

Oral statement to the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 2: General Debate

Speaker: Raphael Viana David

Italics not read.

Mr President,

This is a joint statement.

We are at a critical juncture. Human rights multilateralism faces a triple crisis:

- An **accountability crisis**, where double-standards in all regions entrench impunity for atrocity crimes, *from Gaza, to Russia, to Sudan, to Xinjiang*;
- A **financial crisis**, where the UN human rights pillar is perpetually starved, *and cannot adequately prevent and investigate violations, help States improve laws and policies, and advance rights standards globally*;
- And a **legitimacy crisis**, with the rule of law supplanted by the rule of illegitimate force;

This Council must rise to the challenge. *Crises are a risk, but also an opportunity for critical reflection, vision and ambition. We must safeguard what works, and improve what doesn't, to build a multilateral human rights system that is more credible, inclusive, and responsive to the demands of individuals and communities for justice, and States' needs for assistance.*

To achieve this, we must be bold.

First, States must secure adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for the human rights pillar. The US must stop freeloading and, like all States, pay its dues in full and on time. States should oppose the systematic gutting of human rights budgets by the ACABQ, and by China and Russia *within the G77 and at the Fifth Committee.* States should also agree on the temporary suspension of the return of *unspent cash in the form of 'credits' to Member States, estimated at USD 400 million in 2027.*

Second, States should better equip the HRC to prevent atrocities and combat impunity. Independent *expert* mechanisms should be established based on objective criteria *and fully resourced.* Widespread restrictions *and attacks* on civil society should be acted on as early warning signs of *worsening violations.* *Moreover, the Council's complementarity with other UN bodies should be strengthened.* States should authorise this Council to refer situations to the Security Council, thereby contributing to prevention, and to request advisory opinions from the ICJ, thereby clarifying and strengthening international human rights law.

Third, States should recognise the security and development cases for human rights.

Investment in human rights is the best upstream security investment that States can make, while deteriorating rights situations hinder development and are early warning signs of costly conflicts and crises. Civil society must be able to meaningfully participate in all UN reform processes.

Lastly, States from all regions must recognise their shared strategic interest in human rights multilateralism and increase their political and financial investment in the system.

The joint statement delivered earlier by Albania is a crucial step in this direction.

The multilateral human rights system is essential for peace, security and sustainable development. Fund it. Protect it. Strengthen it.

Thank you.

Signatories:

Article 19

Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR-Centre)

CIVICUS

Earthjustice

Franciscans International

FIAN International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Human Rights Watch

ILGA World

International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

World Organisation Against Torture - OMCT