



General Assembly

GA/SHC/4081

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-eighth General Assembly
Third Committee
33rd & 34th Meetings (AM & PM)

ELECTIONS 'NOT AN END IN THEMSELVES', SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL

AS THIRD COMMITTEE CONTINUES DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Delegates Take Issue with 'Bias' in Mandates of Special Rapporteurs, Other Experts

Elections were fundamentally political rather than technical events, and, more importantly, they were not an end in themselves, the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) heard today, as it resumed its general discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights.

Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said the purpose of elections was to ascertain the will of the people and their opinion of their Government. He was presenting the Secretary-General's report "Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization". While the purpose of United Nations assistance to Member States was to enable them to conduct peaceful and credible elections, the Organization could neither replace national authorities nor take decisions in lieu of political leaders, he said.

Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, presented a series of reports of the Secretary-General on a variety of human rights issues, ranging from migrants' rights to the administration of justice, to the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, to the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Committee also heard a statement by Virginia Dandan, the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, who presented her first report to the General Assembly. It summarized the main elements of a draft declaration on the right of peoples and individuals to international solidarity, she said.

In the broader context of the promotion and protection of human rights, the Committee concluded its general discussions on the implementation of human rights instruments, and on the comprehensive implementation of a follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (item 69 d), before taking up human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and on human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives.

The representative of the United States made brief recommendations on how to improve human rights in countries including Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela and Uzbekistan, while applauding the new path taken by the Government of Myanmar.

The Russian Federation's representative, however, said he opposed the country-specific mandates adopted by the Human Rights Council because they showed clear bias, especially in designating "offenders". Human rights should not be seen as an instrument of foreign policy, he added.

India's representative said terrorism remained a grave threat to security and stability everywhere, adding that terrorists violated the most fundamental human right of their victims, the right to life, while also infringing on democracy, human dignity and development.

Pakistan's representative said that most Member States, including his own, viewed the use of armed drones as a clear violation of State sovereignty and a serious violation of international human rights law and humanitarian law.

Venezuela's representative, speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), concluded the discussion by expressing regret over the "false and politically motivated comments" made by the representative of the United States. A country claiming to be the "tribunal of the world" while in fact it was "liquidating human rights", had neither "moral nor legal authority to point fingers", she emphasized.

Other participants in the general discussion were speakers representing Rwanda, South Africa, Nicaragua, Burkina Faso, Ukraine, Nigeria, Malaysia (on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations), Cuba (on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), Saint Kitts and Nevis (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), European Union Delegation, Austria, India, United States, Canada, Greece, Liechtenstein, Egypt, Switzerland, Mexico, Australia, Senegal, Brazil, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, the State of Palestine and the International Labour Organization.

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply were representatives of Bahrain, Cuba, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Israel.

The Third Committee will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 31 October, to continue its discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met this morning to continue its consideration of the promotion and protection of human rights. It was expected to hear presentations by two senior United Nations officials and one expert, before taking up its general discussion. For background information, see Press Release [GA/SHC/4076](#) of 23 October.

Introduction of Reports

JEFFREY FELTMAN, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, presented the Secretary-General's report "Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization" (document [A/68/301](#)). He said the purpose of United Nations assistance to Member States was to enable them to conduct peaceful and credible elections. However, the Organization could neither replace national authorities nor take decisions in lieu of political leaders.

He said the report focused in particular on improved delivery and the promotion of gender equality and sustainability. On the first, there was a need for system-wide consistency and coherence, and for that reason, the role of different actors had been better delineated, resulting in greater accountability on the part of United Nations actors. However, more needed to be done, he said, noting, for example, that 12 United Nations agencies and entities had reclaimed a role in electoral assistance.

Regarding gender equality in elections, he said, the report noted that despite a steady increase in the share of women in parliaments around the world, the global rate of elected women remained low and their participation in politics still fell far short of expectations. Where the United Nations had facilitated elections, however, women's representation had been higher, he said, pointing out that fully mainstreaming a gender perspective into all activities was now an established practice of all United Nations electoral assistance.

Turning to sustainability, he expressed concern over the potential for international assistance to result in the introduction of excessively costly technologies and systems for receiving countries to maintain in the long run. The issue of sustainability also extended to political sustainability. Elections were political events and their results must represent the will of the people, he said, adding that their outcomes rested with national political leaders. Credible elections alone did not yield sustainable peace, he emphasized. They must be accompanied by full respect for human rights, open media and a robust civil society, among other factors.

IVAN SIMONOVIC, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, presented the reports of the Secretary-General on: "Promotion and protection of human rights, including ways and means to promote the human rights of migrants" (document [A/68/292](#)); "Follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning" (document [A/68/207](#)); "The right to development (document [A/68/185](#)); Human rights and unilateral coercive measures" (document [A/68/211](#)); "National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights" (document [A/68/208](#)); "Globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights" (document [A/68/177](#)); "Human rights in the administration of justice" (document [A/68/261](#)); and "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief" (document [A/68/546](#));

He also introduced reports on: "The universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (document [A/68/224](#)); "The promotion of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies" (document [A/68/323](#)); "Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international

cooperation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity" (document [A/68/209](#)); "The Sub-regional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa" (document [A/68/390](#)); "Human rights and cultural diversity" (document [A/68/277](#)); "The United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region" (document [A/68/287](#)); "Effective promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities" (document [A/68/304](#)); "Protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism" (document [A/68/298](#)); "The situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" (document [A/68/392](#)); and "The situation on human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (document [A/68/377](#)).

In the ensuing question-and-answer session, delegates asked about budget restrictions on the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. Some also requested additional information about the challenging environment for human rights in Iraq and the Secretary-General's report on the situation of human rights in Iran.

Mr. SIMONOVIC said that securing the financial resources for the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region was a challenge because its activities covered 25 countries. Regarding the cut in resources for the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, he said it was only temporary. He said that his visit to Iraq in January would be an opportunity to address the issue of respect for human rights while countering terrorism. As for the report on the situation of human rights in Iran, he said it did not reflect some positive developments, such as the release of prisoners, due to the August cut-off date.

Others participating in the session included representatives of Yemen, Cameroon, Qatar, Iraq and Iran.

General Discussion

The Committee then resumed general discussion on the implementation of human rights instruments and comprehensive implementation of, and follow-up to, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

JEANNE D'ARC BYAJE ([Rwanda](#)) noted that her country had ratified nearly all regional and international legal instruments related to the promotion and protection of human rights. Furthermore, it submitted regular reports on their implementation to different United Nations treaty bodies, as well as to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights and other similar African mechanisms. It was the first African nation to subject itself to the evaluation of the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2005. She went on to describe how the domestic implementation of those instruments resulted in progress in the promotion of human rights. In the education sector, primary school enrolment had improved to 92 per cent for those aged between 7 and 12 in 2010. She underscored progress in access to health services, the promotion of women's rights and social protection.

KAREN HOSKING ([South Africa](#)) said her delegation subscribed fully to the proper contextualization of General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, namely that human rights violations of anywhere in the world should be addressed in a context that would not lead to politicization, double standards or selective targeting. Turning to the relevance of human rights instruments, she described some as moribund and obsolete, citing the 1948 Genocide Convention, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1965 Racial Discrimination Convention. Contemporary violations in those thematic areas were such that the instruments no longer provided for them. For that reason, she called upon the United Nations human rights system to engage constantly in processes that would ensure the elaboration of new instruments responding to modern-day violations.

MARÍA CLARISA SOLÓRZANO-ARRIAGADA ([Nicaragua](#)) said his Government was determined to eradicate poverty and had established programmes to meet the needs of its people, upholding the fundamental right to life. Without fighting the scourge of poverty, those goals would not be achieved. He stressed the importance of citizenship participation in decision-making and other processes. The country had established a mechanism to promote human rights and had developed institutions to comply with international human rights instruments, with an emphasis on assisting those most vulnerable. Among the institutions established were the Ombudsman on human rights and a National Council addressing the needs of minority groups. The Government had also put in place a programme providing legal advice to those who could not afford such services.

PROSPER VOKOUMA ([Burkina Faso](#)) said that his country had adopted a series of measures to strengthen the legislative and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. Those steps, he said, had included improving the living conditions of detainees, creating a national commission for human rights, and establishing the National Council for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. Human rights were a priority for his country also at the international level, as two Universal Periodic Reviews had showed, he added.

SVITLANA HOMANOVSKA (Ukraine) noted that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action outlined top priorities for strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions, and for protecting vulnerable groups such as minorities and indigenous peoples among others. They significantly influenced the situation of human rights around the world, but despite the progress made, the Government of Ukraine regretted to note that human rights violations persisted in different regions. Ukraine was a party to the main international human rights instruments, and was moving towards ratifying the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. It was also making every effort to bring national legislation into line with relevant international standards, given the priority that the President had placed on Ukraine's European integration.

USMAN SARKI (Nigeria) was concerned that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance continued to threaten the rights of millions of people in various parts of the world. Specifically, migrants and their families continued to be subjected to discrimination and xenophobia, suffering marginalization, stigmatization, socio-economic exclusion and denial of access to education and health care. He said that less than 50 States had signed, ratified or acceded to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers. Noting that developed countries, which were largely migrant-receiving, had not signed the Convention, he encouraged they do so. Clarifying some issues pertaining to the enjoyment of human rights and the freedom of expression in Nigeria, he said that his country respected the decision of countries that legalized same-sex marriage and would not pressure them to change their laws. In the same vein, he asked them to respect Nigeria's right to make laws that were in consonance with its beliefs and customs, which reflected the will of the nation's vast majority and were in the national interest of the country.

KEVIN CASSIDY, International Labour Organization (ILO), said the agency had established a system of international labour standards covering a wide range of employment issues. Through its unique tripartite structure — comprising representatives of Governments, employers and workers — ILO had adopted the largest number of binding instruments in the United Nations system, including 189 Conventions. Eight of those — addressing the issues of child labour, forced labour, non-discrimination and freedom of association — had been designated as “fundamental” by the international community. Emphasizing that human rights were not only the foundation of decent work, he said decent work had been recognized as a human right in itself.

The Committee then began its general discussion on human rights questions, including alternative approaches to improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and on the reports of Special Rapporteurs and other experts.

HUSSEIN HANIFF (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), recalled that the bloc had established its Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in October 2009. Welcoming ongoing efforts to fulfil its commitments in the promotion and protection of human rights, he said ASEAN was implementing the 2013 Priority Programmes and Activities of the Intergovernmental Commission as well as the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration adopted in November 2012. Since the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, the bloc had been emphasizing the need for a human rights document tailored to the norms and values of its member States, he said.

The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration emulated the essence of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and several international human rights instruments, yet it was also uniquely Asian, he continued, cautioning, however, that it was not useful to compare the ASEAN version with the Universal Declaration or with other regional human rights mechanisms. Instead, it should be seen as complementing existing human rights instruments, with value-added features that took Asian norms and values into consideration. Ultimately, what was important was that the regional Declaration would lead to improved livelihoods for people in the region. In closing, he reaffirmed the bloc's commitment to intensifying efforts to realize the ASEAN Community by 2015, emphasizing that it was crucial to ensuring the effective promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

RODOLFO REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), focused his remarks on the human rights of migrants, saying that the composition of today's societies was the result of past and present migratory flows, particularly in the Caribbean region. Migration and its implications should, therefore, be systematically addressed by all States — irrespective of whether they were origin, transit or destination countries — to in order to find solutions to present challenges. CELAC underlined the importance of migrants retaining their links with their homelands, and recommended the cultivation of skills among the diaspora so as to foster development in origin countries.

He went on to express concern that the contributions of migrants to the economic and social development of host countries were not sufficiently taken into consideration. CELAC members were also concerned about violations of the human rights of migrants, as well as the deterioration of working and employment conditions of migrant workers and their families around the world. The bloc regretted the adoption of laws and regulations that criminalized migration, and called on States to refrain from putting measures in place that discriminated against and stigmatized migrants and their families. In particular, the Community urged all countries to guarantee the protection of the most vulnerable migrants — women, children, the elderly and

persons with disabilities. He also highlighted the increasing “reverse migration” towards origin countries from both destination and developed countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

DELANO BART (Saint Kitts and Nevis), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that despite many achievements in the field of human rights, particularly civil and political rights, it was regrettable that the world was still plagued by ethnic hatred and genocide. Many were still deprived of food, shelter, access to health care, education and employment. Poverty continued to violate human dignity. Concurring with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education that “education is the best investment a country can make”, he said sustainable development could not be advanced without respect for and promotion of human rights, in particular the right to education.

He recalled that during the 2012 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, the international community had affirmed that full access to quality education was essential to sustainable development. Realizing the right to adequate food, within the broader context of the right to an adequate standard of living, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, was also crucial to eradicating poverty and hunger, and to attaining sustainable development, he said, stressing that CARICOM members would remain actively engaged in the intergovernmental process on strengthening the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

VÉRONICA CALCINARI VAN DER VELDE (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and associating herself with CELAC in the context of migrants’ rights, women’s empowerment, the promotion and protection of children’s rights and social development, emphasized that human rights were universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They contributed to the promotion of sustainable peace and development, in line with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. MERCOSUR had created specific mechanisms to promote effective regional coordination in different fields, such as the Meeting of Senior Officials on Human Rights, the Foreign Ministries of MERCOSUR and Associated States, and the Institute for Public Policy on Human Rights.

MERCOSUR States were concerned about the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on the universal enjoyment of human rights, she said, emphasizing that in no instance should the crisis be used as an excuse for States to disregard or neglect human rights. She called on developed countries to honour their commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development assistance (ODA) until 2015. Meanwhile, MERCOSUR members and associated States condemned and emphatically rejected “spying actions” constituting a violation of human rights in general, and of the rights to privacy and information, specifically, she said, stressing that the prevention of crime must be carried out in accordance with the rule of law and in strict observance of international law.

IOANNIS VRILAS, Deputy Head of the European Union delegation, said that since the Committee’s debate on the agenda item almost a year ago, some “cautious but positive” developments were to be welcomed. Regrettably, however, the broader picture had been one of “attacks on freedom, insidious new laws and a wanton disrespect for human life”, with freedom of expression curtailed and journalists reporting on human rights violations under ever-increasing pressure. “We cannot, however, falter in the face of adversity; human rights require eternal vigilance, and those at the frontline deserve our unwavering support,” he emphasized.

Expressing concern about a wide range of human rights issues in more than a dozen countries, he cited the detention of political prisoners, summary and extra-judicial executions, gender-based violence, the recruitment of child soldiers, the excessive use of force by Governments against protestors, and stigmatization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. In particular, the European Union remained extremely concerned by the deteriorating situation in Syria, he said, calling for an end to all violence and suffering. The bloc would submit a draft resolution on freedom of religion and belief, and hoped that Member States would reach consensus on such an important subject, he said.

THOMAS HAJNOCZI (Austria), speaking also for Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland, stressed the crucial role of civil society in holding States accountable and advancing human rights at the regional and international levels. While the four countries fully recognized the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, civil society representatives must be able to share their experiences, insights and recommendations in the Organization’s public meetings, in particular its high-level meetings and conferences. He expressed disappointment over efforts to restrict the participation of civil society representatives, in particular that of non-governmental organizations lacking consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

AVINASH PANDE (India) said his Government placed great importance on the adoption of a post-2015 development agenda with the central and overarching goal of eradicating poverty through an intergovernmental negotiation process under United Nations auspices and in consonance with the outcomes and principles of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, known as the Rio+20 Conference. In India, the Right to Information Act 2005 had empowered ordinary citizens by providing access to information on Government actions, which had led to more transparent and accountable governance. However, terrorism remained a grave threat to security and stability everywhere, he said, adding that terrorists violated the most fundamental human right of their victims —

the right to life. In addition to infringing on several other basic human rights, terrorism was an attack on democracy, human dignity, human rights and development, he added.

MICHAEL G KOZAK (United States), noting that the Commission of Inquiry on Syria had continued to document violations of human rights in that country, said those responsible should be held accountable. He also acknowledged Iran's new course, but warned that it must be proven by relevant actions and measures, such as the release of political prisoners. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea still had prison camps and practised forced labour, he said, calling upon that country to facilitate the work of the relevant Commission of Inquiry. Sudan should end gross violations of human rights, including the targeting of civilians in Blue Nile State and elsewhere, and protect its people. Belarus should release all political prisoners and grant access to the Special Rapporteur. China should allow freedom of information, refrain from harassing political activists and their families, and refrain from persecuting minorities such as Tibetans. After making brief recommendations and suggestions on how to improve human rights in Cuba, Venezuela, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Somalia, Eritrea and Egypt, he lauded efforts by the Government of Myanmar to ensure the fulfilment of human rights, but warned that much still remained to be done. The United States was willing to offer its support to that Government in its new endeavours, he added.

Report of Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity

VIRGINIA DANDAN, Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, presenting her first report to the General Assembly (document [A/68/176](#)), said that since it provided details of the mandate's activities and processes, she would focus on one of her central tasks — elaborating a draft declaration on the right of peoples and individuals to international solidarity. She provided an overview of that process up to its current status, noting that her efforts had moved through three methodological stages: laying the conceptual and normative groundwork for identifying the content of international solidarity; moving beyond basic definitions of the concept towards giving meaningful content to international solidarity as a human right; and preparing the draft declaration in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

She said the third stage was proceeding well on schedule, with the preliminary text of the draft declaration having been completed in August and circulated among all Permanent Missions in Geneva and New York, as well as United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. Their inputs would soon be consolidated and synthesized to inform the final text of the draft declaration. The preliminary text represented a significant step towards recognition of a human right to international solidarity, and was the product of an extensive consultation process with State delegations and civil society bodies, including non-governmental organizations..

She said that while international cooperation and the right to international solidarity were both essential tools for Member States in addressing some of the most pressing global issues, they were distinct principles. International cooperation provided important content and was itself shaped by international solidarity. Also, the right to international solidarity went beyond the concept and practice of international cooperation and assistance. The preliminary text had been designed not as an abstract set of normative principles, but as a practical and operational framework for the implementation of that right, she said. The direct input and wisdom of diverse communities already employing the practice of international solidarity to generate substantial social change and human rights realization would be essential to creating a document capable of effective use and conducive to innovation by States and communities, she said.

In the ensuing interactive dialogue, delegates requested an update on the drafting of the declaration, and asked the Independent Expert to explain how the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) supported her mandate, as well as how her predecessor's work had been incorporated into the draft declaration.

Ms. DANDAN said consultations had been ongoing for the past two years in Geneva, with such stakeholders as regional groups and non-governmental organizations. A preliminary text had been completed and distributed to States and other relevant actors, including independent experts. Inputs were being received from them, and she would start consolidating their comments with the help of OHCHR. Consultations on the final text would start with regional entities, she said. OHCHR was creatively supporting her mandate, she said, despite the few resources assigned to it. She said her predecessor's work had been incorporated into the draft declaration. Describing her mandate as having been marginalized, she emphasized that the discourse on the post-2015 development agenda should not forget international solidarity.

Participants in the dialogue included representatives of Cuba and Indonesia.

The Committee then resumed its general discussion.

Statements

GUILLERMO E. RISHCHYNSKI (Canada) said the international community had long been profoundly concerned about the Iranian Government's ruthless oppression of its own people and wanted to believe that Iran was genuinely committed to positive change at home and in foreign relations. However, the country would be judged by its actions rather than its words. Women as well as ethnic and religious minorities continued to face serious discrimination, he said. Canada also condemned the chemical weapons attacks orchestrated by the Syrian regime against its own people and fully supported the Security Council statement calling on the Assad regime immediately to facilitate access for humanitarian workers. Furthermore, Canadians were deeply disturbed by the existence in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of total-control zones and labour camps, the practice of arbitrary detention, forced abortion as well as the overall lack of freedom, including freedom of religion. It was difficult to imagine a place that had enjoyed so little freedom for so long, he said.

IAKOVOS IAKOVIDIS (Greece), associating himself with the European Union, said his country would be a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019 with the aim of tackling various challenges through a spirit of cooperation, transparency and constructive dialogue with all United Nations organs and Member States. After the recent occurrence of violent forms of racism in Greece, the authorities had stepped up efforts to combat such acts. At the same time, there was a need to improve the social and economic conditions that could serve as a pretext for racist actions, he said, adding that human rights could be gravely affected by the ongoing economic crisis.

NADYA RASHEED, observer for the State of Palestine, expressed her sincere appreciation to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 for his outstanding work. Referring to Israel's refusal to allow him entry into the occupied territories, she stressed that the refusal must not be allowed to stand as a precedent. The Palestinian people were enduring a human rights crisis in the midst of Israeli oppression and expansionism, and it was high time to reverse 46 years of Palestinian suffering and to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, was held to account for its human rights violations and other crimes. Otherwise, Israel would only be further emboldened to continue acting with impunity in its gross violations of the law. Peace must ultimately result in a complete end to the occupation and the fulfilment of Palestinian national aspirations to live as a free, secure, dignified and self-reliant people in their own independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

GEORG SPARBER (Liechtenstein), describing the war in Syria as "the most urgent human rights crisis of our time", said that country was also a sad showcase of how a pervasive climate of impunity contributed to the escalation of violence and to disregard for even the most basic rules of war and human rights. In that regard, he welcomed the Syrian National Coalition's support for a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. He went on to urge the five veto Powers to refrain from blocking Security Council action in light of mass atrocities, supporting in that connection, France's proposal to develop a code of conduct on veto use. He also stressed that the preventive dimension of the promotion and protection of human rights continued to be undervalued in the United Nations and called for more support for various human rights treaty bodies.

OSAMA ABDELKHALEK MAHMOUD (Egypt), noting that some States sought information on the situation in his country, emphasized its commitment to a political road map that would conclude the current transitional period and install a democratically elected civilian Government by May 2014. An inclusive constitutional committee was working to amend the 2012 Constitution to ensure human rights, democracy equality and justice without discrimination on any basis. The amended Constitution would be the subject of a referendum in December 2013, with the Government having declared its intention to end the state of emergency by mid-November, he said. Meanwhile, an independent fact-finding and inquiry commission was investigating the violence that had occurred since 30 June with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

ANDREY NIKIFOROV (Russian Federation) said that while the United Nations was largely responsible for the extension of human rights, some countries used international forums unilaterally to push their own selectively interpreted and applied standards. He also cited recent examples of the politicization of United Nations platforms, stressing that human rights should not be seen as an instrument of foreign policy. Some States thought problems could exist only in other countries, but ignored their own problems, he said, adding that he opposed the country-specific mandates adopted by the Human Rights Council because they showed clear bias, especially in designating "offenders". He called for constructive dialogue and cooperation, particularly in relation to Syria and to the situation in North Africa, adding that some States took a didactic approach to the Universal Period Review mechanism. He also raised concerns about the growth of neo-Nazi ideologies.

CHRISTINE ELISABETH LOEW (Switzerland) expressed concern that the noose was tightening around civil society actors in many regions, saying she was particularly worried about violations of fundamental rights such as the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, as well as the frequently precarious situation of women human rights defenders. Today, more and more journalists were victims of serious human rights violations, she noted, adding that violence against journalists infringed the most fundamental democratic values. States should guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, which

should apply to those facing discriminated on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, she said, adding that it was alarming that the rights of LGBTI persons were infringed in many countries.

YANERIT MORGAN (Mexico), highlighting the importance of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, said her country had submitted its second report. Turning to the work of the Third Committee, she voiced disappointment over its interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteurs and other experts. With the sessions having turned into monologues, the aims of the dialogue had not been met, she said, calling for a better way to add value to the presentations. She underlined the rights of vulnerable groups such as migrants, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples as well as women and girls. "Migrants are human beings before they are considered agents of development," She pointed out.

TANISHA HEWANPOLA (Australia), citing the "completely unacceptable" human rights situation in Syria, including "systematic and widespread" violations by the authorities, she said some of them were crimes against humanity. All warring parties must respect their legal obligations and hold violators to account, she said. Australia looked forward to seeing President Hassan Rouhani's commitment to human rights translated into action, she said, adding that releasing prisoners would be a positive step. Iran should follow it by engaging transparently with the relevant Special Rapporteur and other rights mechanisms. She said there was a real chance to break the cycle of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but the "total breakdown of law and order" in the Central African Republic was deeply concerning, she said, adding that both situations required urgent international attention. Elsewhere, "serious and systematic" human rights abuses in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued, but Australia was encouraged by developments in Fiji and welcomed the significant reforms carried out in Myanmar. She expressed hopes of a ceasefire with armed groups and the release of all political prisoners by the end of the year, and stressed the need to address the underlying causes of conflict in Rakhine State.

Ms. CORREA (Senegal) underlined the need to balance civil and political rights with economic and social rights, and reiterated the pressing need to provide sufficient funding to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Discussions on human rights were central to development, she said, expressing hope that the right to development would be acknowledged. Emphasizing the scope of the impact of climate change on human rights, she said that people, especially those in developing countries, should be guaranteed the right to a clean, safe and sustainable environment. Turning to migration, she noted the continued racial profiling of migrants and called for a more humane approach. Migrants' rights must be included in all development considerations, she added.

HUSSEIN HANIFF (Malaysia) said his country's commitment to human rights was clear from its implementation of recommendations received at the Universal Periodic Review. Malaysia had accepted 62 out of 103, including those relating to accession to treaties, review of existing laws and judicial systems, and the human rights of vulnerable groups. During the recent second review, Malaysia had received positive comments on the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, and on its efforts to repeal preventive detention laws, like the Internal Security Act and the Emergency Ordinance. Malaysia was a party to three core United Nations human rights instruments, and its accession to the remaining treaties would be based on a cautious, meticulous approach aimed at acceding without reservations. It was important to be clear on the rights and obligations that would flow from them, and to reconcile the standards they established with existing domestic laws, traditions and circumstances. Calling for moderate international responses in parts of the world where human rights situations were deteriorating due to internal conflicts, he warned against unilateral action.

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan) noted that his country was a State party to seven core international human rights instruments and had withdrawn a number of reservations to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the Convention against Torture. He said current session had seen the beginning of a serious and focused debate on the legality and human rights implications of drone operations. Most Member States, including Pakistan, viewed the use of armed drones as a clear violation of State sovereignty and a serious violation of international human rights law and humanitarian law. It was to be hoped that the relevant Special Rapporteurs would study the matter further and submit stronger and clearer recommendations in their final reports to the Human Rights Council.

ERIKA ALMEIDA WATANABE PATRIOTA (Brazil), associating herself with MERCOSUR and CELAC, recalled that her country had hosted the III Global Conference on Child Labour earlier this month, in which intergovernmental organizations, civil society and non-governmental organization from more than 150 countries had been represented. Participants had taken a decisive step towards consolidating the concept of sustained eradication of child labour, she said, adding that the Brasilia Declaration on Child Labour, adopted by consensus, reaffirmed that overarching goal, aiming in particular to eradicate the worst forms by 2016. Emphasizing that Brazil was increasingly wary of the mass surveillance of private and official communications, she said such activities disregarded ethical and moral standards of conduct in international relations, and represented flagrant violations of national sovereignty, the right to privacy and the right to life.

MS. THAM ([Singapore](#)), associating herself with ASEAN, pointed to the continued debate over national application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Context and circumstance were important as Governments worked to balance individual rights and those of the community. Economic development was the foundation of any system seeking to advance human dignity. She highlighted Singapore's success in that regard and its practical approach to human rights. However, she did not call on other countries to emulate Singapore. The policies that worked in Singapore were tailored to the specific national situation. The Government did not claim its policies were perfect and would review them where necessary in response to national circumstances. She underscored the need for the United Nations to respect and celebrate diversity, adding that such respect should apply on human rights. No single country or group could impose their views, especially if applying double standards or ignoring national circumstances. She also noted how norms changed even within countries over time.

NAJLA ISMAIL ALRAEES ([United Arab Emirates](#)) said respect for human rights was enshrined in the United Arab Emirates Constitution. With more than 200 different nationalities living in her country, the Government promoted tolerance and rejected any forms of extremism. In its efforts to improve the human rights situation, it was implementing Universal Periodic Review recommendations. A new law had been established to promote human rights in line with international standards. The Government had also amended both a law on trafficking in persons to ensure safeguards, and a draft law on the media to ensure freedom of expression. A national human rights body was being designed. The Government was also considering withdrawing reservations it had attached to a number of international instruments. According to data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Emirates ranked top in gender equality among Arab countries and thirty-eighth globally. To protect the human and humanitarian rights of Palestinians, she called on Israel to lift the Gaza blockage.

HASSAN EL MKHANTAR ([Morocco](#)) said there was a growing need to build States' capacities, thus enabling them to meet their commitments and obligations in human rights endeavours. Morocco's new Constitution had underlined its commitment to democracy and human rights, he said, describing recent measures aimed at strengthening national human rights institutions, especially the National Council for Human Rights. The country was determined to cooperate with United Nations human rights entities and looked forward to submitting a mid-term review on implementation of recommendations stemming from its Universal Periodic Review. Work continued to harmonize national legislation with international instruments, including the Option Protocol on the Rights of the Child.

ROBERT GUBA AISI ([Papua New Guinea](#)) said that it had hosted visits by the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2010 and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences in March 2012. In December, it would host the Special Rapporteur on Arbitrary Arrests and Extrajudicial Killings. The enhancement of human rights remained a priority for the Government in the context of national development. The constructive engagement of the Special Rapporteurs on human rights continued to add value to further strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights. However, a key challenge was the requisite follow-up by the United Nations and those experts. Given capacity constraint, developing countries, like Papua New Guinea, should not be overburdened by the reporting and other administrative requirements.

VÉRONICA CALCINARI VAN DER VELDE ([Venezuela](#)), associating herself with MERCOSUR, said that among its achievements, her country had almost met the Millennium Development Goals in their totality. The liberty of the press was full, and there was plurality of political parties, as well as autonomy and division of public powers. A big challenge her country faced was in regard to the false and politically motivated comments made by the United States representative this morning. She wondered, in fact, how many deaths had occurred in Iraq after the American invasion, and how many people had been tortured in Guantanamo. Furthermore, she questioned how much "collateral damage" had been caused by targeting civilians with drones under ridiculous pretexts. Such acts undermined the integrity of other States, in disregard of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter. That country was claiming to be the "tribunal of the world" while in fact it was "liquidating human rights". A country that used espionage in a systematic way did not have the "moral nor legal authority to point fingers", she said, regretting that the Third Committee had been politicized.

Right of Reply

The representative of [Bahrain](#), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, thanked the European Union Delegation for having voiced support for the positive steps his country had taken, and welcomed its condemnation of violence in Bahrain.

The representative of [Cuba](#) criticized the United States for opining on human rights while forgetting its own systematic violations across the world. It planned coups d'état, launched armed aggressions, engaged in extrajudicial killings using drones and ran a concentration camp on illegally held land, she said. The United States was one of the few countries yet to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, she said, describing other failings of the United States system. The international community was "ridiculed" by the false allegations made by the United States, a country with no authority to judge any other, she stressed.

The representative of China “firmly and categorically” rejected the “unfounded accusations and attacks” on her country by the United States and the European Union Delegation, saying she wished to pose questions in response about drone use, mass surveillance, discrimination and xenophobia. They were bent on condemning others while ignoring their own failures, she added.

The representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea cited the “politically motivated” allegations made by several delegations, saying they had nothing to do with the genuine promotion of human rights. He called on the United States to examine its own appalling human rights record, and said Canada was also guilty of several violations.

The representative of Israel said the Palestinian delegation persisted in its failure to take responsibility for its own people and their future. Instead, it resorted to abusing Israel while hijacking and abusing United Nations forums. If it showed the same commitment to negotiations, a peace deal would already have been achieved, he said. While Palestinian rights were important, Israeli rights were equally important and the Israel’s Government faced a constant battle to balance Palestinian human rights with the compromised need for security of its own citizens. He acknowledged that Israeli policies were not perfect but stressed that its media and civil society were free to criticize, unlike those in the West Bank and Gaza.

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