

Joint NGO Submission

UN80 Workstream 2 — Mandate Review

The UN80 Initiative presents a critical opportunity to improve how the United Nations creates, implements and reviews its mandates. Workstream 2 (Mandate Implementation Review) will directly impact the effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy of the UN system.

The undersigned civil society organisations (CSOs) emphasise that meaningful reform must include regular, transparent, inclusive opportunities and mechanisms for civil society participation including the meaningful participation of affected communities. This joint submission outlines additional considerations relating to civil society engagement and the specificity of human rights mandates, with text proposals to the zero draft of the Workstream 2 resolution in the Annex.

Civil society plays a vital role in the system and is critical to the UN's legitimacy and effectiveness. For UN80 Workstream 2 to result in meaningful improvements, it must institutionalise civil society participation across the different review processes it seeks to establish, ensure full transparency of mandate-related data and information, and give due consideration to the specificities of human rights mandates, in particular by protecting them from arbitrary or standardised sunset provisions.

1) Guaranteeing meaningful civil society consultation and engagement

Meaningful, early and regular civil society consultation should be institutionalised as a mandatory component of the new Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review and of all new mandate review processes outlined in the draft resolution (OPs 3, 15, 19, and 20(g)(h)(j)), including reviews of General Assembly mandates and Secretary-General reports. This will ensure that civil society is not consulted as an afterthought but engaged as a legitimate stakeholder from the inception of any review cycle, with formalised mechanisms for input and feedback.

Civil society plays a critical role across all three UN pillars in the implementation of mandates, providing necessary expertise, first-hand information, and direct access to and interactions with victims, survivors and affected communities. Meaningful inclusion of civil society actors in the creation and renewal phases ensures that mandates are relevant, impactful and responsive to the needs of their primary beneficiaries, affected individuals, communities, and populations, in particular in the area of human rights. This is essential for the UN to remain transparent, impactful and accountable. This is particularly the case for human rights mandates, the overwhelming majority of which are created in response to the experiences, needs and recommendations of civil society organisations, human rights defenders and affected communities.

In the context of negotiations and adoption of the draft resolution, Member States should emphasise the vital role played by civil society, including as reflected in ECOSOC resolution [1996/31](#), which:

- ‘Acknowledge[s] the breadth of non-governmental organizations’ expertise and the capacity of non-governmental organizations to support the work of the United Nations’
- ‘Confirm[s] the need to take into account the full diversity of the non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international levels’
- Encourages ‘greater participation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries in international conferences convened by the United Nations’

2) Ensuring accessibility of new digital tools

The accessibility of databases foreseen under OPs 20(a) and 20(c) should be governed by a clear principle: any new or consolidated database or digital tool created or adopted in the context of the UN80 reform process should be publicly available, mirroring the open-access model of the UN Mandate Registry (mandates.un.org). Failure to ensure such access would perpetuate a dangerous asymmetry, where Member States retain exclusive control over data, while UN entities and other relevant stakeholders are denied the information necessary to meaningfully contribute to creation and review.

The principles articulated in OP20(d) “to improve transparency, accessibility, and coherence” should not apply solely to the UN Mandate Registry but must serve as the standard for all digital tools created under Workstream 2. Any digital infrastructure that excludes civil society from accessing information risks entrenching opacity and undermining the transparency objectives of the UN80 reform process. Lack of access to information is also likely to contribute to inefficiencies and reduce opportunities for synergies and collaboration.

3) Emphasising adequate resourcing of mandates

It is imperative to maintain and further strengthen language reaffirming the unequivocal commitment of Member States to comply with their financial obligations by paying their assessed contributions in full and on time, as reflected in OP9 as drafted. Such commitment is essential to safeguarding the financial stability, predictability and effective functioning of the UN.

In this regard, it should be underscored that the full and timely allocation of adequate, sustainable and predictable resources is indispensable for the effective, efficient and timely implementation of all mandated activities. Strengthened language in OP10 should therefore clearly recognise that mandates cannot be implemented in the absence of commensurate resources, and that under-resourcing undermines delivery, and the achievement of agreed objectives.

4) Refraining from standardised approaches and collective reviews

The risk of standardised approaches under OP1(e) and of “collective reviews” must be critically assessed in light of the inherently diverse nature of mandates, particularly human rights ones. Standardised criteria risks ignoring the specificity of human rights mandates, and the operational and political contexts in which they are established and function.

The review of specific mandates should be individualised, and not collective as suggested in OPs 15 and 20(g). Relatedly, while the institutionalisation of the Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review (OP2) is a welcome step, this should not be the space to review specific mandates (such as those created by the Human Rights Council); this must remain the prerogative and responsibility of the intergovernmental body that established such mandates.

As outlined in previous civil society [submissions](#), human rights mandates bear specificities that should be given due consideration in the application of the principles and criteria for their creation and review of their implementation and periodicity, as foreseen in the draft resolution (OPs 7, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20(h)(i)) :

- Human rights mandates are frequently time-sensitive responses to acute or rapidly escalating crises, often created in the absence of action by the Security Council or other UN organs. As such, longer conceptualisation phases are rarely possible; on the contrary, being operationalised rapidly is critical to their relevance and ability to address urgent protection needs and to prevent escalating violations.
- Human rights mandates are often conceived and shaped by the direct advocacy and lived experience of victims, survivors, their families, and human rights defenders, and should ultimately be driven by their needs as rights-holders and beneficiaries of human rights protections. Through effective consultation, their perspectives, priorities and assessments must therefore be treated as paramount in any review process concerning the continuation, modification or termination of a specific mandate.
- The continued relevance and periodicity of human rights mandates should not be determined by standardised sunset provisions, bureaucratic timelines or political convenience, but by the persistence of violations and their underlying structural causes. Where root causes remain unaddressed (protracted conflicts, systemic discrimination, entrenched impunity), mandates should be periodically renewed over more extended periods, not subjected to arbitrary sunset clauses or periodicity norms that ignore the temporal realities of human rights crises and the often slow and incremental nature of human rights progress and change.
- Certain human rights mandates, especially country-specific ones, are inherently polarising precisely because they are created in contexts where State authorities themselves may be implicated in grave violations. In such cases, consensus among Member States is neither always feasible nor desirable as a core criterion for mandate renewal or continuation. This is in line with the history and practice of the Human Rights Council, in particular, which has always refused to grant veto powers to the very actors

responsible for the violations under scrutiny. This dynamic should be acknowledged and mitigated in any review framework. Other thematic mandates, such as those relating to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), can be similarly polarising, and it is key that such efforts are not used as a pretext to water down normative processes that ensure commitments to gender equality, SRHR and human rights.

- Relatedly, the assessment of “outcomes and impact” for human rights ‘country’ mandates must not be conflated with a State’s willingness to cooperate, as non-cooperation is often a defining feature of the context in which such mandates are created. Further, investigative mechanisms and special procedures have developed methods of work allowing them to monitor, document and report on violations and abuses, and to collect and preserve evidence, without access to the territory of the states concerned. Impact must be evaluated according to the mandate’s defined objectives, jointly with affected individuals and communities, including in terms of capacity to advance accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims, document violations, and amplify victims’ voices.
- To address double standards and selectivity, while enhancing the effectiveness and impact of human rights country-specific mandates, Member States should leverage existing and widely-endorsed criteria such as the [‘Irish Principles’](#) to guide decisions on mandate creation, renewal and sunseting.

We reiterate our commitment to work together with the Co-Chairs and Member States to ensure the UN80 Initiative contributes to a more transparent, effective and accountable United Nations.

Click [here](#) to see Annex (consolidated version will be added as Annex in the final version of this document).

Signatories:

- Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre)
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- CIVICUS
- Coalition for the UN We Need
- DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
- Forum-Asia
- Franciscans International
- International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
- Sexual Rights Initiative
- World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)

Annex

Mandate Creation, Implementation and Review for an Effective United Nations

The General Assembly,

Recalling the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes and principles,

Recalling resolution 79/318 and decision 79/571,

1. *Agrees* that the following principles shall be applied across the United Nations system throughout the mandate lifecycle, that is, in respect of the creation, implementation and review of United Nations system mandates:

(a) A culture of continuous improvement and enhanced strategic coordination across the United Nations system are essential to ensure effective responses to global challenges;

(b) The purpose of mandates across the United Nations system is to maximize impact for the people we serve;

(c) Improvements to the creation, implementation and review of mandates should be undertaken in a balanced manner across, and bear in mind the specificities of, the three pillars of the United Nations, peace and security, sustainable development and human rights;

(d) Decisions on the creation, renewal and retirement of mandates are the exclusive prerogative of Member States, and should be informed by beneficiaries of mandates and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of mandates, including relevant UN entities, affected individuals and communities, and civil society;

(e) While approaches derived from best practices shall be applied throughout the mandate life-cycle, the diverse and specific nature of mandates should be fully taken into account;

(f) Enhanced visibility and transparency of the mandate landscape is required to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of mandates;

(g) Data, analysis and evidence shall inform Member State decision-making throughout the mandate life-cycle;

(h) Member States shall exercise restraint and strive for enhanced clarity when creating mandates;

(i) Mandates shall be adequately and appropriately resourced to ensure effective implementation;

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(j) Mandates shall be regularly reviewed in order to monitor their implementation, assess their impact, and inform decisions on their future;

(k) Member State decision-making throughout the mandate life-cycle shall be supported by impartial and structured administrative, technical and substantive secretariat support.

2. *Decides* to continue the work of the Informal Ad Hoc Working Group on the Mandate Implementation Review as the Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review to monitor implementation of the principles and actions contained in this resolution from 1 April 2026 onwards;

3. *Requests* the Presidents of the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Security Council in consultation with the Secretary-General, the wider United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society to undertake a review of existing intergovernmental coordination and oversight mechanisms to develop recommendations on possible improvements to avoid duplication, and harmonize and enhance delivery of mandates, to be provided to Member States as soon as practicable and in any event by 31 December 2026 for their consideration;

4. *Commits* to make full use of the enhanced and structured administrative, technical and substantive secretariat support and practical tools outlined in paragraph 20 of this resolution, to improve Member State decision-making throughout the mandate life-cycle, promote coherence and avoid unnecessary duplication across the United Nations system;

5. *Encourages* the bureaux of intergovernmental organs to work collaboratively to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of working methods, and to strive for standardization and harmonization, where practicable;

Mandate Creation

6. *Agrees* that proponents of proposals shall provide, with the zero draft, a concise concept note which explains the context, rationale, target and affected population, expected financial implications and implementation leads, and other requirements in advance of the commencement of negotiations, to be stored in a database accessible by Member States and other relevant stakeholders, including UN entities and civil society;

7. *Commits* to drafting and adopting clearer and more concise mandates which include well-defined scopes and objectives, implementation timetables, and review timelines;

8. *Also commits* to exercising restraint in convening meetings, including high-level meetings, reports, or other activities, and to demonstrate their necessity, to achieve the stated objectives of the resolution or decision;

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Mandate Implementation

9. *Reaffirms* the obligation of Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time;

10. Reaffirms that the full and timely allocation of adequate resources is necessary for the implementation of mandates with clear budgetary implications, including by reprioritizing existing similar or duplicative activities;

11. *Agrees* to allow the Secretary-General greater flexibility to enable the effective use of resources which support mandate implementation, consistent with the criteria outlined in paragraph 20 of this resolution and with full regard for the prerogative of Member States with respect to budgetary allocations;

12. *Commits* to undertake implementation assessments focused on outcomes and impact, rather than activities and outputs and encourages the consistent allocation of resources necessary for assessment of implementation and impact in mandate budgets;

Mandate Review

13. *Decides* to include evaluation and review clauses in all new mandates and in existing mandates when renewed, which outline clear review objectives, timelines, criteria and mechanisms;

14. *Agrees* to develop clear and objective criteria to guide decisions on the renewal, adaptation, merger or retirement of mandates, while reaffirming that such decisions shall be based on relevant data, expertise and analysis;

15. *Also agrees* to expand the use of mechanisms for collective reviews of similar or related mandates, across mandating bodies, considering the advice provided by the Secretary- General in accordance with paragraph 20 of this resolution;

16. *Reaffirms* that, once adopted, mandates remain valid until completed or expired as provided for in their original or renewing resolution or decision, or otherwise renewed, adapted, merged or retired by a decision of Member States;

17. *Agrees* to use every available opportunity to review the frequency with which agenda items are considered across the United Nations system and consider options for streamlining of agenda items;

18. *Also agrees* to use every available opportunity to review the frequency with which resolutions and decisions are considered across the UN system for the purpose of taking a more strategic approach to their periodicity based on their nature and purpose; including by biennializing resolutions and decisions which are traditionally considered annually and by triennializing resolutions and decisions which are traditionally considered biennially;

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19. *Decides* to undertake a review of the existing stock of mandates from General Assembly resolutions with a view to merging or retiring completed, inactive or duplicative resolutions and decisions and report back on progress made as soon as practicable and in any event before the end of UNGA82;

20. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations to:

(a) Provide enhanced and structured administrative, technical and substantive secretariat support to Member States decision-making throughout the mandate lifecycle, including through the provision and storage in a publicly available database accessible to Member States and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of mandates, including relevant UN entities and civil society, of:

- (i) Information on the relevant mandate landscape, including identifying potential gaps and duplications;
- (ii) Preliminary financial and budgetary analysis, including, where possible, early costings and identification of funding sources;
- (iii) Process and drafting guidance, including on institutional coherence and established practices;
- (iv) Preliminary guidance on United Nations system implementation lead and operational feasibility considerations;
- (v) Review, monitoring, and evaluation options;

(b) Provide additional technical and substantive secretariat support to Member States, in the form of:

- (i) Basic resolution and decision templates;
- (ii) Guidance on using the Mandate Registry to support assessment of the relevant mandate landscape;
- (iii) An indicative cost catalogue of mandated activities for resolution proponents and facilitators and chairs of processes;
- (iv) Capacity-building for proposal facilitators;
- (v) Designation of a point of contact for Member States' coordination with respective secretariats;

(c) Further develop practical, interoperable digital tools to support Member States decision-making across the mandate lifecycle, including, where feasible, the development of standardized digital tools and portals accessible for Member States and other stakeholders, that provide consolidated, timely, and comparable information on mandates, resources, activities, and results, using common definitions and reporting standards to the extent possible, in order to support a system-wide perspective and enhance coherence across the United Nations system,

Commenté [A3]: Who would do this? Needs further clarification for HRC mandates. Ensure civil society engagement for HRC ones.

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noting that any tools which use artificial intelligence shall have appropriate human rights and privacy safeguards and effective human oversight;

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(d) Further develop and strengthen the United Nations Mandate Registry as a core reference tool, including by ensuring that it is comprehensive, updated regularly to include new mandate sources, linked, as appropriate, to other mandate source registries across the United Nations system, and responsive to requests from Member States and other stakeholders for enhanced functionality to improve transparency, accessibility, and coherence of the mandate landscape;

(e) Allocate resources within the United Nations Secretariat promptly, with reasonable justification, to support improved mandate implementation, based on the following criteria and as requested by Member States from time to time:

(i) Consistency with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, and compliance with the United Nations financial rules and regulations;

(ii) Consistency with instructions and guidance provided by Member States in relevant mandates;

(iii) Justified by urgent, significant, and clearly defined need to support mandate implementation, taken in a transparent manner, and reported and reviewed through relevant accountability mechanisms;

(f) Allocate mandated tasks within the United Nations system on the basis of their comparative advantage, taking account of any guidance provided by Member States;

Commenté [A5]: This should be clarified to ensure that mandates meant to be implemented by independent experts are not subsumed

(g) Provide recommendations on specific clusters of mandated activities that could benefit from collective review to improve coordination and coherence, as soon as practicable and in any event before the end of UNGA80, and as otherwise requested by Member States from time to time;

(h) Submit to the bureaux of intergovernmental organs, for consideration prior to the formulation of programmes of work, recommendations on completed, inactive or duplicative mandates that could be merged or retired, and on resolutions whose periodicity could be adjusted, in consultation with relevant stakeholders;

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(i) Prepare shorter, higher-quality reports in differentiated formats which incorporate greater user-centered design, data and visual content more suitable to the information provided, without reducing transparency or the visibility of important issues;

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(j) Review the full portfolio of mandated Secretary-General Reports to identify candidates for combination or change in periodicity, for presentation to Member States as soon as practicable and in any event before the conclusion of UNGA80 for their consideration;

(k) Strengthen and harmonize management for results mechanisms across the United Nations system, including how results are measured and communicated;

(l) Regularly review internal mechanisms that coordinate across the United Nations system to ensure they foster a culture of continuous improvement and enhance strategic coordination;

21. *Calls upon* all intergovernmental organs across the United Nations system to take an effective and efficient approach to mandate creation, implementation and review, taking into consideration the relevant specificities of mandates, by applying the principles and actions detailed in this resolution; and

22. *Decides* that the Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review shall remain seized of the matter of mandate creation, implementation and review for a more effective United Nations system.

Commenté [A6]: or 'effective and efficient'

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