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

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Report on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/8. It contains information on relevant developments of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms, and on the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that contribute to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and the provisions of relevant international human rights treaties. The report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021. It concludes, inter alia, that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have a broad range of disproportionate and adverse negative impacts upon minorities. It concludes that, as the world faces the pandemic, the responses from States need to be centred in human rights and promote sustainable development that is inclusive, equitable and universal, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, language and any other relevant status.



I. Introduction

1. In July 2020, the Human Rights Council adopted its resolution 43/8 on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. In that resolution, the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to present a report to it annually. Since the start of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the world has experienced an extremely complex health crisis with multifaceted consequences, including exposing alarming inequalities within our societies, as the High Commissioner for Human Rights has warned.¹ As the Secretary-General stressed in his report entitled *Our Common Agenda*, the COVID-19 pandemic has served as a wake-up call and with the climate crisis now looming, the world is experiencing its biggest shared test since the Second World War. It has exposed human rights concerns and exacerbated deep fragilities and inequalities in our societies.²

2. The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Inequalities have fuelled the pandemic and continue to do so, leading to disproportionate rates of transmission and death in the most marginalized communities, as well as contributing to soaring poverty levels, increased hunger and plummeting living standards, which in turn risk fuelling grievances, social unrest and even full-blown conflict. To recover better from the most wide-reaching and severe cascade of human rights setbacks in our lifetimes, a life-changing vision is needed – and concerted action to follow up. A new social contract and an economic model that puts human beings and human rights at the centre of economic policy is necessary.³ This has brought again into focus the need to promote more inclusive societies, in every region of the world.⁴

II. Activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and recent developments in human rights bodies and mechanisms, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

A. Four-point agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality

3. In July 2021, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/1, the High Commissioner presented to the Council a comprehensive report containing an agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, anchored in the lived experiences of Africans and people of African descent.⁵ The report was informed by over 110 written contributions received and 23 online consultations held with over 340 persons, mostly people of African descent.⁶ The agenda towards transformative change calls for reversing cultures of denial, dismantling systemic racism and accelerating the pace of action, including by adopting comprehensive whole-of-government and whole-of-society reforms and responses.⁷

¹ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1101552>.

² See www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf.

³ See www.ohchr.org/FR/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27660&LangID=F.

⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27038.

⁵ [A/HRC/47/53](#). See also the conference room paper on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers ([A/HRC/47/CRP.1](#)), available on the webpage of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session47/Pages/ListReports.aspx).

⁶ [A/HRC/47/53](#). See also www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/Pages/Call-Implementation-HRC-Resolution-43-1.aspx.

⁷ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27296&LangID=E.

4. The agenda contains recommendations for, inter alia, the elaboration of comprehensive and adequately resourced national and regional action plans, using data to drive and assess responses to systemic racism. It also highlights the need to end impunity for human rights violations by law enforcement officials and to close the trust deficits in that area. It stresses the imperative of ensuring that the voices of people of African descent and those who stand up against racism are heard and that their concerns are acted upon, and of ensuring effective participation and/or representation of people of African descent, in particular women and young people, at every level in State institutions and in policy-making processes. It further stresses the importance of acknowledging and confronting legacies of enslavement, the Transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, and colonialism, including through accountability and redress. It emphasizes the need to take special measures and to deliver reparatory justice.⁸

5. Subsequently, in its resolution 47/21, the Human Rights Council established an international independent expert mechanism, with a three-year mandate, to advance racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement globally. The Council also requested the High Commissioner to enhance and broaden monitoring in order to continue to report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies and to contribute to accountability and redress. In the same resolution, the Council also requested the High Commissioner to take further action globally towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, including by providing support for and strengthening assistance to States and other stakeholders, particularly people of African descent and their organizations, and by giving further visibility to that work.

6. Following the publication of the above-mentioned report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) held seven online consultations with various stakeholders to explain the content of the report and the subsequent action taken by the Human Rights Council, and to seek views on the way forward.

7. In addition, the High Commissioner has reinforced the commitment of her office to address inequalities and eliminate discrimination by including people of African descent as a spotlight population in the OHCHR Management Plan. At the Fundamental Rights Forum organized by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in October 2021, OHCHR organized a panel, with the participation of the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, on efforts needed to follow up on the agenda in Europe.

B. Early warning mechanisms and protection of the existence of minorities

8. In January 2021, the High Commissioner provided an update to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of resolution 30/1 on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka. She expressed deep concern about the persistence and the increased use of ethno-nationalistic and majoritarian rhetoric and symbols, which define public policies that appear to exclusively reflect the perceived interests of the Sinhala Buddhist majority, and with minimal consideration given to minority communities.⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on religious freedom and has exacerbated the prevailing marginalization and discrimination suffered by the Muslim community.¹⁰

9. In February 2021, during the twenty-ninth special session of the Human Rights Council, on the human rights implications of the crisis in Myanmar, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern about the situation of the Rohingya people. She said the military authorities must not be allowed to exacerbate the situation of the Rohingya people, after the extreme violence and decades of discrimination that they had endured. She further said that Myanmar must fully comply with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, and that it must move to genuinely

⁸ [A/HRC/47/53](#), annex.

⁹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26695&LangID=E.

¹⁰ [A/HRC/46/20](#).

address the root causes of conflicts in Rakhine State and other ethnic minority areas.¹¹ On 12 July, the Human Rights Council adopted its resolution 47/1, in which it condemned the gross human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the security and armed forces of Myanmar against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities, even during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. On 23 September, the High Commissioner addressed the Human Rights Council and noted that since her last update, the human rights situation in Myanmar had deteriorated significantly as the far-reaching impacts of the military coup continued to devastate lives and hopes across the country. She further stated that her report included documentation of many serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.¹² On 6 December, the High Commissioner stated that she deplored the conviction and sentencing of the State Counsellor of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, and on 10 December, the office expressed serious concern over the country's human rights situation, which was deepening on an unprecedented scale.¹³

10. On 26 February 2021, the High Commissioner addressed the Human Rights Council and raised concerns that in the Islamic Republic of Iran, an apparently coordinated campaign had been targeting minority groups since December 2020, including in Sistan and Baluchestan province; Khuzestan province; and the Kurdish provinces.¹⁴

11. On 29 March 2021, several United Nations experts expressed serious concerns about the alleged detention and forced labour of Uighurs in China, calling for unhindered access to the country to conduct fact-finding missions and urging global and domestic companies to closely scrutinize their supply chains.¹⁵ They said they had received information that connected over 150 domestic Chinese and foreign domiciled companies to serious allegations of human rights abuses against Uighur workers.

12. In June 2021, the High Commissioner provided an update to the Human Rights Council on China, informing the Council that she continued to discuss with China the procedures for a visit, including meaningful access, to the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. She hoped that it could be achieved in 2021, particularly as reports of serious human rights violations continued to emerge.¹⁶

13. During the thirty-first special session of the Human Rights Council, on the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, held in August 2021, the High Commissioner highlighted that the diverse ethnic and religious minorities of Afghanistan were at risk of violence and repression, given previous patterns of serious violations under Taliban rule and reports of killings and targeted attacks in recent months.¹⁷ She strongly urged the Taliban to adopt norms of responsive governance and human rights, and to work to re-establish social cohesion and reconciliation. On 16 August, several United Nations human rights experts urged swift global action to protect human rights and prevent civilian slaughter in Afghanistan.¹⁸

14. In September 2021, the High Commissioner addressed the Human Rights Council regarding Iraq, recommending full implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law. The law provides for reparations, care and rehabilitation for the survivors of the targeted crimes committed by Da'esh. It also recognizes the crimes committed by Da'esh against women and girls as crimes against humanity and genocide, and it excludes future amnesties. While the law is a welcome step to strengthen support to survivors of Da'esh atrocities, some gaps remain, including the need to expand the definition of survivor to include men and boys and other communities. In addition, the law does not address the issue of the status of children born of rape committed by members of Da'esh. On 16 September, the Council of Ministers of Iraq adopted the by-laws, which provide the implementation mechanism for the law.

¹¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26743&LangID=E.

¹² [A/HRC/48/67](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26743&LangID=E).

¹³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27948&LangID=E.

¹⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26806&LangID=E.

¹⁵ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26957&LangID=E.

¹⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27178&LangID=E.

¹⁷ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E.

¹⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27384&LangID=E.

15. On 17 December, during the thirty-third special session of the Human Rights Council, on the grave human rights situation in Ethiopia, several human rights experts expressed deep concern at the ongoing crisis in which all parties to the conflict have perpetrated violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Since the outbreak of the conflict, ethnic Tigrayans have been subject to widespread discrimination, with hundreds of arrest warrants issued by federal authorities against them, including civilians, under claims of involvement with the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The consistent allegation is that these victims are being targeted mainly as a result of their ethnic identity. The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, in addressing the Council, stated that she deplored the increasing hate speech and incitement to violence by federal and regional authorities, as well as other public figures, which was particularly targeted against Tigrayans and members of the Oromo community. She warned that the risk of increasing hatred, violence and discrimination was very high, and that it could escalate into generalized violence.¹⁹

16. At the country level, the OHCHR office in Moldova, in partnership with the State Chancellery, organized an online training on the international human rights and minority rights system, which was held in July. Over 60 representatives from central public authorities, law enforcement agencies, national human rights institutions and local human rights coordinators attended the training.

17. During 2021, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues held four regional virtual forums in the Americas, Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe, on conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities.²⁰ Discussions at the regional forums informed the recommendations made at the Forum on Minority Issues at its fourteenth session, held on 2 and 3 December 2021, on the theme of conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities.²¹ In this context, OHCHR, through its regional offices, contributed to these discussions.

C. Addressing and countering discrimination

18. On 2 December 2020, OHCHR conducted a webinar on COVID-19, the health of minorities and their right to effective participation. The webinar highlighted the dangers of exclusion and intersecting forms of discrimination and how social vulnerabilities bring on a broad range of adverse impacts that affect minorities, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

19. In February 2021, the High Commissioner addressed the Human Rights Council on the state of play in the fight against racism and discrimination 20 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and on the detrimental effects the COVID-19 pandemic had had on those efforts. Past and contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance continued to victimize Africans and people of African descent, and Asians and people of Asian descent. Certain communities had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, demonstrating that racism, discrimination and poverty form a vicious cycle, as discrimination leads to economic deprivation, while poverty heightens the multiple impacts of bigotry.²² For example, in a number of countries, people of African descent experienced higher rates of infection, hospitalization and mortality due to COVID-19.²³

20. On 22 September, a General Assembly held a high-level meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, on the topic of reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent, for which

¹⁹ See

<https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/OrganizationalSessions/OrganizationalSessionForThe16thCycleoftheHRC6December2021/Pages/statements.aspx?SessionId=53&MeetingDate=17/12/2021%2000:00:00>.

²⁰ See <https://tom-lantos-institute.events.idloom.com/files/events/16187/files/concept-note-regional-forums-2021-final.pdf>.

²¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session14.aspx.

²² See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26772&LangID=E.

²³ [A/HRC/47/CRP.1](#).

the Office provided substantive secretariat support. The High Commissioner made a statement in which she highlighted that the anti-discrimination agenda concerned and belonged to all of us, irrespective of race, colour, descent, ethnic or national origin, affiliation, religion or belief. She also noted that stronger efforts must be employed by all stakeholders to implement the goals laid out in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.²⁴

21. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent presented its report to the General Assembly.²⁵ In the report, the Working Group highlighted that the year 2020 had shed light on the long-lasting systematic racism and structural discrimination that had historically put people of African descent at a disadvantage and prevented them from fully enjoying their human rights. It noted that urgent actions were needed to address racial disparities in health and to put an end to systematic racism in the areas of law enforcement and criminal justice.²⁶

22. Throughout 2021, OHCHR and the Equal Rights Trust carried out work on a practical guide on developing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation for the protection of minority rights. Broad consultations in the development of the guide were undertaken throughout 2021. In February 2021, the project partners complemented these consultations with a webinar dedicated to the nexus between expression and action, focusing on hate speech, incitement and anti-discrimination legislation.²⁷

23. Human rights treaty bodies have issued recommendations to strengthen the protection of minority groups within national frameworks against discrimination. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Lebanon incorporate a provision defining and prohibiting direct and indirect racial discrimination in its legislation.²⁸ The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families expressed concern about discrimination and violence directed at Haitian migrants and migrants of African descent in Chile. It recommended that Chile develop measures to eliminate xenophobia and discriminatory stereotypes.²⁹

24. Systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent affects the enjoyment of their human rights in every part of life. In many States and regions, stark socioeconomic marginalization shapes the lives of people of African descent. People of African descent are more likely to suffer disproportionately high unemployment rates, earn lower wages and occupy less-skilled positions, in addition to being underrepresented in management positions. They are more likely to lack access to adequate housing and to face obstacles in gaining equal access to quality education and health care. Disparate outcomes in terms of the enjoyment of economic and social rights are compounded by the insufficient meaningful participation and representation of people of African descent in decision-making processes.³⁰

25. In March 2021, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues presented his mission report on Kyrgyzstan, raising concerns about the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in State entities; gaps in school education in minority languages, including Uzbek; and the hostile environment faced by civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists. In 2021, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia continued advocating for the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation in Kyrgyzstan and also supported civil society organizations working on this issue. Furthermore, it provided expert support to the Government of Kyrgyzstan in developing an action plan for the implementation of the *Kyrgyz Jarany* civic identity concept, which is aimed at increasing minority participation in decision-making processes and at combating discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.

²⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27510&LangID=E.

²⁵ [A/76/302](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27510&LangID=E).

²⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/urgency-of-now.aspx.

²⁷ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/ConceptNoteHateSpeechDiscrimination.pdf.

²⁸ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27419&LangID=E.

²⁹ [CMW/C/CHL/CO/2](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27419&LangID=E), paras. 27–28.

³⁰ [A/HRC/47/CRP.1](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27419&LangID=E).

D. Hate speech

26. At the multi-stakeholder forum on addressing hate speech through education, held on 30 September and 1 October 2021, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the Office's #Faith4Rights toolkit brings together tools by and for faith-based actors, including tools to address hate speech and protect religious or belief minorities.³¹ She noted that OHCHR and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council contributed to the open online course on freedom of expression, held in May and June 2021 jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford, bringing together close to 5,000 participants.³²

27. In February 2021, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues presented his thematic report on hate speech, social media and minorities to the Human Rights Council.³³ In his report, the Special Rapporteur emphasized the responsibility of States, civil society and social media platforms to acknowledge that hate speech was mainly a minority issue and, as a matter of urgency, also emphasized their duty to take further steps towards the full and effective implementation of the human rights obligations involved.

28. In April 2021, the High Commissioner addressed the High-Level European Conference on protection from racial discrimination and related intolerance.³⁴ Welcoming the political steps taken by the European Union to address systematic racial discrimination and related intolerance, she encouraged European Union countries to continue the crucial work of addressing the root causes of racial discrimination and related intolerance, in partnership with concerned communities and civil society.

29. In July 2021, the human rights office of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo³⁵ designed and launched a pilot initiative to monitor incitement to hatred and hate speech on social media and online media outlets, particularly with regard to hate speech against minority communities. The initiative was aimed at helping to inform the Mission's future interventions and preventative efforts in line with the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and the Rabat Plan of Action.

30. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine recorded hate speech incidents, including incitement to bias-motivated violence.³⁶ The mission advocated, together with relevant authorities, for the adoption of necessary actions to prevent incidents of hate speech from turning into hate crimes. On 23 March 2021, the mission delivered a presentation on monitoring of hate speech for 31 regional representatives of the Ombudsperson's Office with a view to strengthening their capacity to record and react to such incidents, and to increase calls for investigation and prosecution thereof. Furthermore, a working relationship with the Facebook office in Ukraine also allows the mission to report material of concern and enhance the company's awareness of hate speech patterns in the country. In addition, the mission has received information about a wave of threats and expressions of hatred towards individuals who publicly criticized the 2019 law on ensuring the functioning of Ukrainian as the State language or individuals who expressed any positive views about the public use of the Russian language.

31. Various treaty bodies have expressed concerns during their reviews of States parties about discriminatory, racist and violent information, and hate speech directed at minority groups, including women, African descendants, Muslims, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Roma and Jewish communities,³⁷ and people of Asian origin.³⁸

³¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27582&LangID=E.

³² Ibid.

³³ [A/HRC/46/57](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27008&LangID=E).

³⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27008&LangID=E.

³⁵ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

³⁶ OHCHR, "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine", 23 September 2021, para. 97.

³⁷ [CCPR/C/FIN/CO/7](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27008&LangID=E), para. 14.

³⁸ [CERD/C/BEL/CO/20-22](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27008&LangID=E), para. 18.

E. Economic, social and cultural rights of minorities

32. In 2021, OHCHR published guidance on COVID-19 vaccines.³⁹ Access to vaccines and medicines is disturbingly uneven in many parts of the world, with poorer health outcomes for national, ethnic, religious, racial and linguistic minorities, and others experiencing marginalization. OHCHR guidance has recommended that vaccines should be affordable to all and accessible without discrimination.

33. The Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights focused her report to the Human Rights Council on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultures and cultural rights. Noting the disproportionate impact of all pandemic measures on marginalized groups, including members of minorities, she called for the guarantee of cultural rights and the right to science for everyone, without discrimination, during and after the pandemic.⁴⁰

34. In 2021, through its surge initiative and particularly within the context of the socioeconomic crisis generated by the pandemic, OHCHR has stepped up engagement to combat economic and other inequalities, contributing rights-based analyses and solutions with a spotlight on those at risk of being left behind, including minorities. The surge initiative has, among others, reviewed stimulus packages and emergency measures focusing on impacts on gender and on disadvantaged groups, including minorities at risk of exclusion from such measures.⁴¹

35. In June 2021, OHCHR organized an intersessional workshop on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage. It was concluded that rights-based tools should facilitate universal approaches and mutual recognition of the cultural heritage of all, including minorities. Concerns were raised that violations of human rights in conflicts are sometimes accompanied by the intentional, selective destruction of the cultural heritage of other parties to the conflict or of persecuted minorities.⁴²

36. In July 2021, OHCHR co-sponsored and participated in a side event to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The event was on combating discrimination in development. It was aimed at addressing the discriminatory barriers in law, policy and practice that prevent, among others, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities from enjoying their rights on an equal footing with others and that also contribute to their marginalization in development. The event was also aimed at examining the way those barriers had exacerbated the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for particular groups and communities.

37. The human rights office of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo monitored and reported on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the right to information, language rights, and economic, social, and cultural rights of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minority communities in Kosovo, such as challenges they faced with regard to accessing COVID-19 testing, education and economic recovery measures.⁴³ In addition, the office supported the authorities and institutions in Kosovo in placing human rights at the heart of the pandemic response and recovery with a view to ensuring that minority communities were not left behind in the process of building back better.

38. In the framework of its programme to support the litigation of economic, social and cultural rights, the OHCHR office in Tunisia facilitated a training session for members of civil society working in favour of vulnerable and discriminated groups, including ethnic and religious minorities.

39. In Belize, OHCHR is collaborating with the World Health Organization country office to support the conduct of a situational analysis in the country that examines the state of health policies of, among others, Afrodescendent populations. OHCHR is supporting the production of communication materials along with translation services to communicate the right to

³⁹ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/COVID-19_AccessVaccines_Guidance.pdf.

⁴⁰ [A/HRC/46/34](#), paras. 3 and 79 (m).

⁴¹ [E/2021/77](#).

⁴² See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/ESCR/Pages/IntersessionalWorkshopProtectionCulturalHeritage.aspx.

⁴³ [S/2021/332](#) and [S/2021/861](#).

health to Afrodescendent populations in their respective languages. The situational analysis will also be aimed at operationalizing the principle of leaving no one behind.

40. In October 2021, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues presented his report on minorities, equal participation, social and economic development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴⁴ In his report, the Special Rapporteur warns of the danger of the failure to include any specific reference to the marginalization of minorities in United Nations and State efforts related to the Sustainable Development Goals. A high-level side event on the 2030 Agenda and the economic participation of minorities was held at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, and the event was discussed in the Special Rapporteur's thematic report.

41. On 8 December, OHCHR organized a seminar on good practices, key challenges and new developments relevant to access to medicines and vaccines.⁴⁵ The seminar explored, among others, particular challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic for the enjoyment of human rights by those living in poverty and other persons in vulnerable situations, including minorities. The High Commissioner, in her opening statement, emphasized that available and affordable vaccines were indispensable to any policy that made vaccines mandatory. She noted that unless all people had genuine, practical access to vaccines, vaccine requirements would not be consistent with fundamental human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination.⁴⁶

F. Minorities and climate change

42. In February 2021, OHCHR, with civil society partners, hosted an expert workshop entitled "Creating a just climate for fighting climate change: how can United Nations human rights mechanisms contribute to ending environmental racism?" At the workshop, discussions were conducted on how United Nations human rights mechanisms and other stakeholders could meaningfully address the disproportionate impact of climate change and environmental degradation on racial and other minorities. Furthermore, in its resolution 48/13, the Human Rights Council recognized for the first time at the global level the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. In the resolution, the Council recognized that the human rights consequences of environmental damage were felt most acutely by those segments of the population that were already in vulnerable situations. In its resolution 48/14, the Council decided to appoint a special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and climate change. In the same resolution, the Council explicitly recognized the disproportionate impact of climate change on the human rights of persons belonging to minority groups, and provided the Rapporteur with a mandate to, among others, support the resilience and adaptive capacities of people in vulnerable situations to respond to the adverse impact of climate change.

43. In September 2021, the High Commissioner informed the Human Rights Council about the impact of climate change in human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Environmental damage usually does the greatest harm to those who are least protected – the poorest and most marginalized people, and the poorest nations, which often have the least capacity to respond. She raised concerns about the humanitarian emergency in Sahel countries, which was also fuelled by climate change. Compounded by weak governance of natural resources, long-standing patterns of poverty and inequalities, inadequate access to basic services, and high rates of youth unemployment and discrimination against minorities, women and girls, these trends compelled people into displacement, aggravated conflicts and political instability, and fuelled recruitment by violent extremist groups.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ [A/76/162](#).

⁴⁵ See

www.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/Documents/Issues/MentalHealth/CN_Access_medicines_vaccines.docx&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1.

⁴⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27924&LangID=E.

⁴⁷ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27443.

44. In May 2021, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, during its thirty-eighth session, adopted reports in which they recommended that States mitigate human rights violations against persons belonging to minorities, including by ensuring the participation of minority groups in developing and implementing climate change and disaster-risk reduction frameworks,⁴⁸ by strengthening efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,⁴⁹ or by implementing educational programmes that encouraged the culture of encounter.⁵⁰

45. In 2021, in the context of the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, OHCHR co-led efforts to develop United Nations system guidance for the protection of environmental human rights defenders in collaboration with other United Nations entities. The guidance was informed by global and regional consultations with environmental human rights defenders, who are among the human rights defenders most exposed and at risk. They include minorities who advocate for land- and for resource-related rights and other individuals and groups who strive to protect and promote the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

G. Empowerment and participation

46. In March 2021, the High Commissioner presented her report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights around the world.⁵¹ In the report, she underscored the need to address human rights throughout the response to and recovery from the pandemic in order to build a more sustainable, equitable and secure future for people and for the planet. She recommended creating effective channels for civil society participation in policy development and decision-making at all levels, in particular organizations representing minorities and marginalized groups, and leveraging new technologies to allow inclusive processes in which the voices of civil society are heard.

47. Since 2020, the three Geneva-based OHCHR fellowship programmes focused on indigenous peoples, minorities and people of African descent who were substantially challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programmes have been redesigned and significantly expanded by placing former fellows in United Nations field presences as senior fellows to engage in training in the form of job-shadowing. During the first cycle of the programme, 35 former fellows who were members of indigenous or minority communities were selected to undergo a senior fellow traineeship in various OHCHR regional and country offices or in other United Nations country presences in all regions of the world, with support, training and guidance provided by two supervisors. Following the success of the first cycle of the redesigned programme in the first half of 2021, OHCHR launched the second cycle of the programme in September, where six new minority fellows were selected.

48. In 2021, former OHCHR minority fellows from the Americas, Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia took part in consultations with the Special Rapporteur on minority issues ahead of the regional forums for 2021. As a result, the former minority fellows hosted joint side events on the margins of the Regional Forum for Africa and the Middle East and the European Regional Forum.

49. The Minority Artists, Voice and Dissidence series, a collaboration between OHCHR and the non-governmental organization Freemuse, brings together minority artists to present artwork on the theme of freedom of artistic expression. The first event, on human rights, art and protest, focusing on voice and expression in minority communities in the United States of America during the pandemic, was held in February 2021.⁵² The second event, on speaking truth to power, was held in May 2021. It focused on religious or belief minorities worldwide, including in circumstances where artists may be threatened by anti-blasphemy or anti-

⁴⁸ See, e.g., [A/HRC/48/17](#).

⁴⁹ [A/HRC/48/8](#).

⁵⁰ [A/HRC/48/5](#).

⁵¹ [A/HRC/46/19](#).

⁵² See

www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/Webinar_Human_Rights_art_and_protest_February112021.pdf.

apostasy laws, as well as by other forces limiting civic space.⁵³ The third event, on human rights, virtual art and activism, featured artists from a broad diversity of visual media worldwide.

50. Based on the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights and the United Nations guidance note on promoting and protecting civic space of September 2020,⁵⁴ OHCHR has sought to advance United Nations efforts to make participation of civil society and communities, both online and offline, more inclusive, more meaningful and safer.

51. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called for the enhanced participation and representation of minorities, including people of African descent, in public administration, the media, cultural settings, the scientific community and academia.⁵⁵

52. On 16 and 17 November 2021, the third session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law was held, on equal access to justice for all. Participants discussed the specific challenges in access to justice for various constituencies, including minorities. They also discussed the ways in which intersecting forms of discrimination affected the enjoyment of the right to access to justice.⁵⁶

53. Throughout 2021, the human rights office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq continued its work with academics, community leaders and human rights defenders across Iraq on peace narratives highlighting the role of young people in Iraq as catalysts for positive change in building sustainable peace. The peace narratives document local youth initiatives, reaching across religious and ethnic communities to address cross-cutting human rights concerns. They also document how these initiatives contribute to strengthening social cohesion and fostering a climate of tolerance in Iraq. The publication of the report will be accompanied by the launch of a website, with the aim of creating a platform for the exchange of information, inviting viewers to share their stories and read about other initiatives.

54. The OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia continued to monitor the situation of ethnic minorities in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, especially those impacted by large-scale development projects, including dams, mining, monocrop plantations and logging. The Office is working with the United Nations country team to ensure increased and meaningful participation of local communities in socioeconomic and development programmes and projects, as a core principle of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in addition to the work aimed at addressing key emblematic human rights cases.

55. The OHCHR office in Colombia, at the invitation of the Directorate for the Affairs of Afro-Colombian, Black, Raizal and Palenquero communities of the Ministry of the Interior, provided support and advice to the Raizal authorities and government bodies in the process of prior consultation on the Raizal Statute, a legal instrument for the protection of the territorial, economic, social and cultural rights of the Raizal people. The Statute is considered the second most important norm in the recognition of collective rights for Afrodescendants after Law No. 70 of 1993.

H. Human rights situation of Roma communities

56. As part of its follow-up on the 2015 report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, OHCHR has continued to support Roma civil society and human rights defender networks in the Americas. Priorities for 2021 have included Roma Holocaust memorial actions and efforts at the national level in the Americas to combat discrimination against Roma and to end stigma against persons pejoratively referred to as gypsies. OHCHR organized several online capacity-building and advocacy meetings with around 20 leaders and activists from Roma communities and Roma NGOs in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia. The advocacy work resulted, among others, in increased participation in several United

⁵³ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/FreemuseMinorityArtists_2ndWebinar%20June2021.pdf.

⁵⁴ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.pdf.

⁵⁵ See [CERD/C/BEL/CO/20-22](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/CERD/C/BEL/CO/20-22).

⁵⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Democracy/Pages/Session3.aspx.

Nations international mechanisms and in consultations organized by United Nations human rights experts. The OHCHR Regional Office for South America participated, for the second time, in an international Roma Congress, on education, rights and equality for the Roma. The Congress was held in Argentina in October. In addition, the office is following up on several cases of violence against Roma in Brazil.

57. In March 2021, the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe participated in the launch of CHACHIPEN, a new project on truth and reconciliation processes to address antigypsyism in Europe, in the run-up to the fiftieth International Roma Day.⁵⁷ The event was aimed at advancing the recognition of and response to historically rooted and systemic antigypsyism through an innovative model of truth and reconciliation processes. In July and August, the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe led an initiative with Roma civil society groups to gather insights into challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Roma framework at the national level.

58. On 8 April 2021, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues made a statement to mark International Roma Day, expressing concerns about the rise of hate speech disproportionately targeting Sinti and Roma on social media. He further urged States to strengthen measures to combat prejudice, hate speech and discrimination of Roma.⁵⁸

59. In September 2021, the High Commissioner welcomed legislation adopted in Czechia that enables women and men to receive compensation for having been sterilized unlawfully and without consent. For more than 45 years, and until 2012, hundreds of people, in particular Roma women, were subjected to forced sterilization.

60. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine has led the United Nations country team's engagement with the Government on the elaboration of the post-2020 Roma strategy. The strategy was adopted on 28 July 2021. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine continues to advocate for the adoption of an action plan and the provision of adequate funding for the implementation of the strategy.

61. In August 2021, the OHCHR office in the Republic of Moldova issued a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human rights in the country.⁵⁹ While the impact on the general population was assessed, a special focus was placed on Roma, among other groups that were the most affected, in 10 different human rights areas, including health, education, social security, labour, sanitation, access to information and water.

I. Linguistic minorities

62. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine worked to enhance the compatibility of legislation in Ukraine with international human rights standards, in particular with regard to the protection of languages spoken by minorities. The 2019 law on ensuring the functioning of Ukrainian as the State language instructed that a draft law on the rights of national minorities of Ukraine be developed by 16 January 2020. The latest version of the new draft law incorporates several recommendations made by the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine on the rights of linguistic minorities, although it still requires further improvements to bring it into line with the recommendations of the European Commission for Democracy through Law and the Human Rights Mission.⁶⁰

63. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, in her report presented to the Human Rights Council in July 2021, described acts of discrimination against the Polish-speaking community. She expressed concerns that that community faced growing obstacles to its running of an already limited number of schools and cultural centres.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See www.ceps.eu/ceps-events/chachipen-project-launch-event-in-a-run-up-for-50th-international-roma-day/.

⁵⁸ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26974&LangID=E.

⁵⁹ See <https://moldova.un.org/en/138288-impact-covid-19-human-rights-republic-moldova>.

⁶⁰ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/31stReportUkraine-en.pdf (para. 91).

⁶¹ [A/HRC/47/49](#).

64. In Iraq, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the human rights office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq undertook a campaign to raise awareness on the human rights impact of the pandemic, and it disseminated information in minority languages on health protection measures. In October 2021, the office disseminated 17,000 posters, in six of the country's minority languages. In addition, the office is currently implementing a project to translate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into seven minority languages of Iraq. The project is jointly implemented with the Minority Working Group, a forum co-chaired by the office and comprising members of government and civil society and representatives of minority communities. The project is aimed at raising awareness about the country's linguistic diversity and at advocating for concrete steps to strengthen their preservation.

J. Minorities, discrimination and statelessness

65. Statelessness is often the result of discrimination on the basis ethnicity; race; religion; age; gender; disability; language; and sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics, as well as intersectional or multiple forms of discrimination. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it is estimated that more than 75 per cent of the world's known stateless populations are members of minority groups. Statelessness exacerbates barriers already faced by minority populations and other disadvantaged groups, thus further limiting their access to services and the enjoyment of their human rights. On 21 October 2021, OHCHR and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees jointly convened a high-level round table on equality and non-discrimination in nationality matters to end statelessness. It called attention to the right to nationality and the plight of stateless populations, in particular members of minorities who were stateless as a result of discrimination. The event highlighted good practices in removing discrimination from nationality laws, policies and practices and in implementing an intersectional approach to the right to nationality among United Nations human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions.⁶²

K. Religious or belief minorities and faith-based actors

66. In February 2021, in the context of her update to the Human Rights Council on recent human rights issues, the High Commissioner raised concerns that in Pakistan, women from religious minority communities were particularly vulnerable to forced marriage accompanied by forced conversion.⁶³

67. In March 2021, the Human Rights Committee adopted Views on two individual communications, finding that Azerbaijan had violated the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses, a religious minority in the country. In both cases, *Aliyev et al. v. Azerbaijan* and *Gurbanova et al. v. Azerbaijan*,⁶⁴ the Committee considered that the authors' rights to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention and to freedom of religion or belief had been violated.

68. In 2021, OHCHR conducted peer-to-peer learning events, piloting the interactive methodology and case studies contained in the #Faith4Rights toolkit,⁶⁵ including with civil servants in Brazil and Nigeria (with the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief). Additional events were conducted with universities in Misau, Mozambique; Oslo; Oxford, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Pretoria; and Uberlândia, Brazil, as well as with Chevening scholars from more than 60 countries. United Nations human rights mechanisms have been part and parcel of these webinars.

69. Furthermore, OHCHR collaborated with the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations for a peer-to-peer learning programme with religious actors and faith-based organizations, focusing on topics

⁶² See <https://vimeo.com/645372402/b04d020129>.

⁶³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26806&LangID=E.

⁶⁴ [CCPR/C/131/D/2805/2016](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26806&LangID=E) and [CCPR/C/131/D/2952/2017](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26806&LangID=E).

⁶⁵ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf.

related to religious or belief minorities, hate speech, atrocity crimes, religious sites, gender equality and interfaith dialogue.⁶⁶ In addition, a series of monthly high-level dialogues on freedom of religion or belief and the Sustainable Development Goals was conducted with parliamentarians and faith-based actors.

70. In 2021, the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, in partnership with the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, published a booklet engaging religious actors to counter hate speech, prevent incitement to violence, and build peaceful and inclusive societies.⁶⁷ In the publication, it is noted that persons belonging to minorities, including religious or belief minorities, remain subject to acute discrimination across the Middle East and North Africa region.

71. As a result of technical cooperation supplied by OHCHR to promote human rights in Tunisia, the Decree No. 534 of 29 June 2021 on the organization of the Ministry of Religious Affairs provides for the creation of an office for human rights and relations with organizations and associations that supervise the affairs of religious minorities. Following a recommendation by OHCHR, the mandate of the Ministry's monitoring unit, which monitors and follows up on human rights violations against or caused by imams and other men and women of worship, was extended to include Christian and Jewish clerics. Throughout 2021, OHCHR has worked closely with the Ministry, providing guidance on the drafting process and substantive contents of the monitoring unit's periodic reports, including to ensure a gender-based approach.

72. In 2021, the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine continued to document incidents of violence in relation to churches and religious communities transitioning from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, although the number of incidents fell after the 2019 presidential elections. In 2021, the mission documented two cases of violence related to tensions between the above-mentioned Orthodox communities. The mission also noted a lack of visible progress in bringing to account perpetrators of violent attacks and threats in relation to church transitions in the period 2018–2019.

73. In 2021, various United Nations human rights experts warned about the erosion of the historic consensus on freedoms of religion and expression, in a context where digitalization and the COVID-19 pandemic have generated a new wave of stigma, racism and xenophobia against minorities, including religious minorities. The experts also flagged State actions that were incompatible with freedoms of religion, belief, opinion and expression, including the use of anti-blasphemy and anti-apostasy laws, which render religious or belief minorities, including atheists and dissenters, vulnerable to discrimination and violence.⁶⁸ Furthermore, in July 2021, several human rights experts expressed concern over the lack of attention to the serious human rights violations perpetrated against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in various countries around the world.⁶⁹

74. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine documented limitations to freedom of religion or belief targeting multiple religious communities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, occupied by the Russian Federation.⁷⁰ Muslim communities, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and Jehovah's Witnesses remained the most affected groups on the peninsula.⁷¹ The practice of using administrative charges of proselytism against religious minorities by Russian law enforcement agencies in Crimea continued. The mission recorded court cases against religious organizations or individuals on such grounds.⁷²

⁶⁶ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/GlobalPledgeActionConcept.pdf.

⁶⁷ See www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/OHCHR-Notebook-Side-Binding.pdf.

⁶⁸ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26937&LangID=E.

⁶⁹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27305&LangID=E.

⁷⁰ See General Assembly resolution 74/168.

⁷¹ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/31stReportUkraine-en.pdf; [A/76/260](#), paras. 14 and 29–31; and [A/HRC/47/58](#), paras. 24–26.

⁷² During the period of 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, OHCHR recorded 32 court cases against religious organizations or individuals on such grounds, including 14 Protestant, 10 Muslim and 2 Jewish organizations, and 1 Catholic and 1 Mormon organization.

75. In Viet Nam, the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, continued to work with civil society organizations to strengthen their capacities in human rights investigations and documentations with a view to documenting emblematic cases of violations of freedom of religion or belief, and the right to land of minorities groups, and bringing them to the attention of the relevant special procedures. In Viet Nam, restrictions on religious practice have been imposed through legislative means, in particular the 2016 Law on Religion, which among others imposes surveillance and burdensome registration requirements for churches and minority religious groups.

L. Interfaith dialogue

76. In July 2021, the High Commissioner flagged the increasingly harsh restrictions on civic space in many countries. She stressed the importance of building networks and coalitions involving religious or belief minorities, referring also to cases in which members of majority communities have stood up for the right of religious or belief minorities to participate equally and effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life. She noted that the United Nations could facilitate “safe spaces” in which religious actors and others could engage on issues of faith and human rights, based on the normative human rights framework, soft-law standards and peer-to-peer learning methodology.⁷³

77. In September 2021, the High Commissioner noted that thematic forums, such as the Forum on Minority Issues, could contribute to widening civic space, promoting mutual understanding and enriching governmental deliberations with grass-roots contributions.⁷⁴ She also referred to the new European Union Gender Action Plan III, which emphasizes that the European Union should support mobilization of religious actors for gender equality in line with the Faith for Rights framework.⁷⁵

78. During 2021, OHCHR continued to advocate and provide technical support to the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Tunisia for the drafting of a guide that listed key commitments made by imams to advance their role in promoting human rights and a democratic society. The reference guide is intended to be a practical benchmark developed by the preaching imams themselves, drawing inspiration from the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on Faith for Rights.

III. United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities

79. During 2021, the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities significantly expanded its field of action, pursuant to global concerns around racial justice and the troubling impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minority communities worldwide. In December 2020, the network adopted its workplan for the period 2021–2025.⁷⁶

80. In March, the network launched its checklist to strengthen at the country level the work of the United Nations to combat racial discrimination and advance minority rights,⁷⁷ followed by the roll-out of the checklist in Arabic, French, Romanian, Russian and Spanish. The network also began engaging United Nations country teams to use the checklist, by offering training packages and by embedding the checklist in analytical work going forward, such as a major inter-agency effort to examine human rights in common country analysis documents and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

81. On 21 September, the network convened a side event on the margins of the forty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council to profile its work in support of the United

⁷³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27279&LangID=E.

⁷⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27442&LangID=E.

⁷⁵ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017&from=EN>.

⁷⁶ See

www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/UN_Network_Racial_Discrimination_Protection_Minorities_Workplan2021.pdf.

⁷⁷ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q74L9g8s2Mo.

Nations system to address racial discrimination and to strengthen minority rights in practice. The event highlighted some of the network's work and its prospects of further development, and it served as an opportunity for discussion with Member States and other interested actors, including civil society, academia and the public-at-large, as to possible synergies around its work planning for the period 2022–2023.

82. Throughout the year, network members worked to supplement the human rights review of the United Nations country teams' socioeconomic response plans to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group undertook an analysis of the first generation of common country analysis and cooperation frameworks from the perspective of how they address racial discrimination and the protection of minorities. In October, the network convened a month-long training activity for the country teams, on addressing racial and ethnicity-based discrimination and strengthening the protection of minorities, indigenous peoples and other population groups in United Nations programming processes.

IV. Conclusions

83. In his report entitled *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General highlighted that the full spectrum of human rights must be at the heart of every society's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and he emphasized the need for a renewed social contract. With a view to preserving and building trust, he called upon institutions to establish better ways of listening to people and taking their views into account, especially groups that are frequently overlooked, such as minority groups.⁷⁸

84. In 2022, the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities will be celebrated. The anniversary provides an important opportunity to take stock, identify constraints and achievements in implementation of the Declaration, and establish priorities for the future, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. By reaching out to those whose voices are usually not heard, the anniversary should help shed light on the lived realities and rights of persons belonging to minorities and create channels for meaningful civil society participation.

85. In response to the current context in which the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic repercussions are disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, the Office is expanding its work on structural inequalities and pervasive discrimination. The Office will also continue to extend support to States and other relevant actors to ensure that their efforts to build back better are rooted in human rights.

86. By contributing to rights-based analyses and solutions with a spotlight on those at risk of being left behind, including minorities, the Office's work will help address the alarmingly high levels of inequality. By identifying people of African descent as a spotlight population, the Office will take further steps to broaden and deepen its work on racial discrimination, making this a whole-of-Office effort. Moreover, OHCHR has committed to further strengthening its work on inequalities in its extended Office Management Plan.

87. Through its work on the four-point agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, as well as its ongoing work on combating racial and other forms of discrimination, the Office is supporting a recovery that promotes more sustainable, equitable and just societies.

88. OHCHR will also continue to support minority participation, including through its redesigned online fellowship on people of African descent and its largely expanded minority fellowship programme, which places senior fellows in OHCHR and United Nations field presences with a view to ensuring a critical role for them as active members of society and to enhance OHCHR's work on minorities at the country level.

⁷⁸ See www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/.

89. The United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities will continue to heighten cooperation and collaboration of United Nations agencies and entities to address racial discrimination and protection of minorities issues.

90. United Nations international human rights mechanisms are playing a key role in promoting the protection of minorities, and OHCHR will continue to provide support to their important work.
