

## Mechanisms (M)

Increasing implementation of the outcomes of the international human rights mechanisms



### TREATY BODIES



**Experts**  
**172** treaty bodies experts  
(including 34 new experts)



**Recommendations**  
**59** concluding observations  
(and 132 lists of issues prepared)



**Capacity-building**  
**83** capacity-building activities (63 held online, attended by more than 2,300 participants, including 995 women, to support integration of human rights in development agenda and engagement with treaty bodies)



**General comments**  
**2** new comments adopted (CMW on migrants' rights to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention, and CRC on children's rights in relation to digital environment)

### HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC) AND UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)



**UPR mid-term reports**  
**11** documents submitted (on the implementation of recommendations issued during the 2nd and 3rd UPR cycles)

### REPORTING AND FOLLOWING UP ON RECOMMENDATIONS



**National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up**  
**70** established and/or strengthened

**More than 700 participants** (State officials, CSOs, NHRIs, UN partners from over 80 countries took part in regional consultations on National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up)

### SPECIAL PROCEDURES



**Special procedures mandates**  
**45** thematic and **13** country-specific



**Standing invitations**  
Extended by  
**128** States (to thematic mandates)



**Reports**  
**139** presented to the General Assembly/HRC  
(19 on country visits)



**Communications**  
**1,002** communications sent  
(to 149 States and 257 non-State actors)  
**651** replies received

## Bringing human rights defenders together through the Uganda National Stakeholders' Forum

“Since 2011, UN Human Rights has been supporting the National Stakeholders' Forum for the Universal Periodic Review,” said James Nkuubi, a lawyer, human rights defender (HRD) and outgoing Coordinator of the Forum. Mr. Nkuubi has been working to raise awareness about the Universal Periodic Review process in Uganda from the beginning.

The Uganda National Stakeholders' Forum for the UPR process is an umbrella entity of over 300 national organizations that document, monitor and report on the implementation of UPR recommendations. Mr. Nkuubi notes that UN Human Rights has been instrumental in bringing HRDs on board through annual trainings that have been offered since 2016. Learners increase their knowledge about documenting and monitoring human rights violations, undertaking fact-finding and the importance of authenticity, all of which are crucial to the UPR process.

At a capacity-building session to commemorate International Human Rights Defenders Day, on 9 December, Mr. Nkuubi said, “UN Human Rights has expanded the principle of Leaving No One Behind and provides participants with practical information on engaging with the UPR process and the diplomatic community in Uganda.” This also includes a compilation of the UPR recommendations issued in relation to Uganda, which has been disseminated to relevant stakeholders throughout the country.

“UN Human Rights works with HRDs to identify and use the space they need to speak for themselves. In the past, we've



James Nkuubi moderates a discussion on civil society and government experiences during the second UPR cycle, in November 2021. © NCHRD-U

been sponsored to attend and deliver statements during the UPR process in Geneva. UN Human Rights' training for government ministries, departments and agencies has also improved our interactions with them. They've become more

accepting of our advocacy and recommendations. The UPR sensitization in Uganda would not have been so widespread without the support of the UN Human Rights Office in Uganda,” Mr. Nkuubi concluded.

# Highlights of pillar results

## Mechanisms (M)

The international human rights mechanisms, composed of the human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council, with its special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review, are the backbone of UN Human Rights' work. Their analyses, monitoring and interactions with States and stakeholders

help to identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities in relation to all rights. Through their actions and recommendations, they provide the basis for engagement with States and other actors and support duty-bearers to comply with their obligations and rights-holders to claim their rights. UN Human Rights

provides secretariat support to these mechanisms and supports States in honouring their obligations. Through their procedures and country visits, the international human rights mechanisms give a voice to vulnerable persons and groups at the national level.

### PILLAR RESULTS / SHIFTS / SDGs

#### M1 – NATIONAL MECHANISMS for REPORTING and FOLLOW-UP

National institutionalized structures facilitate an integrated and participatory approach to reporting to the international human rights mechanisms and implementation of their recommendations.



### RESULTS / SPOTLIGHTS



In January, following consistent advocacy and technical advice by UN Human Rights, **Sudan** established **its permanent National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)**. Since its establishment, UN Human Rights has been providing support through capacity-building and technical assistance to support its operationalization. Notably, the first national consultation on Sudan's UPR was launched in August, bringing together 65 civil society representatives from across the country. Sudan submitted its national report for the third UPR cycle in October.

In 2021, seven countries from the **Pacific** region underwent the **third UPR cycle**, namely, Australia, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands. UN Human Rights provided support to governments, NHRIs and CSOs from Pacific Island Countries in their engagement with the UPR process, including in the preparation of their national reports. It also delivered workshops for CSOs to submit alternative reports, coordinated joint UNCT reports and organized mock UPR sessions for government delegations. All seven national reports were successfully submitted.

In **Chad**, UN Human Rights assisted the Government with the **submission of initial and periodic reports to the human rights treaty bodies**, in accordance with their respective reporting guidelines. UN Human Rights provided technical and financial support to the Government's Interministerial Committee, which is tasked with preparing and following-up on reports to regional and international human rights mechanisms. This led to the drafting and submission of the Government's initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in June, and the mid-term report on the implementation of the UPR recommendations, in May. This assistance also facilitated the drafting of an implementation plan for the UPR recommendations. UN Human Rights partnered with UNICEF to support the Government in drafting and submitting two initial reports on the implementation of OP-CRC-AC and OP-CRC-SC. This momentum will be maintained during 2022 to help the Government eliminate its backlog of overdue reports to the human rights treaty bodies.

In 2021, a comprehensive redesign of the **National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD)**, was initiated. First launched in 2019, the NRTD is a digital application that is made available to States to support their management of their human rights treaty obligations and engagement with the international human rights mechanisms. The recommendations from the human rights mechanisms are imported from the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI) into the NRTD. The redesigned version of the NRTD will be launched in 2022.

## M2 – ENGAGEMENT with human rights MECHANISMS

Civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and non-traditional actors, particularly those working on emerging human rights issues (frontier issues), increasingly engage with the international human rights mechanisms and use their outcomes.



In **Zimbabwe**, UN Human Rights cooperated with UNESCO, as the lead of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), to assist organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) through the provision of resources and technical expertise on the preparation and submission of the **first thematic consolidated UPR report on disability issues**. A total of four umbrella OPDs, representing a membership of over 55 organizations, contributed to the drafting of the submission. UN Human Rights also collaborated with UNESCO to deliver a briefing on the UPR for representatives of the Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe and the Media Association of Zimbabwe. Following the delivery of technical expertise by UN Human Rights, two organizations submitted a thematic report to the UPR on the media and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe.

Enhanced **communication with and accessibility to the international human rights mechanisms** by civil society actors was ensured through the systematization of the NGO video and written statement process, improvement of the online submission platform and the dissemination of timely and targeted information to NGOs through informal exchanges, electronic broadcasts and online platforms. The mechanisms therefore became more accessible to NGO representatives from the field that would have been unable to travel to Geneva to deliver in-person statements, including prior to the pandemic.

In **Brazil**, UN Human Rights implemented a series of virtual dialogues with indigenous leaders, in partnership with the National Articulation of Indigenous Peoples and the Network of Cooperation in the Amazon. The objective of the dialogues was to strengthen their engagement with the international mechanisms. As a result, participant organizations submitted inputs for consideration in the development of CEDAW's General Recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls. UN Human Rights also supported members of the Lickantay indigenous peoples and people of African descent, in **Chile**, to prepare alternative reports to CERD.

UN Human Rights published its first regional thematic report on the right to freedom of association entitled *Freedom of association in the Middle East and North Africa: An overview of trends, challenges and good practices*. The report focuses on the right to freedom of association in the 10 countries being served by the Regional Office, including **Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates**. Drawing on information emanating from the engagement of States with the international human rights mechanisms, the report identifies challenges, good practices and national updates on the right to freedom of association in all 10 countries. The report seeks to encourage States and civil society to work together and collaborate on human rights action and is complemented by a second report on freedom of expression published in late 2021. The reports will inform a number of events and consultations planned for 2022.

### M3 – USE of MECHANISMS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers, legislators and courts make increased use of the outcomes of the international and regional human rights mechanisms.



In **Uzbekistan**, following the creation of the parliamentary joint commission on human rights, UN Human Rights cooperated with UNDP in Uzbekistan and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to co-organize a **parliamentary forum on the ratification of OP-CAT and CRPD**, in June, and the **implementation of the recommendations** issued by the international human rights mechanisms. In November and December, UN Human Rights worked closely with UNDP in Uzbekistan to deliver presentations to law enforcement officials on the prevention of torture and the provisions of OP-CAT. The series of hybrid lectures were organized as a part of an online human rights course developed by the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan. The course is aimed at improving the understanding of police officers, penitentiary service staff and prosecutors about human rights and the international obligations of Uzbekistan on the prevention of torture. During the reporting period, the course was taken by close to 200 law enforcement officials.

With support and inputs from UN Human Rights, IOM, UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF, the Government of **Montenegro** adopted the **new Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2021-2025**. The Strategy draws upon recommendations issued by the Universal Periodic Review, CRC, CEDAW, CERD and CRPD to combat discrimination and negative social attitudes, improve access to education, undertake measures to combat child marriage and other forms of violence against women and girls, trafficking and forced labour and improve access to health care and employment. Specific measures are included to strengthen standards and their implementation related to non-discrimination, an adequate standard of living, education, health, employment, housing, social protection, political participation and legal identity.

UN Human Rights cooperated with UNICEF and UNEP to release a joint statement and organize a virtual launch of the *Principles and policy guidance on children's rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in the ASEAN region*. The document is the result of an 18-month collaboration between the three UN agencies and child, youth and adult experts from the **ASEAN region**. It sets out fundamental principles for realizing the **right of the child to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment** and for putting the best interests of the child at the forefront of those efforts. It provides essential policy guidance for governments, civil society, businesses, the media and children to implement these principles. A child-friendly version for youth aged 14-18 years was also developed.

In **Ukraine**, as a result of advocacy, technical cooperation and recommendations provided by the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), the Parliament adopted a **law on the harmonization of criminal law** with standards and principles of international criminal law and international humanitarian law. As recommended by the HRMMU, this legislation aligns the provisions on criminal liability for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression with the Rome Statute and customary international law. It also includes crucial provisions on command responsibility, the non-applicability of statutory limitations for international crimes and universal jurisdiction for the prosecution of international crimes.

## M4 – DEVELOPMENT of INTERNATIONAL LAW

International human rights mechanisms contribute to the elaboration of international law and jurisprudence, in particular in the context of emerging human rights concerns (frontier issues).



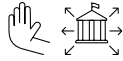
UN Human Rights supported the Committee on Migrant Workers in the development and launch of its **General Comment No. 5 on migrants' rights to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention**. The General Comment is intended to provide guidance to States regarding the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families against arbitrary detention. UN Human Rights further supported the development of a General Comment on land and economic, social and cultural rights (CESCR), a General Comment on sustainable development and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), a General Recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls (CEDAW) and a General Comment on the rights of persons with disabilities to work and employment (CRPD).

UN Human Rights supported the adoption of decisions by the human rights treaty bodies that developed **human rights standards in the area of climate change and environmental harm**. These included five decisions issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in cases filed by 16 child activists. In the decisions, the Committee noted that the failure of a State to reduce carbon emissions may result in violations of the rights of the child, including for those located outside of its territory, if the State has effective control over the sources of emissions that caused the foreseeable harm to the children. The Human Rights Committee found that **Paraguay's failure to prevent and control the environmental harm** caused to an indigenous community due to the intensive use of pesticides by nearby commercial farms had violated the community's rights and sense of "home." It recommended that Paraguay complete the criminal and administrative proceedings against all parties responsible and make full reparation to the victims.

UN Human Rights updated an analytical paper on **normative standards in international law in relation to older persons**, which was originally issued in 2012. The updated UN Human Rights study, issued in March 2021, provides an analysis of protection gaps and the adequacy of the existing international legal framework for the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. The study provoked significant discussion among Member States, civil society and NHRIs and led to the adoption by the HRC of the first ever thematic resolution 48/3 on the human rights of older persons. The resolution mandates the High Commissioner to submit a report to the forty-ninth session on normative standards and obligations under international law in relation to the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons and to organize a multi-stakeholder consultation to discuss the findings of the report in 2022.

## M5 – EFFECTIVENESS of international human rights MECHANISMS

International human rights mechanisms are increasingly effective in promoting and protecting human rights.



Significant progress was made in **integrating human rights information**, including information generated by the international human rights mechanisms, **into the UN's Regional Monthly Review process**, notably through prevention assessments undertaken by the human rights treaty bodies and the inclusion of a standard human rights slide in the RMR briefing decks. This resulted in an increased awareness about the role of the international human rights mechanisms in opening up a space to engage with national authorities on key risk areas identified in the RMR that have limited entry points for the UN system. For instance, the RMRs on Djibouti and Eritrea identified specific entry points for UN engagement based on UPR recommendations that were accepted by the respective governments.

Despite the pandemic, the **accessibility of and participation in the UPR review process** was enhanced during 2021. Support provided by the Voluntary Fund for participation in the UPR enabled representatives of Member States, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that would have been ineligible for travel assistance due to travel restrictions, to participate virtually in their reviews. By the thirty-ninth session, held in November, COVID-19-related restrictions had eased. In parallel with assistance for virtual participation, UN Human Rights provided travel assistance to delegates from some eligible States to facilitate in-person participation in their reviews. Accordingly, the UPR continued to see a 100 per cent participation rate by States under review.

At the end of 2020, UN Human Rights conducted an initial assessment of its digital technology needs in order to lay the foundation for a sustained **digital transformation**. The assessment mapped digital gaps and needs, as well as existing tools, in particular with regard to the international human rights mechanisms. In 2021, UN Human Rights embarked on a two-year project to develop and deploy fit-for-purpose digital tools, which will make the mechanisms more accessible to stakeholders and enhance their efficiency in everyday operations. While the new tools are under development, improvements are being made to existing tools. For example, the functionality and information retrieval of the treaty bodies database was streamlined, including in relation to the follow-up procedures and general comments, resulting in the increased visibility of the human rights treaty bodies. The Petitions database was upgraded with the introduction of new functionalities to streamline workflows and allow for a more efficient handling of individual communications. In addition, preparatory steps have been undertaken to further define key components of a new digital case management system and a submission portal.

## “We need your support and hope to see our dreams coming true”

On 30 July 2005, businessman Masood Janjua was travelling by bus with one of his friends, Faisal Faraz, to Peshawar in north Pakistan, from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Somewhere along the way, they disappeared.

Their families immediately began searching for them. Eventually, they learned that the two men had been forcibly disappeared by forces loyal to then President Pervez Musharraf.

Today, the families still don't have information on the whereabouts of their loved ones.

“Our three children were very young at the time. It would be impossible for anyone to understand what we've all gone through during these 16 years of torture and misery,” said Amina, Masood's wife, at the twenty-first session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, in Geneva, which began on 13 September. At each session, the Committee reserves a space for hearing the stories of victims of enforced disappearances. It uses these testimonies to identify options to support victims and their families and governments of concern.

Amina described the period of shock and anguish she experienced when her husband was disappeared. Their family had to take care of the children and Masood's business deteriorated.

Soon after, she connected with three other families of disappeared people to initiate a movement that held protests in front of the Parliament House, the Supreme Court

and the presidential residence. Together, the families transformed this movement into an association known as the Defence of Human Rights (DHR).

### **FEAR, UNCERTAINTY AND GRIEF**

Sixteen years later, Amina is still searching for answers. At the same time, DHR has developed into a well-known organization that envisions “a world without enforced disappearances, injustices and where the disappeared are reunited with their loved ones.” Families of disappeared victims from around Pakistan have now joined the association.

As Amina told the Committee, enforced disappearances in Pakistan have become a “widespread social evil.” Victims include activists, HRDs, writers, poets, journalists, students and lawyers.

“Fear, uncertainty, grief, economic and emotional devastation have become a part of the daily life of the families of the disappeared,” she said.

Since its inception, DHR has registered 2,818 cases of disappeared Pakistanis. A total of 1,358 individuals have been traced by the organization and subsequently reunited with their families. Sadly, 77 disappeared people have reportedly lost their lives in custody.

Amina and her DHR colleagues have strongly advocated for the Government to criminalize enforced disappearance in the country. As a result, a bill will soon be brought before Pakistan's Parliament.



Amina and her husband before his disappearance.  
© OHCHR

While Amina is pleased with this progress, she insists that there is still a long way to go.

“Pakistan needs to ratify the Convention so that authorities can rely on the Committee to get the guidance they need to better address enforced disappearances, in law and in practice,” she said.

She urged the Committee to support this process. “We hope to see our dreams coming true that Masood and all the disappeared will be traced and that Pakistan will stop this practice once and for all,” she said.