

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**, where big powers mock international law and the rules that allow all nations and peoples to coexist peacefully;

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, we must secure adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for the human rights pillar. 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.* The US cannot continue to hold the UN financially hostage. All States should pay their contributions in full and on time and 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, we must empower the HRC to combat impunity for atrocity crimes and act better and faster on crises. 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 and to request advisory opinions from the ICJ.

Third, we must make the case for human rights at times of UN reform. Human rights mandates, *born out of emergencies and shaped by victims and rights-holders*, cannot be viewed as financial burdens. Their value should be measured by their impact: justice delivered, lives improved, systems changed. Civil society *can't be sidelined*, it must be embedded in every reform effort.

Lastly, we must build a large coalition of States from all regions with an unwavering commitment to human rights multilateralism. *States from all regions have a shared interest in safeguarding a system that upholds human rights and the rule of law, tackles the root causes of conflicts, and puts rights-holders at the center of development.* [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