

Joint NGO submission: criteria and modalities for the review of the existing stock of General Assembly mandates in the context of UN80 Workstream 2 on Mandate Review

The implementation of [resolution 80/251](#) on *Mandate creation, implementation and review for an efficient and effective United Nations* presents a vital opportunity to enhance the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations. In this spirit, ongoing reform efforts, including the review of General Assembly mandates and those emanating from other intergovernmental organs, should be primarily driven by considerations of impact for individuals and communities as rights-holders.

This joint submission outlines key considerations and recommendations to Member States with regard to human rights mandates ahead of negotiations on the development of criteria and modalities for the review of the existing stock of mandates from General Assembly resolutions and those emanating from other intergovernmental organs, as mandated by resolution 80/251 (OP22 and OP23).

The undersigned organisations also reiterate the critical role played by civil society in ensuring any reform effort is meaningful, impact-driven, and legitimate, including through meaningful participation in the upcoming review stages.

On modalities:

- 1. The review of Human Rights Council mandates should build on, not duplicate, the existing process for rationalization and efficiency**

Under resolution 80/251, States ‘agree to undertake a review of the existing stock of mandates from General Assembly resolutions, without duplicating any existing mandate review processes’ (OP22), while calling upon ‘other intergovernmental organs across the United Nations system to review their existing stock of mandates in accordance with their respective intergovernmental decision-making processes’ (OP23).

Whether mandates emanating from the Human Rights Council are understood as General Assembly mandates referred to in OP22 or those of ‘other intergovernmental organs’ referred to in OP23, the process of reviewing mandates emanating from the Human Rights Council should **build on, not duplicate, the existing process for rationalization and efficiency**. The existing rationalization and efficiency process, for which two co-facilitators are appointed by the Council’s President ([Djibouti and Australia in 2026](#)), takes place on a yearly basis. In this regard, [presidential statement PRST OS/19/1](#) of 8 December 2025 ‘encourages States to continue advancing rationalization and efficiency in the work of the Human Rights Council, drawing, inter alia, on the [proposals of the co-facilitators on rationalization](#), as set out in their non-paper, such

as by [...] reviewing mandates, assessing the necessity and scope of mandated activities, strengthening coordination and dialogue among main sponsors focusing on similar issues or considering, where appropriate, and in consultation with all concerned, the merging and clustering of resolutions, mandates and mandated activities addressing overlapping issues, whether country specific or thematic, with a view to reducing duplication, including with other United Nations bodies.'

2. The mandate review must exclude mandates that 'embody the UN's normative identity, institutional architecture, and political responsibilities.'

States must give due consideration to OP25 of resolution 80/251 in which States 'agree that mandates that are in the Charter, norm-setting of universal character, institution-creating, or relate to ongoing political situations which have implications for international peace and security shall not be subject to the reviews referred to in paragraphs 22, 23 and 24, unless otherwise agreed by Member States' (OP25). These grounds of exemption were further [clarified](#) by the co-chairs of the former Informal Ad Hoc Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review in an official meeting convened on 12 March 2026, under three categories:

- Foundational mandates, which 'establish principles, standards and values that are of universal application and guide us across the UN's three pillars', understood to 'include universally accepted norms, such as human rights, self-determination, sovereign equality, and non-discrimination';
- Structural mandates, which 'create standing institutions' and 'establish the UN's structural architecture', and 'would not typically be subject to review unless part of an explicit institutional reform exercise';
- Mandates related to 'ongoing situations affecting international peace and security', understood to 'include mandates which address active, unresolved political situations where the UN plays a continuing role' such as 'situations where tensions persist and where the UN contributes to preventing escalation';

These grounds for exclusion from review seek to safeguard mandates that 'embody the UN's normative identity, institutional architecture, and political responsibilities.' States should therefore ensure that the adopted modalities and mechanisms for the review of mandates of the General Assembly, including its subsidiary organs, as well as those of other intergovernmental organs, all include a **thorough and impartial screening of mandates against such criteria, excluding from review those mandates falling under these categories**. At a minimum, this should exclude from review the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the High Commissioner, as well as the Human Rights Council. It should also exclude any mandates established by the Human Rights Council to address situations of grave and systematic human rights violations (including investigative and accountability mechanisms, given the vital role of accountability in contributing to prevention), or mandates related to peremptory norms of international law. 'Ongoing situations affecting international peace and security' should be understood as encompassing situations much beyond active conflict situations, for instance – but not limited to – situations of post-conflict, transitional settings, as well as situations of gross,

systematic human rights violations or that can be analysed as high-risk as per the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes and its 14 Risk Factors (Common and Specific).

On criteria:

1. Additional criteria should be established to guide the review of mandates in specific areas

Principle 1(b) of resolution 80/251 underscores that *'the diverse nature of mandates and their contexts, and of the membership, governance structures and financial and administrative arrangements across the United Nations system must be respected and preserved'*. As a result, while general criteria in line with the principles of resolution 80/251 may be agreed upon to guide the review of all General Assembly mandates, **additional criteria should be established by relevant General Assembly subsidiary bodies or other intergovernmental organs to guide the review of mandates in specific areas.**

Criteria relevant to Human Rights Council mandates should take into consideration existing provisions for the improvement of its mandates in the Council's founding resolution [HRC/RES/5/1](#), including that *'merging mandates should have regard to the content and predominant functions of each mandate, as well as to the workload of individual mandate holders; [that] in creating or reviewing mandates, efforts should be made to identify whether the structure of the mechanism (expert, rapporteur or working group) is the most effective in terms of increasing human rights protection,[and that] new mandates should be as clear and specific as possible, so as to avoid ambiguity.'*

2. Any such criteria should consider the specificities of human rights mandates

Due consideration must be given to the **specificities of human rights mandates**, as outlined in a previous [joint submission](#) by civil society organisations to the Informal Ad Hoc Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review, including that:

- They are frequently time-sensitive, responding to acute or rapidly escalating crises and protection needs, and thus require prompt operationalisation;
- They are shaped by the needs and lived experience of victims, survivors, witnesses, their families, and human rights defenders, and thus should ultimately be driven by their needs as rights-holders and beneficiaries of human rights protections;
- They often address entrenched human rights violations and their underlying structural causes - protracted conflicts, systemic discrimination, entrenched impunity - contributing to incremental human rights progress, and thus should not be determined by standardised 'sunset' provisions, bureaucratic timelines, or political convenience;
- Certain mandates are inherently polarising or may not enjoy consensus, including when they are created in contexts where State authorities themselves may be implicated in grave violations and refuse to recognise or address them, and thus should not be reviewed on the basis of lacking, or for the purpose of achieving, consensus;

- The impact of mandates should 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, and thus should be evaluated according to objectives defined jointly with affected individuals and communities.

In addition, criteria for the review of the existing stock of mandates should guide, and not predetermine, the outcome of the review, that is, to maintain, expand, downscale, merge or sunset a mandate.

3. States should consider the following criteria in their review of human rights mandates

In light of these specificities, Member States should take into account the following criteria in conducting impartial reviews of human rights mandates.

- 1) **Impact:** In line with Principle 1(a) of resolution 80/251, the mandate should demonstrate the delivery of impact *'for Member States and the people we serve, while taking into account the needs and interests of future generations'*, by assessing outcomes against one or several of the following complementary objectives:
 - a) **Normative development:** Does the mandate contribute to the development of international norms and standards in the field of human rights? Does it refine or clarify existing human rights standards in a specific area? Does it create or elaborate new standards in a specific area?
 - b) **Prevention:** Does the mandate contribute to preventing the escalation of existing human rights violations and abuses, and/or situations of armed conflict, or to decreasing the prevalence of Risk Factors as per the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes? Does it respond to early warning signals of escalating violations or conflict, including those identified by UN bodies and civil society? Does it create a mechanism to identify early warning signals and trigger international responses?
 - c) **Protection:** Does the mandate contribute to the protection of civilians? Does it contribute to the protection of at-risk civil society actors, human rights defenders or vulnerable groups? Would civilians or at-risk individuals and communities face increasing attacks and targeting if the mandate were downscaled or discontinued?¹
 - d) **Accountability:** Does the mandate contribute to monitoring and reporting on grave human rights violations and abuses and combat impunity? Does it advance efforts to identify and hold perpetrators accountable? Does it advance the recognition of victims and the promotion of their right to reparations?

¹ The number of civilians killed or injured in Yemen almost doubled in the four months following the termination of the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE) in October 2021. (see [Norwegian Refugee Council](#), 10 February 2022).

- e) **Addressing root causes:** Does the mandate contribute to identifying, raising awareness and providing recommendations to address root causes of systemic human rights violations and abuses?
- f) **Cooperation and system-wide mainstreaming:** Does the mandate facilitate cooperation between Member States and UN human rights bodies? Does it facilitate cooperation between Member States and other stakeholders, including civil society and human rights defenders? Does it support other UN agencies, bodies, and mechanisms in expanding their understanding of cross-cutting human rights issues addressed by the mandate?
- g) **Awareness-raising and dialogue:** Does the mandate provide for a platform to exchange views, perspectives and best practices among Member States and other stakeholders? Does it serve as a channel for bringing emerging issues to the attention of the UN and for deepening discussions on new thematic areas within the UN agenda? Does it promote greater understanding of human rights issues at the international level?
- h) **Capacity-building:** Does the mandate contribute to building the capacity of national authorities in the promotion and protection of human rights, including in the development and implementation of laws and policies? Does it contribute to building the capacity of other stakeholders, including civil society and business actors?
- i) **Technical assistance and implementation:** Does the mandate contribute to issuing guidance and recommendations on the implementation of a human rights-based approach to law and policy-making? Does it enhance channels for technical assistance by UN human rights bodies to national authorities on the implementation of specific recommendations made by UN Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, and the UPR?

2) Relevance:

- a) Is the mandate responsive to the needs of individuals and groups as rights-holders, including victims, survivors and their families, human rights defenders and civil society?
- b) Does the mandate address a distinctive human rights situation or issue or complement other mechanisms addressing similar issues?
- c) In line with Principle 1(e) of resolution 80/251, does the mandate contribute to upholding the balance across the three pillars of the United Nations, including by addressing the imbalance and under-resourcing of human rights as compared with the other pillars?
- d) Does the mandate contribute to the recognition and promotion of the rights of historically marginalised and oppressed peoples and communities, such as people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, traditional communities, and other groups who have been disproportionately affected by human rights violations, particularly in the Global South?

In addition, 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.

The '**Irish Principles**' consist of nine objective considerations when assessing whether a situation or specific issue merits the attention of the Council and if so, when formulating how the Human Rights Council should respond. They were outlined in a [joint statement](#) delivered by Ireland at the Council's 32nd session on 8 July 2016, building upon a previous [joint statement](#) delivered by the Maldives at the Council's 20th session on 2 July 2012. A commitment to uphold such criteria was reiterated in a [joint statement](#) delivered at the Council's 35th session on 23 June 2017 by the Netherlands, and subsequently included in yearly joint statements endorsed by a range of new Council Members, known as the Incoming Members Pledge. To date, 82 past or current Council Members have endorsed the 2016 'Irish Principles' joint statement or subsequent Incoming Members Pledges. This corresponds to two-thirds (66%) of the 125 countries that have served on the Human Rights Council (see Annex for more information).

4. States should meaningfully consult affected individuals, communities and civil society in applying such criteria for human rights mandates

Finally, such criteria should be applied impartially, and only when **substantially informed by the perspectives of the United Nations Secretariat, mandate holders, and other stakeholders, including civil society**. Principle 1(d) of resolution 80/251 emphasises that '*United Nations secretariats and stakeholders have an indispensable role to play in supporting Member States throughout the mandate life cycle*'. Any review of human rights mandates that does not provide for the meaningful participation of civil society, human rights defenders, victims and affected communities would be ill-informed and unresponsive to the very objectives and beneficiaries these mandates were created to achieve and support.

We will continue to closely follow the process of review of General Assembly mandates, and look forward to continuing to engage with your delegations.

Respectfully,

Signatories:

International Service for Human Rights
DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
Conectas Direitos Humanos
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

5 June 2026

Franciscans International
ILGA World
Human Rights House Foundation
Amnesty International
QUNO (Quaker United Nations Office)
CIVICUS

ANNEX

Previous or current Human Rights Council members that have endorsed the “Irish Principles” in their original 2016 [statement](#) delivered by Ireland, the 2017 [statement](#) delivered by the Netherlands, or subsequent Incoming Members Pledges, by regional group:

- WEOG (18): Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States. *This corresponds to 95% of the total number (19) of WEOG States who have been Council members.*
- EEG (18): Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine. *This corresponds to 90% of the total number (20) of EEG States who have been Council members.*
- GRULAC (14): Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay. *This corresponds to 70% of the total number (20) of GRULAC States who have been Council members.*
- AG (18): Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Togo. *This corresponds to 49% of the total number (37) of African States who have been Council members.*
- APG (14): Afghanistan, Cyprus, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Qatar, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Uzbekistan. *This corresponds to 47% of the total number (30) of Asia-Pacific States who have been Council members.*

Other States that have endorsed the “Irish Principles” in one of the above-mentioned statements: Haiti, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, New Zealand, Serbia, Sweden, St Kitts and Nevis.

This builds on a previous [statement](#) delivered at the Council’s 20th session on 2 July 2012 by the Maldives, endorsed by: Austria, Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, France, Honduras, Maldives, Mauritius, Norway, Palestine, Peru, Slovenia, Somalia, Switzerland, Ukraine, UK, Uruguay.