



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
4 January 2023

Original: English

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda items 2 and 3

### 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

## 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 49/14, in which the Council requested 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 contributed 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.

The report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022, a year that marked the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. Many of the activities undertaken in the course of the year and reflected in the report focused on commemorating the anniversary of the Declaration.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 49/14, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to present an annual report containing 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 (OHCHR) at headquarters and in the field that contributed 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.

2. In the resolution, the Human Rights Council noted that 2022 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration, and that the anniversary offered an important opportunity for States to reflect on achievements, best practices and continuing challenges with regard to the implementation of the Declaration and to take further steps for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

## II. Commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

3. The General Assembly adopted the Declaration by consensus on 18 December 1992 through resolution 47/135. It is the only United Nations instrument entirely dedicated to minority rights. The adoption of the Declaration was a landmark moment, a step towards promoting equality, protecting communities, providing a voice and preventing conflict.<sup>1</sup>

4. The preamble to the Declaration states that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live. In other words, the Declaration, with its four pillars, namely protection of the existence of minorities, non-discrimination, protection of identity, and participation, serves to mitigate the risk of conflict. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues has observed that most contemporary violent conflicts involve aggrieved minorities, that strategies should directly address the root causes of exclusion and injustice and better protect minority rights, and that greater attention must be paid to minority issues in support of conflict analysis and conflict prevention.<sup>2</sup>

5. The Declaration is rooted in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language. The Declaration also reflects article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides the same protection specifically for children belonging to minority groups.

6. The Declaration provides specific guidance and measures that States can undertake to protect minorities' rights and has influenced legal developments. For example, it was a valuable model for the drafters of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, which serves as one of the pillars of the Council of Europe's human rights protection. In addition, references to the Declaration have been made in regional jurisprudence, including judgments by the European Court of Human Rights,<sup>3</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/05/30th-anniversary-marks-landmark-moment-minority-rights>.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/49/46, paras. 22 and 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Gorzelik and Others v. Poland*, Application No. 44158/98, Judgment, 17 February 2004.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights<sup>4</sup> and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.<sup>5</sup>

7. The thirtieth anniversary has provided an opportunity to examine progress achieved under the Declaration and to consider implementation challenges, while bringing more awareness to its contents and to minority rights. For example, during the high-level meeting convened on 21 September 2022 by the President of the General Assembly, Csaba Kőrösi, and organized by his office and OHCHR pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/168, Member States themselves recognized that they were falling behind in their commitments with regard to the protection of the rights of minorities. There were also calls by Member States for better national frameworks that could contribute to strengthened implementation of the Declaration and to the advancement of political and social stability, sustainable development and conflict prevention.

8. At the high-level meeting, the Secretary-General affirmed that the protection of minorities was integral to the mission of the United Nations and that the promotion of minority rights was vital to advancing political and social stability and preventing conflict within and between countries.<sup>6</sup> The President of the General Assembly echoed that, noting that the Declaration was more relevant than ever before.<sup>7</sup> The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights emphasized that the Declaration provided the global minority rights framework, but that progress in implementation had stalled and even regressed in some cases. She also emphasized that Member State and multilateral action was urgently needed to raise the priority of minority rights on the global agenda, and noted that the United Nations system itself needed to step up and take joint action, anchored in the Secretary General's call to action for human rights and his report entitled "Our Common Agenda".<sup>8</sup>

9. In May 2022, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement highlighting the Declaration's guidance for States on protecting and promoting minorities' human rights, while lamenting how minorities remained systematically excluded from participating in decision-making around issues that directly affected them. She underscored that the Declaration's anniversary should stand as a stark reminder for the whole international community that they could do more to protect minority rights.<sup>9</sup>

10. In his 2022 report to the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on minority rights called for a renewed approach, recommending, among other things, that minority rights be mainstreamed within the work of the United Nations, that a treaty on minority rights be developed and that an international year or decade for minorities be established. He also recommended that minorities be included in documents and activities surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals, that a United Nations voluntary fund be created and that a permanent forum for minorities be established.<sup>10</sup>

11. Ahead of the fifteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, held on 1 and 2 December 2022, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 74/165, regional forums were convened by the Special Rapporteur on minority rights in coordination with the Tom Lantos Institute, in order to put a spotlight on crucial gaps and to ensure that minority issues and rights of minorities were mainstreamed into the agenda of the United Nations more concretely.<sup>11</sup> Participants at each regional forum commemorated the thirtieth anniversary,

<sup>4</sup> *Xákmok Kásek Indigenous Community v. Paraguay*, Judgment, 24 August 2010.

<sup>5</sup> *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v. Republic of Kenya*, Application No. 6/2012, Judgment, 26 May 2017.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and>.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1s/k1sd1c79hy>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/09/assistant-secretary-general-ilze-brands-kehris-statement-high-level-meeting>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/05/30th-anniversary-marks-landmark-moment-minority-rights>.

<sup>10</sup> *A/77/246*, paras. 71–78.

<sup>11</sup> See [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/minorities/forums/2022-07-21/CN2022\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/minorities/forums/2022-07-21/CN2022_Eng.pdf).

critically assessed achievements and shortcomings in the implementation of the Declaration, and formulated recommendations. The first of the recommendations made at the regional forums for Europe and Central Asia and for the Americas focused on the need for a treaty.

12. In her remarks at the regional forum for Europe and Central Asia, held on 2 May 2022, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights recalled the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration as a milestone – a time to stop and take stock of progress. She called for a review of frameworks, norms and legislation, mechanisms, institutions and policies in order to improve implementation of minority rights, and for discussion on improving existing accountability instruments.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. Other activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and recent developments of human rights bodies and mechanisms**

13. OHCHR undertook a series of activities as part of its ongoing work on minority rights. In March 2022, OHCHR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Minority Rights Group and Freemuse: The World Forum on Music and Censorship launched an international art contest for minority artists working on statelessness themes. The contest was organized to support the work of minority artists while raising awareness of the human rights of stateless individuals and groups belonging to minorities. The panel of judges, which included minority artists and the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, selected three minority artists, who received their awards during a ceremony in November 2022.<sup>13</sup>

14. In May 2022, OHCHR held a virtual round table on strengthening the protection of minority rights under the Declaration. The round-table participants addressed present and long-standing challenges in securing minority rights under the Declaration and considered how to fill in the gaps in normative standards protecting the rights of minorities. The event brought together 29 experts, who took note of good practices to be replicated and established a way forward in terms of steps that could lead to a norm-strengthening process.

15. OHCHR participated in the World Justice Forum, held in May and June 2022. The former High Commissioner opened the Forum and highlighted forthcoming OHCHR guidance on developing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, recalling that, in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, the Secretary-General had emphasized the urgency of adopting such legislation.<sup>14</sup> At the Forum, leaders, activists and academics came together to discuss the increasing challenges faced by vulnerable groups, including racial and ethnic minorities, and also discussed promising solutions to address those challenges.

16. In July 2022, OHCHR and Equal Rights Trust held a pre-launch event in connection with the publication of the above-mentioned guidance: *Protecting Minority Rights: A Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation*.<sup>15</sup> The guide provides legislators and advocates with the tools to develop anti-discrimination legislation consistent with international legal standards on the rights to equality and to non-discrimination. It is intended as a resource to assist States in meeting their core international law obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights to equality and to non-discrimination. The publication includes practical examples to assist lawmakers and policymakers. It also provides specific guidance on the link between anti-discrimination law on the one hand, and minority rights on the other. The event served as a forum to introduce the guide to a wide audience and as a platform to highlight the need to place comprehensive anti-discrimination law at the core of rule of law work.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2022/05/opening-remarks-european-central-asian-regional-forum>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/minority-artists-voice-and-dissidence>.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/05/world-justice-forum-2022-video-statement-michelle-bachelet>.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/minority-rights-equality-and-anti-discrimination-law>. See also <https://youtu.be/-P0sWCY0XM>.

## A. Selected regional and country engagement activities

17. In Ethiopia, from March to September 2022, the OHCHR Regional Office for East Africa supported civil society partners in providing access-to-justice training for over 95 community members (58 men, 37 women), including members of the Manja community, a minority group. Participants also included law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary. This activity resulted in the establishment of a local committee to identify and address discriminatory practices affecting members of the Manja community and other minority groups. The local committee consists of community members, including members of the Manja community, civil society organizations, legal aid service providers and local government officials.

18. In Kyrgyzstan, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia continued supporting the Government's implementation of the joint project on inclusive governance and common civic identity for sustainable peace and development. The Regional Office advocated for the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation, including on education in minority languages and participation by minorities in public life, and supported civil society organizations working on this issue.

19. In North Macedonia, throughout 2022 OHCHR engaged with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the national human rights institution and civil society, with the goal of better implementing and aligning national laws and policies with international human rights and equality standards. OHCHR supported the development of the new National Equality and Non-discrimination Strategy, which is underpinned by the principle of intersectionality and the acknowledgement of all discriminatory grounds recognized under international law. The Government of North Macedonia adopted the strategy in May 2022.

20. In Tajikistan, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia supported the drafting and adoption of a law on equality and non-discrimination that was recommended by human rights mechanisms. The law, adopted in July 2022, prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on race, origin, language and ethnicity, among other grounds.<sup>16</sup> OHCHR also supported the drafting of and public discussions on a national strategy for the protection of human rights, which is aimed at promoting the participation of members of national minority groups in the country's political, economic and cultural life.

21. In Madagascar, OHCHR conducted research to inform a more inclusive approach to programming by United Nations entities. The Office identified the absence of adequate data and analysis on minorities as a challenge, particularly in updating the common country assessment report with a view to developing a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Madagascar. In 2022, the Office conducted research to gain a deeper understanding of the minority population in the country and presented the initial results to the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities in September. The resulting report identifies systemic challenges by particular minorities in accessing their rights, particularly with respect to protection from discrimination, effective participation in social, economic and public life, and access to education, health care, adequate housing and social services.

22. The OHCHR country office in Yemen has played a major role in the establishment of the National Council for Minorities in Yemen. The Council is a network of civil society organizations consisting of groups of different faiths, such as Christians, Baha'is, Jews and Sufis. It includes linguistic minorities, such as the Muwaladeen and the Muhamasheen. The Council was formally established in March 2022 to strengthen the coordination of minority organizations in their human rights advocacy work. OHCHR has been working closely with the Council and coordinating with it on human rights protection activities, including the organization in Yemen of five workshops on minority rights.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=142287>.

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

23. In February 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar noted that ethnic minority groups that faced discrimination were susceptible to traffickers, who promised work abroad, and women and girls were especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation.<sup>17</sup> In March 2022, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights informed the Human Rights Council that the plight of the Rohingya people – a population persecuted for decades – remained dire, with no solution in sight.<sup>18</sup>

24. In March 2022, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues expressed grave concerns about the situation of minorities in the armed conflict in Ukraine and the treatment of minorities fleeing the conflict. He stressed the paramount importance of acknowledging that minorities, such as Roma, faced specific vulnerabilities and emphasized that all people of Ukraine, including people of African, Asian and Middle Eastern descent and Roma, should be granted equal protection.<sup>19</sup>

25. In March 2022, the former High Commissioner strongly urged the Government of Ethiopia to cooperate with the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia.<sup>20</sup> The Commission expressed extreme alarm about the atrocities being committed in the country, stating that “any spread of violence against civilians, fuelled by hate speech and incitement to ethnic-based and gender-based violence, are early warning indicators and a precursor for further atrocity crimes”.<sup>21</sup> After concluding its first mission in August 2022,<sup>22</sup> the Commission warned of the potential for further atrocities. The Commission reported rape and crimes of sexual violence perpetrated on a “staggering scale”, with Tigrayan women and girls brutally targeted.<sup>23</sup>

26. In June 2022, in a statement on Afghanistan presented to the Human Rights Council at its fiftieth session, the former High Commissioner referred to direct attacks on ethnic and religious minorities and reiterated the key points she had made following her March 2022 visit to the country, including that the calls of religious and ethnic minorities, in particular those who had historically faced discrimination, marginalization and violence, must be heeded.<sup>24</sup>

27. In August 2022, OHCHR published its assessment of human rights in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China, in the context of the application of counter-terrorism and counter-“extremism” strategies. The implementation of those strategies and associated policies had led, in the view of the Office, to interlocking patterns of severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights.<sup>25</sup>

28. In August 2022, following her visit to Bangladesh, the former High Commissioner noted the need for space for more dialogue and for the voices of religious minorities and Indigenous Peoples, among others, to be heard, and stressed the importance of protecting

<sup>17</sup> See the conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur entitled “Losing a generation: how the military junta is attacking Myanmar’s children and stealing their future”, para. 159, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc50crp1-conference-room-paper-special-rapporteur-losing-generation>.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/high-commissioner-says-accountability-remains-crucial-any-solution-crisis>.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/ukraine-un-expert-says-war-against-multi-ethnic-population-must-stop-calls>.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/oral-update-situation-human-rights-tigray-region-ethiopia-and-progress-made>.

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/06/oral-update-international-commission-human-rights-experts-ethiopia-un-human>.

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/members-human-rights-body-conclude-first-mission-ethiopia>.

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/un-experts-warn-potential-further-atrocities-amid-resumption-conflict>.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/06/high-commissioner-updates-human-rights-council-afghanistan>.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assessment.pdf>.

minority groups, such as Hindus and Indigenous Peoples, from violence or land encroachment. While underscoring the importance of the humanitarian contribution of Bangladesh, she also expressed concern about increasing anti-Rohingya rhetoric, stereotyping and scapegoating Rohingya as the source of crime and other problems.<sup>26</sup>

29. On 1 December 2022, while opening the fifteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, the High Commissioner referred to the fact that serious violations of minority rights continued to be at the heart of many violent conflicts. He stressed that through history, it was known that past genocides demonstrated the dangers of hate speech that was directed at minorities. He stated that exclusion, hostility and violence must be decisively addressed, and thus required political will at different levels. He noted that the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration provided an important opportunity to reaffirm commitments and build new momentum.

### C. Minorities from descent-based communities

30. In its general recommendation No. 29 (2002), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination strongly reaffirmed that discrimination based on descent included discrimination based on caste and analogous systems of inherited status, thus reaffirming that such discrimination was covered by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

31. Following his visit to Nepal, conducted in late 2021, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights noted that widespread discrimination against Dalits perpetuated intergenerational poverty.<sup>27</sup> The report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, on his visit to Sri Lanka contained reports about members of oppressed castes not being able to own suitable land to secure a livelihood, which forced many to work in conditions that could amount to forced labour, servitude or other slavery-like practices.<sup>28</sup>

32. In June 2022, OHCHR, in partnership with the International Dalit Solidarity Network, held a virtual round-table discussion, with the participation of 22 experts, on addressing business-related discrimination against minorities belonging to descent-based communities and their exclusion from participation. The discussion focused on implementation gaps with regard to the business and human rights agenda as it concerned descent-based minorities. Participants concluded that business behaviours needed to incorporate broader participation, including of those most at risk. At the event, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues stressed that Dalits and other caste-affected groups were ethnic minorities. He also emphasized the need to explicitly refer to, acknowledge and protect Dalits.<sup>29</sup>

33. In December 2022, OHCHR held, jointly with The Inclusivity Project and the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, a side event to the fifteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues on the situation of minorities belonging to descent-based communities. Participants discussed how to create a platform at the United Nations for dialogue on issues pertaining to descent-based communities and where policy recommendations could be put forward. The event led to recommendations on steps to address gaps in minority rights protection that affected persons belonging to descent-based communities.

### D. Minorities and contemporary forms of slavery

34. To commemorate the anniversary of the Declaration, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, focused his 2022

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/08/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-michelle-bachelet-concludes-her-official-visit>.

<sup>27</sup> [A/HRC/50/38/Add.2](#), paras. 23–24.

<sup>28</sup> [A/HRC/51/26/Add.1](#), para. 61.

<sup>29</sup> See <https://idsn.org/leave-no-one-behind-addressing-business-related-human-rights-issues-and-exclusion-of-communities-on-the-basis-of-caste-and-descent/>.



thematic report for the Human Rights Council on contemporary forms of slavery affecting persons belonging to minorities.<sup>30</sup> In comments regarding the report, the Special Rapporteur asserted that deep-rooted and systematic discrimination, often resulting from historical legacies such as slavery, colonization, systems of inherited status, and formalized and State-sponsored discrimination rendered minority communities vulnerable to contemporary forms of slavery.<sup>31</sup>

35. In the report itself, he noted that minority women and girls were disproportionately affected by poverty, ethnic prejudice and intersecting forms of discrimination. They often were not recognized as workers in the informal sector, which made them susceptible to sexual and labour exploitation and abuse.<sup>32</sup> The Special Rapporteur recommended that States adopt temporary special measures to ensure that members of minority communities had access to education and employment, and that States formalize the informal economy to prevent contemporary forms of slavery. He recommended that States identify instances of contemporary forms of slavery at an early stage and eliminate deep-rooted intersecting forms of discrimination against minority communities.<sup>33</sup> He also called on States to ensure that everyone, regardless of descent, gender, inherited or migration status, was able to access decent work.<sup>34</sup>

36. In the report on his visit to Sri Lanka, the same Special Rapporteur raised concerns about the minority community of Malaiyaha Tamils, who continued to face multiple forms of discrimination based on their descent.<sup>35</sup> He also noted that child labour was particularly severe in poor rural areas populated by ethnic minorities, and that children, in particular girls, dropped out of school to support their families.<sup>36</sup>

## E. Human rights of people of African descent

37. The newly established International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement held its first session from 28 February to 4 March 2022. The Mechanism held a series of virtual consultations in May 2022 to inform its first report to the Human Rights Council. Through those virtual consultations, the Mechanism heard from approximately 70 participants, many of whom were of African descent. In the report, the Mechanism focused on the importance of data disaggregated by race or ethnic origin with regard to interactions of Africans and people of African descent with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, as an essential element for driving and assessing responses to systemic racism.<sup>37</sup> In November 2022, the Mechanism conducted its first country visit, to Sweden.<sup>38</sup>

38. In May 2022, at the thirty-first session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, OHCHR and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly held a high-level side event on addressing and preventing racial discrimination in the criminal justice system, focusing on the human rights of people of African descent. The former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recalled that discrimination was nowhere more visible than in law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Referring to a report she had submitted to the Human Rights Council in 2021,<sup>39</sup> she highlighted that

<sup>30</sup> [A/HRC/51/26](#), para. 1.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/un-expert-says-contemporary-forms-slavery-affecting-minority-communities>.

<sup>32</sup> [A/HRC/51/26](#), para. 52.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 56.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/un-expert-says-contemporary-forms-slavery-affecting-minority-communities>.

<sup>35</sup> [A/HRC/51/26/Add.1](#), para. 52.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 31.

<sup>37</sup> [A/HRC/51/55](#), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/sweden-should-step-efforts-fight-systemic-racism-un-mechanism-advance-racial>.

<sup>39</sup> [A/HRC/47/53](#). See also the accompanying conference room paper, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/ahrc4753-promotion-and-protection-human-rights-and-fundamental-freedoms-africans>.



racial discrimination in law enforcement and the criminal justice system could not be separated from systemic racism, and that eliminating systemic racism therefore required addressing both – and the legacies they were built on.<sup>40</sup> OHCHR pledged to continue to work with UNODC and other United Nations partners, including through the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, while calling on Governments to implement concrete measures with specific, time-bound commitments developed through national dialogues with affected communities.

39. In the report on his 2021 visit to the United States of America, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues stated that submissions to inform the report had made it abundantly clear that African Americans were among the most marginalized minorities in the country.<sup>41</sup> He also noted that human rights, and especially the equal right to vote, were moving backwards for minorities in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

40. The Deputy High Commissioner, as acting United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, presented the High Commissioner's 2022 report on racial justice and equality for Africans and people of African descent to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly.<sup>43</sup> It contained information on developments and initiatives undertaken by States and others to address manifestations of systemic racism, including in the area of law enforcement, and to advance accountability and redress for victims, including for legacies of enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism.<sup>44</sup> In the report, the former High Commissioner reiterated her call for States to step up the implementation of the 20 actions contained in the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, noting that greater political will was needed.<sup>45</sup>

41. On 2 August 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/314, establishing the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent as a consultative mechanism for people of African descent and other relevant stakeholders as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent, as well as an advisory body to the Human Rights Council. The inaugural session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent was held in December 2022.<sup>46</sup> Part of the mandate of the Permanent Forum is to consider the elaboration of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.<sup>47</sup>

42. The OHCHR country office in Colombia observed that, despite the signature of the peace agreement in 2016, serious human rights violations had persisted, and that those violations disproportionately affected ethnic communities in rural areas, including people of African descent.<sup>48</sup> The Office noted that the 2022 presidential and congressional elections had been marked by intense racist aggressions, including by public officials against voters. The attacks had also targeted Francia Márquez, a human rights defender and the first woman of African descent to run for and win the vice-presidency of Colombia. During the period covered by the present report, the OHCHR office in Colombia conducted social media campaigns against hate speech and supported an anti-racism campaign carried out by young artists of African descent. The OHCHR office in Colombia supported the post-election implementation of the Government's equality and anti-racism policies and programmes, providing technical advice in accordance with international standards.

43. In February and March 2022, the OHCHR office in Colombia provided advice on the governance instrument for implementing the peace agreement in Chocó and on the anti-

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/05/hc-we-cannot-sit-and-continue-watch-history-repeat-itself>.

<sup>41</sup> [A/HRC/49/46/Add.1](#), para. 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 31.

<sup>43</sup> [A/HRC/51/53](#) and [A/77/205](#).

<sup>44</sup> [A/HRC/51/53](#). See also <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/un-report-records-piecemeal-progress-combating-systemic-racism-against>.

<sup>45</sup> [A/HRC/51/53](#), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2022/permanent-forum-people-african-descent>.

<sup>47</sup> General Assembly resolution 75/314.

<sup>48</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/07/colombia-urgent-government-action-needed-rising-violence-rural-areas-gravely>.

racism proposals by representatives of African descent in the Bogotá City Council. From April to June 2022, the office provided advice and technical assistance to Afro-descendant communities affected by violence associated with drug trafficking and participated in processes of consultation between organizations of people of African descent and government entities. In August 2022, the office also assisted in developing a proposal on the rights of the Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities, with delegates from 18 of the organizations that form the National Afro-Colombian Peace Council.

## **F. Human rights situation of Roma communities**

44. In Serbia, OHCHR supported the State authorities in preparing for the 2022 census with data from a recent OHCHR mapping of Roma settlements that were substandard. In early 2022, OHCHR, in collaboration with the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of Serbia and the Association of Coordinators for Roma Issues, jointly developed sustainable models for access to safe water, sanitation and electricity for Roma living in substandard settlements. It is expected that those models should assist nearly 168,000 Roma still living in substandard settlements in deplorable conditions without basic infrastructure, such as access to electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation.

45. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR completed an 18-month human rights capacity-building programme for 22 human rights activists, including 8 members of the Roma community and representatives of vulnerable groups from the Transnistria region. OHCHR also supported the participants' advocacy and human rights awareness-raising activities. As a result, Roma human rights activists conducted human rights training and informational sessions for 115 Roma. In May 2022, the Office, in cooperation with the national association of Roma mediators, provided training to 32 Roma community mediators. The training included content on international and national human rights standards; the protection of minorities; access to public services; issues pertaining to documentation for Roma; and remedies for discrimination targeting Roma people.

46. In May 2022, the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe participated in Romani Week 2022, which encompassed a variety of events organized by the European Parliament to discuss policies for the equality and inclusion of Roma people in Europe. At the events, OHCHR called for a human rights approach to Roma policies and strategies that required a renewed political commitment at the highest level, effective Roma participation and a comprehensive and coordinated engagement between the regional, national and local levels. OHCHR also referred to the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, set out by the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as a possible inspiration for tackling anti-Gypsyism.

47. In July 2022, OHCHR organized a training session in the Republic of Moldova on the role of Roma community mediators in preventing and tackling human trafficking among Roma refugees; 25 managers and social workers from refugee accommodation centres participated. Since February 2022, OHCHR has mainstreamed human rights and has carried out regular monitoring trips to border areas and refugee accommodation centres, in particular those with a high concentration of Roma, and participated in numerous coordination forums, including the task force on Roma refugees. In September 2022, OHCHR launched a study to assess the human rights situation of Roma, including Roma refugees fleeing from the armed conflict in Ukraine, and the underlying causes that limit their access to human rights.

48. Also in September 2022, OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence organized an international round table entitled "Roma and memorialization: advancing recognition and remedy for the dark chapters of the past and their impact on the present". The purpose of the event was to advance recognition and memorialization of the problematic chapters of Romani history and structural racism, such as the Roma holocaust, slavery, sterilization of Romani women, and other racial and anti-Gypsy persecution, as well as their impact on the present. Participants in the round-table event explored how the legacies

of structural racism against Roma are obstacles to the right to know and the right to truth and justice.<sup>49</sup>

## G. Hate speech

49. In January 2022, in an address to the Italian Senate's extraordinary commission against intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism, and incitement to hatred and violence, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that narratives of hatred on social media platforms had contributed to extreme violence against minority groups.<sup>50</sup> She referred to the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and its threshold test, which had been used by courts, other national authorities and United Nations peacekeeping operations. She noted that States were responsible for ensuring the protection of human rights online, but noted with concern that some efforts to combat hate speech had suppressed legitimate dissent and restricted civic space.<sup>51</sup>

50. OHCHR held #Faith4Rights workshops, linked to hate-speech scenarios, during the 2022 Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition and the 2022 Price Media Law Moot Court Competition, with the participation of special rapporteurs, treaty body experts and the Facebook Oversight Board administration. The former High Commissioner welcomed the use by the Facebook Oversight Board of the Rabat threshold test in several decisions on hate speech.<sup>52</sup>

51. In February 2022 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, OHCHR developed a plan of action to counter hate speech, including on the grounds of ethnic and religious background. In the report on his visit to the country, undertaken in December 2021, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence stated that anti-ethnic rhetoric had led to worrying levels of polarization and tangible risks to peace sustainability.<sup>53</sup> Together with key State institutions, the Office published a fact sheet on hate speech in July 2022.<sup>54</sup> It also analysed hate speech in the context of the general elections of October 2022. While it found that there had been no direct incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence towards ethnonational groups, it noted persistent patterns of divisive discourses, recurrent use of pejorative and discriminatory terms, and some instances of inflammatory, including warmongering, language, which tended to stigmatize other groups, instil distrust and create tension.

52. In May 2022, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation on combating hate speech that builds on the threshold test of the Rabat Plan of Action. The explanatory memorandum contained references to the United Nations #Faith4Rights framework and toolkit, in particular its peer-to-peer learning methodology, as a useful tool.<sup>55</sup> The Forum on Minority Issues also encouraged States, the United Nations, international and regional organizations and civil society to work together closely in supporting the positive contributions of faith-based actors, including through the promotion of the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights and the #Faith4Rights toolkit.<sup>56</sup>

53. The OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, jointly with the Conscious Advertising Network, convened a session on the role of advertising in confronting hate speech and disinformation, which they held during the United Nations Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum, Asia-Pacific in September 2022.<sup>57</sup> The session offered an

<sup>49</sup> See <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-events/roma-and-memorialization-advancing-recognition-and-remedy-for-the-dark-chapters-of-the-past-and-their-impact-on-the-present/>.

<sup>50</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2022/01/hearing-italian-senates-extraordinary-commission-against>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> A/HRC/49/86, para. 70.

<sup>53</sup> A/HRC/51/34/Add.2, para. 15.

<sup>54</sup> See <https://bosniaherzegovina.un.org/en/189364-hate-speech-factsheet>.

<sup>55</sup> See [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a6891e](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a6891e), para. 184.

<sup>56</sup> A/HRC/49/81, para. 58. See also Human Rights Council resolution 49/9, para. 22.

<sup>57</sup> See <https://www.rbhrforum.com/confrontinghatespeech>.

opportunity for stakeholders to understand human rights due diligence and apply it to advertising on social media and other platforms in order to confront hate speech against and disinformation about minorities, and to support human rights-based narratives through ethical and representative advertising.

54. In November 2022, the human rights office of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo<sup>58</sup> finalized a report on hate speech and incitement perpetrated through online and social media and particularly directed at minorities. The most prominent instances of potential hate speech and incitement in online exchanges were along inter-ethnic lines and against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. The report provided concrete recommendations to enable effective responses to address the impact of hate speech on minorities and to support authorities and other stakeholders in addressing this phenomenon.

55. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR organized an awareness-raising campaign on tackling hate speech. The campaign marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration, and addressed a wide audience through various media channels in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine, which had exacerbated the socioeconomic crisis and the rise of hate speech in media and social media against certain groups of minorities in the country.

## H. Minorities and climate change

56. In March 2022, the Human Rights Council appointed the first Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. In carrying out his mandate, the Special Rapporteur will explore actions to address the human rights aspects of loss and damage experienced by individuals and communities in vulnerable situations, including persons belonging to minority groups.<sup>59</sup> In his vision for the new mandate, he highlighted how climate change could aggravate the frequency, complexity, and severity of crises and their impact on populations, and in particular on minority communities,<sup>60</sup> citing a report of the previous Special Rapporteur on minority issues.<sup>61</sup>

57. In June 2022, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights opened the Human Rights Council panel discussion on the adverse effects of climate change on the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. She highlighted that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had estimated that at least 3.3 billion people were highly vulnerable, a situation that the Secretary-General had described as both an environmental and a social justice crisis. She also pointed out that women were affected twice as much as men.<sup>62</sup> The Human Rights Council has expressed concern that the adverse effects of climate change are felt most acutely by those segments of the population already in vulnerable situations owing to factors such as minority status.<sup>63</sup>

58. The report of the Secretary-General on the impacts of climate change on the human rights of people in vulnerable situations informed the aforementioned Human Rights Council panel discussion. In the report, the Secretary-General highlighted that climate change impacts could vary based on a number of factors, including religion, race and cultural or ethnic background. He also underscored that multiple forms of discrimination could combine, overlap or intersect, especially in the experiences of people in vulnerable situations.<sup>64</sup> During the panel discussion, speakers noted the need to recognize the intersection between racial, environmental and climate injustice, stressing that intersecting risk factors were a particular

<sup>58</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>59</sup> [A/HRC/50/39](#), para. 22 (d).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, annex, para. 17.

<sup>61</sup> [A/71/254](#), para. 29.

<sup>62</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/06/human-rights-council-panel-adverse-effects-climate-change-human-rights-people>.

<sup>63</sup> Resolution 47/24.

<sup>64</sup> [A/HRC/50/57](#), para. 4; see also para. 14.

concern. They highlighted that for climate action to be fully effective, it had to integrate the perspectives of people in vulnerable situations, including minorities.

59. In her report submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance explained why there could be no meaningful mitigation or resolution of the global ecological crisis without specific action to address systemic racism, in particular the racial legacies of colonialism and slavery. In the report she referred to “sacrifice zones”, regions rendered dangerous and even uninhabitable owing to environmental degradation.<sup>65</sup> She has also said that such regions are in effect “racial and ethnic sacrifice zones”, where inhabitants have been subjected “to the worst forms of historical and contemporary racial and ethnic subordination”.<sup>66</sup> She recommended institutionalizing meaningful participation of racially and ethnically marginalized persons in climate governance and prioritizing reparations for historical climate harms and for contemporary harms rooted in historic injustice.<sup>67</sup>

## I. Empowerment and participation

60. Article 2 of the Declaration provides that persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has recommended action to ensure the effective participation of minorities in decision-making<sup>68</sup> and equitable representation, including through special measures, in the public sector,<sup>69</sup> the police force and the judiciary.<sup>70</sup> The Human Rights Committee has recommended that ethnic minorities be represented in national human rights institutions,<sup>71</sup> governmental bodies and public administration at all levels.<sup>72</sup> The Secretary-General has recalled that “societies that embrace diversity and inclusion are more vibrant”.<sup>73</sup>

61. In the third cycle of the redesigned Minorities Fellowship Programme, OHCHR recruited, in 2022, 11 former minority fellows as senior fellows. OHCHR posted almost all senior fellows in their home regions. Three were placed in OHCHR regional offices – one in the Pacific office, one in the Middle East and North Africa office, and one in the Central Africa office. Four were assigned to United Nations country teams: in Argentina, in Montenegro, in Nepal and in Nigeria. Two were placed in OHCHR country offices (Ukraine and Yemen). One was placed in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. One senior fellow is based in Geneva to provide support for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

62. OHCHR launched a new intersectionality component of the senior fellowship programme. Former minority fellows who also self-identify as persons belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community and/or persons with disabilities were recruited under this component. The intersectionality focus has been extended to former OHCHR fellows of African descent to promote inclusion and diversity while also addressing persistent and multiple forms of discrimination. In 2022, five new senior fellows were recruited under this component.

63. The senior fellowship programme has become an OHCHR flagship participation, training and capacity-building initiative. The programme offers senior fellows the opportunity to strengthen their skills and advance their knowledge of human rights, especially

<sup>65</sup> A/77/549, p. 1 and para. 1.

<sup>66</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/global-climate-crisis-racial-justice-crisis-un-expert>.

<sup>67</sup> A/77/549, paras. 78 and 82.

<sup>68</sup> CERD/C/SVK/CO/11-12, para. 20.

<sup>69</sup> CERD/C/AZE/CO/10-12, para. 25; and CERD/C/KAZ/CO/8-10, para. 30.

<sup>70</sup> CERD/C/ZWE/CO/5-11, para. 44 (c).

<sup>71</sup> CCPR/C/IRQ/CO/6, paras. 6–7.

<sup>72</sup> CCPR/C/GEO/CO/5, para. 52 (a).

<sup>73</sup> See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and>.

minority rights, at the national and regional levels. The senior fellows also serve as a bridge between the OHCHR headquarters office in Geneva and its country and regional presences, thereby reinforcing complementarity, sustainability and continuity in minority rights work. As human rights advocates, senior fellows provide OHCHR field presences and United Nations country teams with thematic expertise on minority rights and on other human rights issues, thereby making a genuine contribution to the advancement of human rights.

64. The senior fellow in the Republic of Moldova supported the field presence from September 2020 until September 2022. The senior fellow helped strengthen the mainstreaming of minority rights in United Nations-led processes and the Government's policymaking by providing minority rights training to civil servants and service providers at the national and local levels. In the OHCHR country office in Yemen, the senior fellow, who was from the Muhamasheen community, working with Baha'i leaders, took the initiative to form the National Council for Minorities in Yemen (see para. 22 above).

## J. Religious or belief minorities and faith actors

65. In 2022, OHCHR conducted peer-to-peer learning events with religious or belief minorities and faith-based actors, using the interactive methodology and case studies contained in the #Faith4Rights toolkit.<sup>74</sup> Two expert workshops held in October 2022 were focused on implementing the Rabat Plan of Action and the Beirut Declaration and its 18 Commitments on Faith for Rights. Furthermore, OHCHR developed an informal network of "faith for rights" facilitators and a peer-to-peer learning programme for professional faith leaders.

66. Together with the Freedom of Religion or Belief Leadership Network, the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Religions for Peace, the African Parliamentarians Association for Human Rights and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, OHCHR organized a dialogue series entitled "Leave no one behind". The monthly peer-to-peer learning events explored the interrelated topics of freedom of religion or belief and the Sustainable Development Goals, gender, education, civic space and freedom of expression, health, and climate change. In a public statement, 100 signatories from more than 50 countries committed to seek and listen to peoples' experiences of inequality based on religion or belief and to better understand their needs, which must be integrated into Sustainable Development Goals-related planning, policy and action at a country level.<sup>75</sup>

67. During the 8th Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs, on "Mobilizing moral influence and governance to end the systemic injustices of racism, the legacy of colonialism, and slavery", OHCHR stressed the importance of fully implementing the Declaration, notably the right of all persons belonging to minorities to participate effectively.<sup>76</sup>

68. In April and May 2022, the OHCHR Regional Office for East Africa monitored interreligious violence in Ethiopia between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, in which 34 people were killed and more than 100 injured. In May 2022, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed distress about the April clashes, reportedly triggered by a land dispute, and noted that, in addition to the deaths and injuries, two mosques had been burned and another two partially destroyed. In attacks that appeared to be retaliatory, two Orthodox Christian men were reportedly burned to death, another man hacked to death, and five churches burned down.<sup>77</sup> Following those clashes, the Regional Office developed and promoted positive messages on human rights, peaceful coexistence, tolerance and inclusivity, to prevent further deterioration of the human rights situation. In Gondar, the

<sup>74</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup>

See <https://www.ippforb.com/newsroom/2022/29/06global-commitment-to-ensure-no-one-is-left-behind-on-the-basis-of-their-religion-or-belief>.

<sup>76</sup> See <https://www.ippforb.com/newsroom/2022/29/06global-commitment-to-ensure-no-one-is-left-behind-on-the-basis-of-their-religion-or-belief>.

<sup>77</sup> As set out in article 2 of the Declaration. See also commitment VI of the 18 Commitments on Faith for Rights.

<sup>77</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/05/inter-religious-clashes-ethiopia>.



epicentre of the clashes, the Regional Office conducted six community sensitization activities, including on three radio talk shows. The Regional Office also collaborated with local leaders and faculty at Gondar University to deliver awareness-raising sessions. Furthermore, the Regional Office carried out advocacy activities in Ethiopia with local authorities and other actors to resolve the root cause of the clash between the Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities. As a result, in August 2022, Gondar City Administration announced a resolution of the dispute, reached through the allocation of separate pieces of land for the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians. The decision involved issuing title certificates for the parts of the land allocated to the Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities.

69. In 2022, the OHCHR human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine noted that the local authorities in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine had temporarily suspended Ukrainian Orthodox Church activities for the duration of the state of martial law in at least seven territorial communities. It also found that “in territory occupied by the Russian Federation or controlled by Russian armed forces or affiliated armed groups, the overall environment for religious minorities remains highly restrictive”.<sup>78</sup> In its concluding observations on Ukraine adopted in November 2021, the Human Rights Committee recommended that the State party guarantee the effective exercise of the right to freedom of religion and belief, including by protecting places of worship against acts of violence, intimidation and vandalism, and strengthen efforts to combat intolerance, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against minority groups.<sup>79</sup>

#### IV. United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities

70. In January 2022, the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities hosted a webinar for United Nations agencies on combating racial discrimination and enhancing the protection of minorities in the criminal justice system. The event was spearheaded by UNODC, as the lead of the criminal justice pillar of the network. OHCHR outlined its four-point agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality.

71. In May 2022, the intersectionality pillar of the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities convened a virtual consultation with civil society organizations with a view to preparing the first draft of a guidance note on intersectionality, racial discrimination, and protection of minorities. Inputs received from civil society were used to provide further guidance on intersectional forms of discrimination and good practices at the local level to address such forms of discrimination. The inputs of this consultation meeting were incorporated into the final version of the guidance note.

72. On 27 September 2022, the intersectionality pillar of the network hosted a day of events on intersectionality and marked the launch of the *Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination & Protection of Minorities*. The purpose of the guidance note is to encourage an intersectionality perspective in the context of policy development, programming and project implementation and as a means for strengthening the United Nations system’s efforts towards the elimination of racial discrimination and the strengthening of the protection of minorities. It presents examples of how different United Nations entities have relied on intersectionality in their work and puts forward a series of practical recommendations for applying an intersectionality perspective in the United Nations system’s work at the country level.

73. In December 2022, the times-of-crisis pillar of the network organized an event at the University for Peace in Costa Rica to draw attention to issues facing minorities in conflict-affected settings. The event sparked a dialogue among stakeholders, particularly United Nations entities, on future steps. The event was opened by the President of the General Assembly, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and the Special Adviser to the

<sup>78</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ua/2022-09-23/ReportUkraine-1Feb-31Jul2022-en.pdf>, para. 126.

<sup>79</sup> CCPR/C/UKR/CO/8, paras. 16 and 46.



Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide. Panellists included the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and representatives of Minority Rights Group, Equal Rights Trust, University for Peace, the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, and United Nations entities.

## V. Conclusions

74. Minorities are exposed to violence and discrimination, and are poorly represented in decision-making. The systematic exclusion of minorities reinforces grievances and can establish fertile ground for violence and conflict.

75. The thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities provided an opportunity to take stock, identify constraints and achievements, and reflect on the Declaration as the key to conflict prevention. As recognized in the preamble of the Declaration, the promotion of minority rights contributes to the political and social stability of States. The Secretary-General has recalled that States that protect the rights of minorities are more peaceful.<sup>80</sup> The former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted the tenet that the promotion and protection of the rights of all persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities contributed to the political and social stability and progress of States – components important to maintaining peace and stability.<sup>81</sup>

76. Many activities held during the reporting period were focused on the way forward after the anniversary and on future priorities. At the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to mark the commemoration of the Declaration, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the principles and rights enshrined in the Declaration. Several States also called for a renewed approach to better implement the Declaration and to advance political and social stability, sustainable development and conflict prevention. As stated by the Secretary-General, political leadership and resolute action were needed to protect minorities.<sup>82</sup> It is vital that commitments are followed by actual implementation of the Declaration.

77. The momentum generated by the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary serves to strengthen OHCHR resolve to ensure more coherence and impact in the protection of minority rights. OHCHR will build on efforts to inform, share knowledge with, develop capacity for, and support strategies for key stakeholders, in particular in countries and regions where minority rights need to be strengthened. The role of OHCHR is critical, not only from an early warning and prevention perspective, but also with regard to countering discrimination against and inequalities faced by minorities, so as to leave no one behind.

78. Leaving no one behind is a central pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is fundamental to achieving each of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the threats that minorities face require galvanized action to promote the adoption and implementation of comprehensive legislation, policies and programmes to combat the exclusion of minorities and promote their equality. OHCHR stands ready to assist in this regard.

79. In 2022, OHCHR laid the groundwork for further important progress in countering discrimination against minorities through various activities, such as the launch of publications, including a guide on developing comprehensive anti-

<sup>80</sup> See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and>.

<sup>81</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/05/30th-anniversary-marks-landmark-moment-minority-rights>.

<sup>82</sup> See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and>.

discrimination law; the convening of a summit on racial discrimination and protection of minorities in the context of peace, security and prevention; and engagement in a process of examining the normative basis on which minority rights are grounded, which may lead to a potential norm-strengthening process.

80. OHCHR will continue to support the participation of minorities, including less visible minorities, through its flagship Minorities Fellowship Programme and its senior fellowship programme. The new intersectionality component of the senior fellowship programme promotes diversity and inclusion while addressing persistent and multiple forms of discrimination. In order to maintain these programmes and expand them to more participants from minority communities, additional financial support would be needed.

81. OHCHR, as permanent Co-Chair of the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, will continue to enhance synergistic dialogue and cooperation within the United Nations on racial discrimination and protection of minorities.

82. United Nations international human rights mechanisms play a crucial role in advancing the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and OHCHR will continue to support their essential work.

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