

30th annual meeting of Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council

Joint statement

13 December 2024

Speaker: Tess McEvoy, ISHR

Oral statement

Thank you. I make this joint statement on behalf of 14 organisations that engage with the Special Procedures. It is based on a more substantive joint written submission that we made for this very meeting

The work of the Special Procedures is essential to the realisation of human rights and provides an indispensable avenue for those who seek to expose violations and seek justice.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with the Annual Meeting, despite the liquidity crisis and its postponement to December. However, we regret that the meeting is limited to organisations in Geneva, that we received very short notice of it and that limited information has been shared on the meeting in advance.

Diverse civil society participation, particularly from those outside of Geneva cannot be an afterthought and efforts should be made to ensure that those who wish to engage can do so remotely, including through video statements, with interpretation in UN languages, and accessibility measures such as sign language interpretation and closed captioning.

The ongoing liquidity crisis has led to cuts in Special Procedures' activities, limiting engagement opportunities for rights holders. We urge you to disclose a list of impacted activities for 2025 and the impact on mandates' activities in 2024, as well as regularly update and consult civil society on these issues.

We take this opportunity to highlight the continuous need for collaboration and coordination among mandate holders in addressing human rights issues, particularly from an intersectional perspective and across the international and regional levels. The work of Special Procedures needs to be grounded in international human rights law and interpreting and applying that law in a principled, consistent and progressive way. We encourage you to continue to work collaboratively and in coordination on joint statements and actions, as well as by sharing knowledge between regional and international levels.

We welcome efforts by mandate holders to adopt working methods that ensure a greater impact of their work. We believe that mandate holders are also accountable to rights holders and we stand in support of the Special Procedures' self-regulatory powers.

In addition to this, the Coordination Committee is uniquely placed to take action and consider the current challenges and ways forward to protect the integrity and independence of Special Procedures as well as their responsibility vis-a-vis rights-holders.

We urge the Coordination Committee to publish detailed information about the workings of the Internal Advisory Procedure, including estimated timelines, how decisions are communicated and to

whom. We also emphasise the need to establish safeguards to prevent and address attempts to intimidate civil society organisations by mandate holders and acts that may cause safety concerns and create a chilling effect on civil society's advocacy work.

Civil society should be regularly consulted and informed about updates to the Manual of Operations and related rules for Special Procedures, this Annual Meeting is the perfect moment for this. The Manual must be available in all UN languages and in formats that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Once published, new versions should be uploaded to the OHCHR website.

We encourage the Coordination Committee to continue its practice of requesting former mandate holders to share insights on essential skills for incoming mandate holders, and to make these letters publicly available. We welcome recommendations in these letters from mandates that highlight the importance of cooperation and engagement with civil society as a key criterion in the selection of new mandate holders.

Finally, we particularly welcome initiatives aimed at enhancing practices of follow-up, such as follow-up visits or desk-based assessments of the implementation of country visit recommendations. We emphasise that follow-up should be a standard practice undertaken by all mandate holders, in consultation with all interested parties.

We reaffirm our commitment to constructive engagement with the Special Procedures system and will continue our calls on States to respect, protect and promote the independence and effectiveness of mandate holders, including by ensuring the resources necessary to fulfil their vital mandates. We look forward to continuing to work with the Coordination Committee and mandate holders to strengthen the Special Procedures' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights globally.

Thank you.

Signatories:

1. International Service for Human Rights
2. Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos - Promsex
3. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
4. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)
5. World Uyghur Congress (WUC)
6. CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation
7. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
8. UN Program, Occidental College
9. Sexuality Policy Watch - ABIA Brazil
10. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World)
11. International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
12. Sexual Rights Initiative

13. Center for Reproductive Rights
14. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies