedures to the global human rights agenda. It shows that mandate holders endeavored to offer essential solutions, working towards rendering the human rights system more responsive and innovative. The report also shows that special procedures keep bringing new and emerging issues and their impact on human rights to your attention. Mandate holders also tackled cross-cutting issues, bringing human rights at the center of the challenges of our time; armed conflicts, prevention, development, climate change and new technologies, and more recently the impact of economy on human rights are just some examples. By doing so, we contribute significantly to increasing the relevance of human rights throughout the UN system and beyond.

Mr. President,

The Council has created our mandates. Engaging with the Council on an annual basis is therefore essential for my colleagues and I. This is a unique moment of dialogue where we can share the results of our work. It is important to preserve this dedicated exchange as it provides essential insights for the pursuance of our mandates. Our presence in Geneva allows us to engage with numerous stakeholders, in particular States, and maintain trust and cooperation with them. We have noted with appreciation that interactive dialogues are increasingly substantive, focusing on the issues raised by mandate holders, and with an increased number of participants, including from UN entities and agencies. We take it as a testimony of the value you all give to our work, and we are thankful for that.

Mr. President,

The impact of our work goes beyond this Council. As shown in the report, the outreach and capacity of engagement of mandate holders go beyond this room. The addendum to the report contains compelling information on how mandate holders have interacted with stakeholders at the national, regional and international level, how they have provided technical assistance to States, how they have contributed to legislative or policy changes. With OHCHR we have done our best to collect these stories of impact and we would invite all of you to share those stories with us so that others will be encouraged to follow suit.

The engagement with the UN system is also a key feature of the report. The collective voice of special procedures can be a powerful means to get more visibility for human rights within the UN. During our Annual Meeting last year, we adopted a joint declaration ahead of the SDG Summit underscoring the critical role of human rights as a tool for transformative changes needed to meet all Sustainable Development Goals. The Coordination Committee also continued to engage with all concerned on the Summit on the Future. The Committee met with the co-facilitators on the Summit and participated in the consultations held on 13 December, stressing that human rights should be fully and substantively reflected in the Pact for the Future. More specifically, the Pact should reflect the call for a fuller use of the human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, treaty bodies and special procedures, to solve pressing social, economic and political challenges and to better link them with other processes to maximize their impact and assist States parties with compliance. The Pact should also put the human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing and should therefore include an unequivocal commitment to significantly strengthen the human rights pillar at par with the other pillars, including by reinforcing and significantly increasing the resources of the United Nations Human Rights Office and human rights mechanisms, including special procedures.

Mr. President,

With the benefit of our independence and expertise to address the wide array of issues covered by our 60 mandates, we have the unique ability to offer independent examination and analysis of situations in light of human rights norms and practice. We conduct country visits, advice on thematic and country specific issues, raise concerns on individual cases directly with the relevant parties and develop international standards. We also facilitate national and international debate on human rights issues and are often the first to do it. As a system, special procedures work together to promote human rights mainstreaming, connect various sectors of society and draw attention to all human rights issues, including those that might otherwise remain invisible.

To achieve this, full cooperation from all concerned, in particular States, is indispensable. I would like to thank States that have extended cooperation to us, in particular those that have accepted more than five visits in the last five years. The number of visits significantly increased last year, with 82 visits in total to all regions. Several States also have a good response rate to our communications. We have also noted active participation in our consultations or responses to calls for input. While we usually enjoy fruitful cooperation from many States, we still face difficulties having access to some countries or engaging with some on critical human rights issues. There are also glaring examples of non or selective cooperation. The addendum to this report reflects the status of cooperation from all States with SP in relation to country visits and communications. A total of 80 countries had not received a visit by a special procedure mandate holder during the past five years, although 67 had received at least 1 request. Twenty-four countries did not accept a visit, despite having five or more pending requests during the same period. It is also worrying that some States that have formally accepted to issue standing invitations to special procedures in the context of their Universal Periodic Review did not honor their acceptance or asked for their country to be removed from the list of States having issued standing invitations.

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 and their families. Some of my colleagues have been facing intimidation

and baseless accusations about their integrity and motivations. In some extreme cases, mandate holders have been the subject of derogatory remarks and personal attacks. This has happened in United Nations bodies, during country visits or in other contexts. Recent examples comprise disparaging personal remarks, verbal attacks against mandate holders, derogatory campaigns in the press, aggressive or insulting public statements by States representatives or by representatives of civil society, and claims of partial and unprofessional conduct designed to damage reputations, including publicly involving family members, thereby potentially creating insecurity. The legitimacy and authority of special procedures were directly put into question, thus undermining the whole system of special procedures and the reputation of the United Nations.

While mandate holders appreciate frank dialogue on their work and accept criticism, a threshold is reached when criticism is no longer directed at the work of the mandate holder but rather at the person. None of my colleagues, nor I, claim to be above scrutiny. Disagreement with special procedures mandate holders can always be expressed, even in a robust manner. However, disagreements should be evidence-based and expressed in a respectful and constructive way, and never veer into the realm of the personal.

As some of the recent personal attacks against mandate holders relate to the resources available to mandate holders to discharge their mandates and how they use such resources, I would like to recall that there is full transparency in the funding of special procedures. The information about resources received by mandate holders, directly or through OHCHR, is disclosed in the annual report of special procedures I am presenting today.

We count on the Council to maintain and consolidate its practice of condemning personal attacks against the experts to whom it entrusts the delicate task, described on numerous occasions, of being their eyes and ears.

Mr. President,

The Coordination Committee has also redoubled its efforts to constantly evaluate and optimize the working methods of the special procedures. We have promoted numerous instances of dialogue with the States and participated in many others promoted by them; we have continued to move forward with the internal advisory procedure; we have continued our commitment to financial transparency. Detailed information on all these processes is available in the report and, in more detail, on the website of the Special Procedures.

As the other part of the UN system, special procedures are deeply affected by the liquidity crisis. Several of our core activities are cut; the number of country visits will be reduced; the Annual Meeting in June and the induction session of new mandate holders will not take place. These restrictions will significantly reduce the capacity of special procedures to deliver their mandates, including their engagement and support to States, civil society, rightsholders and the UN system in moving the human rights agenda forward. As you know, the insufficiency of resources to support the special procedures precedes the regular budget liquidity situation. It is therefore imperative to secure sustainable funding for the special procedures system. This system is made of a dynamic and creative group of independent experts strongly dedicated to human rights and to engaging with you on this joint purpose. We are therefore committed to continuing our work during these challenging times and we count on your support in doing so. Now more than ever we should all be guided by unity and solidarity and uphold the call of the High Commissioner for human rights as a path for solutions, and in particular for strengthening the UN human rights system.

I thank you.