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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

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Chapter I

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/141. It contains an overview of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva and New York and in the field between 1 July and 31 December 2019 in support of international human rights mechanisms and in the areas of development, peace and security, non-discrimination, accountability and participation. The report should be read in conjunction with the report of the High Commissioner on the work of OHCHR for the period between 1 January and 30 June 2019 (see A/74/36).

2. As of December 2019, there were 80 United Nations human rights field presences worldwide. In the last quarter of 2019, the High Commissioner signed agreements with the Governments of the Sudan and the Niger to establish country offices in both countries, and a letter of understanding with the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela providing a framework for cooperation and for the presence of two human rights officers in the country.

3. Between July and December 2019, the High Commissioner visited Australia, Costa Rica, France, Ireland, Kenya, Malaysia, Senegal, Slovenia, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The Deputy High Commissioner visited Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, while the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights travelled to Costa Rica and Denmark.

4. During the reporting period, OHCHR submitted 81 reports to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and 92 to the Human Rights Council at its forty-second session.¹

Chapter II

II. Activities of the Office of the High Commissioner

A. International human rights mechanisms

1. Treaty bodies

5. OHCHR continued to facilitate the work of the human rights treaty bodies. It supported the reviews of 75 State party reports, and the adoption of views and decisions on 132 individual communications, 4 decisions on registered inter-State communications and 111 decisions related to urgent actions of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. As of 1 November, OHCHR had facilitated the registration of 154 new individual complaints and 221 urgent actions, out of a total of 822 newly registered cases during 2019. OHCHR also facilitated visits to two States parties by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the elaboration of five general comments and the initiation of five confidential inquiries.

6. The insufficiency of human and technical resources resulted in increased delays in that work. In his second biennial report on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/73/309), the Secretary-General confirmed the urgent need for additional resources to ensure its effective functioning. The 2020 review will be a crucial opportunity to address the situation.

7. OHCHR field presences also provided technical support to numerous countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Colombia, Lesotho, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Zambia, on their engagement

¹ In 2019, OHCHR submitted 299 reports to the Human Rights Council at its three sessions.

with treaty bodies. OHCHR also promoted increased interaction between the European Union and treaty bodies.

2. Human Rights Council

8. During the reporting period, OHCHR established the secretariat of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It also continued supporting the independent commissions of inquiry on Burundi and the Syrian Arab Republic, the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, the team of international experts on the situation in Kasai and the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

9. OHCHR supported the efforts of the Bureau of the Human Rights Council to increase efficiency, including by revisiting the programme of work and further rationalization of initiatives. It also supported the President's initiatives to hold consultations on the review of the status of the Human Rights Council pursuant to resolution 65/281 and supported a retreat of the Council in Dakar in October, focusing on its role in addressing pressing global challenges.

10. Contributions from States to the OHCHR-administered voluntary technical assistance trust fund to support the participation of least developed countries and small island developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council supported the participation of 26 delegates and fellows, including 18 women. To further enhance participation in the work of the Council, in November 2019, OHCHR organized a second regional workshop in Nadi, Fiji, which adopted the Nadi Declaration Towards 2022² aimed at enhancing the participation of Pacific small island developing States. OHCHR also continued to support follow-up to the Georgetown Declaration: Towards 2022 to enhance the participation of Caribbean States.³

3. Universal periodic review

11. OHCHR continued to support Governments, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and the United Nations country teams in the preparation and submission of reports for the universal periodic review, including in Barbados, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Lesotho, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Timor-Leste. The voluntary trust fund for participation in the universal periodic review, administered by OHCHR, provided support to 13 States. The High Commissioner continued to address letters to ministers of foreign affairs, offering follow-up support for the implementation of recommendations of the universal periodic review.

4. Special procedures

12. OHCHR continued to support the work of 44 thematic and 12 country-specific special procedure mandates, some of which faced attacks or threats during the year. Reports A/HRC/43/64 and Add.1, as well as A/HRC/43/65, provide an overview of the activities and recommendations of special procedures. As part of its support, OHCHR also assisted the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, including with ongoing efforts to improve the system in response to growing expectations and the concerns raised. A new web page provides examples of the human rights impact of special procedures.⁴

5. Follow-up to the work of human rights mechanisms

13. OHCHR assisted States in establishing or strengthening national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up, including in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, North Macedonia, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic

² See www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/LDCs_SIDS/Workshops/PacificRegion/Nadi_Declaration_Towards_2022.pdf.

³ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/LDCs_SIDS/Workshops/CaribbeanRegion/GeorgetownDeclarationTowards2022.pdf.

⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/SPGoodStories.aspx.

of) and Zambia, as well as through a regional event for 12 States from Asia hosted in Thailand. Other support included rolling out the national recommendations tracking database in Botswana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mauritius, Mongolia, Montenegro, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Sierra Leone. OHCHR also trained United Nations resident coordinators and country teams in the Balkans and East Africa on how to engage with and follow up on the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms.

14. The treaty body capacity-building programme enabled OHCHR to develop training materials, provide national and regional training to strengthen the capacities of States and civil society to implement the recommendations of human rights mechanisms, further upgrade the Universal Human Rights Index and roll out the generic national recommendations tracking database.

15. Through the OHCHR-administered voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review, OHCHR provided assistance to States, including through a regional consultation in Panama in September on good practices in the universal periodic review process, follow-up and synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. Humanitarian funds

16. In 2019, the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, both administered by OHCHR, awarded grants to support redress and rehabilitation for about 8,600 victims of contemporary forms of slavery in 25 States and for about 36,000 victims of torture in 77 States. The Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture also issued emergency grants to respond to cases occurring in the context of human rights and humanitarian crises. In 2019, the Special Fund established by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment supported 13 prevention projects in 12 States parties.

B. Development

1. 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

17. To help promote a rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda, OHCHR increased its support to States, United Nations resident coordinators and country teams, civil society and other stakeholders in a broad range of countries, including Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Lesotho, Liberia, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Ukraine, Uruguay, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. That included assistance to countries preparing for voluntary national reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

18. OHCHR continued to promote a human rights-based approach to data⁵ to ensure that no one was left behind in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, providing technical support and capacity-building in Albania, Kenya, Kosovo,⁶ Pakistan, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Uganda and the United Kingdom. OHCHR also populated indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals under OHCHR international custodianship⁷ and contributed to the first handbook developed under the auspices of the Statistical Commission to measure governance and human rights progress, including on the basis of such indicators.⁸ In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, OHCHR developed a common survey module to support countries in the collection of data for the indicators for Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals, including indicator 10.3.1/16.b.1, which measures discrimination.

⁵ See www.ohchr.org/HRBAD.

⁶ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁷ Notably, indicators 16.1.2, 16.10.1, 16.a.1 and 10.3.1/16.b.1.

⁸ See www.ine.cv/praiagroup/#home.

19. OHCHR also participated in the high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In December, OHCHR organized a second intersessional meeting of the Human Rights Council for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda. Its report (A/HRC/43/33) will serve as an official input for the forthcoming meeting of the high-level political forum.

20. Alongside five United Nations agencies and the United Nations Global Compact, OHCHR co-facilitated the secretariat of the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, which launched its report entitled *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+ – Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*.⁹

21. OHCHR also actively engaged in the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system. Through its contributions it helped to ensure that the new guidance for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework had a strong normative and human rights foundation. As co-lead of the inter-agency Task Team on leaving no one behind, human rights and the normative agenda under the auspices of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, OHCHR played a leadership role in different workstreams, notably on resident coordinator leadership on human rights issues, the deployment of human rights advisers and the piloting of the operational guide for country teams on leaving no one behind in Cameroon, Nepal and Tunisia.

2. Right to development

22. OHCHR continued its efforts to mainstream the right to development. In October 2019, it convened an expert meeting to develop a draft legally binding instrument on the right to development, in support of the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Right to Development. OHCHR also supported the Special Rapporteur on the right to development with developing a tool on how to design, monitor and assess human rights-motivated development policies, which was launched in September.

3. International financial institutions

23. Policy engagement by OHCHR on the safeguard policies of multilateral development banks focused on the Inter-American Development Bank Group's safeguard review processes, and accountability mechanisms and reprisals policies and procedures. In that context, OHCHR finalized a human rights due diligence benchmarking study.¹⁰ OHCHR participated actively in the World Bank/International Monetary Fund annual meetings in October, served as a resource point in the inaugural training for World Bank staff under its Human Rights and Development Trust Fund, carried out two launch events for its publication entitled *The Other Infrastructure Gap: Sustainability: Human Rights and Environmental Perspectives*,¹¹ and launched a global project on accessing remedy in development finance.

4. Economic, social and cultural rights

24. As part of its efforts to expand its work on economic, social and cultural rights, and to better support countries in leaving no one behind, OHCHR field presences initiated a number of small catalytic projects on economic and other types of inequalities and drivers of discrimination and exclusion. Moreover, OHCHR further strengthened its partnerships to promote and protect economic and social rights, including the rights to education, food, health, housing, water and sanitation, work and land.

25. On the right to food, OHCHR promoted human rights as a tool to fight hunger and inequalities during the October 2019 session of the Committee on World Food Security. On work and land rights, the High Commissioner advocated for a human rights-based approach

⁹ Available at www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2019-07/Global%20Alliance%2C%20SDG%2016%2B%20Global%20Report.pdf.

¹⁰ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Development/DFI/OHCHR_Benchmarking%20Study_HRDD.pdf.

¹¹ Available at www.ohchr.org/documents/Publications/TheOtherInfrastructureGap_FullLength.pdf.

to social protection during the Global Social Protection Week of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

26. To highlight the right to sanitation, in November 2019, OHCHR led the UN-Water global campaign for the World Toilet Day under the theme of “Leaving no one behind”.¹² In Mexico and Colombia, OHCHR continued to monitor the rights to health, water and a healthy environment.

27. OHCHR was also actively engaged on the issue of forced evictions, with a focus on indigenous peoples and minorities in a number of countries, including in Cambodia, Colombia, Honduras and Thailand.

28. OHCHR continued to engage with cities and local governments and to promote their role in the promotion and protection of human rights. In October, OHCHR participated in the World Human Rights Cities Forum in the Republic of Korea where it presented the report of High Commissioner on local government (see A/HRC/42/22).

5. Environment, climate change and human rights

29. OHCHR continued to prioritize the integration of human rights in environment and climate action. In September 2019, in her opening address to the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner highlighted climate change as an unprecedented threat to human rights that demanded immediate action.¹³ In September, OHCHR co-organized, with several partners, the Peoples’ Summit on Climate, Rights and Human Survival resulting in a declaration¹⁴ signed by more than 400 organizations.

30. OHCHR regional and country offices worked increasingly on environmental issues, such as the protection of environmental human rights defenders, the human rights impact of mining activities and mega-infrastructure, indigenous peoples, land rights, the integration of human rights in climate laws and policies, and the impact of climate change on the effective enjoyment of human rights. OHCHR organized a regional meeting for Pacific States on climate change and human rights in Fiji in August. In October, it held a regional dialogue, in the Philippines, with national human rights institutions from Asia on climate change as a transboundary human rights issue.

31. Moreover, the OHCHR continued to work to create space for people to engage in environmental decision-making, including through support for the ratification and implementation of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), engagement on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and enhanced collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme. The High Commissioner’s participation at the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in December 2019 capped off a year of action by OHCHR in that important area.

6. Business and human rights

32. OHCHR provided technical support for the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the development of national action plans in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Honduras, Mexico, Mongolia and the Russian Federation, among other countries. Furthermore, OHCHR conducted national and regional company peer-learning workshops in Cambodia, Kenya, the Russian Federation and South Africa, as well as a regional workshop in Thailand to strengthen capacities to implement the Guiding Principles. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Papua New Guinea and Peru, OHCHR is implementing a project on responsible business conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean, in collaboration with ILO and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

¹² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving No One Behind* (Paris, 2019).

¹³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=24956.

¹⁴ See www.climaterights4all.com/peoples-summit-on-climate-rights-and-human-survival.

33. As part of phase III of its Accountability and Remedy Project, which focuses on non-State-based grievance mechanisms for access to remedy in cases of business-related rights abuses, OHCHR convened five regional meetings, which culminated in a draft discussion paper on insights for phase III,¹⁵ which was discussed at a global multi-stakeholder consultation in November 2019 in Geneva.

34. In October, OHCHR organized consultations with civil society and national human rights institutions from Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe to improve accountability for business-related human rights abuses and victims' access to remedy through non-judicial grievance mechanisms.

35. OHCHR also assisted the open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights with negotiations on the full text of a revised draft legally binding instrument.

36. The eighth session of the Forum on Business and Human Rights, supported by OHCHR, focused on implementing a State's duty to protect and strengthen accountability and attracted 2,000 participants.

C. Peace and security

1. Support to peace missions

37. In 2019, OHCHR continued to contribute to the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative through sustained efforts to integrate human rights in peace operations.

38. OHCHR continued to strengthen its cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, providing strategic planning and operational support on human rights in 12 United Nations peace operations. In 2019, OHCHR-led human rights trainings for peacekeeping reached more than 500 mission leaders, police and military officers.

39. OHCHR also engaged with the Security Council in support of robust human rights mandates for peace operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali. OHCHR further sustained its collaboration with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to strengthen implementation of the peace agreement signed between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army.

2. Human rights global policies and compliance frameworks

40. OHCHR continued to lead efforts to foster implementation of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. It provided expertise in undertaking risk assessments and developing procedures and systems for the policy's implementation in mission and non-mission settings including in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Chad, Haiti, Libya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Myanmar, the Niger, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

41. OHCHR also continued to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the African Union Commission in the development and implementation of their human rights and international humanitarian law compliance and accountability frameworks.

42. OHCHR co-led efforts to develop a new United Nations policy and guidance for peace operations personnel on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. OHCHR also promoted a victim-centred and human rights-based approach in United Nations efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. It also contributed to the implementation of the Secretary-General's human rights screening policy of United Nations personnel. It continued to work to harmonize standards applicable to United Nations and other forces operating under a Security Council mandate to ensure the relevant

¹⁵ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Business/ARP/ARPIII_Discussion_Paper_Nov2019.pdf.

principles were reflected in United Nations policies and practice and in engagement with States on the issue.

3. Prevention, early warning and emergency response

43. OHCHR actively supported the efforts of States and the Secretary-General to strengthen the work of the United Nations on prevention. Much of that work built on efforts under the Human Rights Up Front initiative.

44. In Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria and other countries, as part of United Nations efforts, OHCHR contributed to early warning, conflict prevention and resolution initiatives, in collaboration with Governments, national human rights institutions and other stakeholders. As part of the strengthening of its prevention and protection efforts, OHCHR dispatched teams to respond to crises and other emerging situations, including to Cameroon to conduct a technical assessment of the human rights situation.

45. OHCHR also continued to refine methodologies and tools and reinforced its risk analysis, early warning and information management capacity. Notably, it strengthened its internal procedures to enhance and systematize efforts to undertake early warning analysis, contingency planning and coordinated action. Moreover, OHCHR broadened its access to data by updating its monitoring technology and expanding its partnerships. When OHCHR could not access a country or territory, it continued to use new technology to gather contextual information for analysis.

46. OHCHR also strengthened its work on recording of civilian casualties. It has published the first public United Nations guidance on casualties,¹⁶ which is aligned with the conflict-related death indicator of the Sustainable Development Goals.

47. OHCHR continued to strengthen its partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office, including by embedding a staff member in the Office and developing a joint workplan to enhance the integration of human rights issues in the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. OHCHR benefited from the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, which supported OHCHR in 12 locations.

48. In addition, OHCHR supported the work of the rapporteurs designated under Human Rights Council resolution 38/18 to make recommendations, in March 2020, relating to the Council's prevention mandate.

4. Sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking and related exploitation

49. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, OHCHR supported national police in the development of action plans to fight sexual violence. In the Central African Republic, it supported the establishment of a shelter for victims of sexual violence. In Colombia, OHCHR and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) engaged with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the use by municipal authorities of the protocol on comprehensive health care for victims of sexual violence.

50. In Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras, OHCHR continued to strengthen the capacities of judicial authorities to implement the Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-related Killing of Women; in South Africa, it supported the implementation of the Emergency Action Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide. In Liberia, it strengthened its activities to prevent and address violence against women and girls.

51. Through the work at its headquarters and field presences, OHCHR continued to promote a human rights-based approach to address trafficking in persons. In collaboration with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, OHCHR issued a joint statement and a related briefing paper highlighting the challenges and opportunities

¹⁶ *Guidance on Casualty Recording* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.XIV.1).

of technology in combating trafficking in persons.¹⁷ OHCHR continued to build the capacity of the aviation industry to better identify victims of trafficking on board flights and at airports.

5. Humanitarian action

52. OHCHR contributed to rights-based humanitarian action in several countries, including in Afghanistan, the Bahamas, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, the State of Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen. OHCHR also continued to work with the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions to strengthen the capacity of 11 national human rights institutions in South and South-East Asia to integrate human rights in humanitarian action.

53. At the global level, OHCHR continued to implement its commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, including to strengthen national protection mechanisms. It also sustained its engagement in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Joint Steering Committee to advance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and in the Global Protection Cluster, including the development of its new strategic framework.

D. Non-discrimination

1. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

54. In partnership with United Nations entities and other regional and national institutions, OHCHR continued to contribute to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (see A/CONF.189/12), the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (see A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, annex) and the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights (see A/HRC/40/58, annexes I and II), and the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.¹⁸

55. OHCHR provided assistance to address discrimination against victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including in Cameroon and South Africa. OHCHR organized a workshop on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, focusing on their role in combating racism and discrimination and implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

56. OHCHR helped implement the International Decade for People of African Descent, including by supporting the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. In her function as coordinator of the Decade, the High Commissioner participated in the October 2019 regional meeting for Africa, organized by OHCHR in cooperation with the African Union, and hosted by Senegal, to increase the engagement of African Governments, youth and civil society in the Decade and explore linkages between the Decade, the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda. In December 2019, the High Commissioner participated in a regional seminar, hosted by Costa Rica, on the empowerment and political participation of women of African descent, organized by OHCHR.

2. Migrants

57. OHCHR continued to focus on the human rights of people on the move, including countering xenophobia. As a member of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Network on Migration, OHCHR supported States with the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, including through the development of national implementation plans. For example, in Guinea-Bissau, OHCHR supported national

¹⁷ Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, “Human trafficking and technology: trends, challenges and opportunities” (Vienna, 2019).

¹⁸ See www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml.

consultations that resulted in the adoption of a national action plan to implement the Compact.

58. With the Office of Counter-Terrorism, OHCHR finalized a training course for border officials based on its Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders.¹⁹ In cooperation with experts, OHCHR further developed joint guidance on human rights-compliant returns of children with key partners²⁰ and provided guidance on respecting children's rights in return policies and practices.

59. OHCHR dispatched teams to respond to crises and other emerging situations, including to Mexico, to monitor the situation of migrants, particularly in detention facilities, and Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile and Ecuador, to gather information on human rights violations committed in the context of the protests. Following several monitoring missions, it presented a report on the human rights situation of refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Human Rights Council (see A/HRC/41/18).

60. Under the leadership of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the efforts of OHCHR to document and monitor the situation of migrants helped strengthen the inclusion of human rights in the Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, which aimed at addressing the drivers of migration. OHCHR also helped strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions and civil society organizations in several States in South America to support Venezuelan migrants and refugees. OHCHR further continued to monitor the human rights of migrants in Libya. In Tunisia, OHCHR engaged with border police and security forces to enhance protection of human rights at borders.

3. Discrimination on the basis of indigenous or minority status

61. OHCHR continued to support the integration of indigenous peoples' rights in legislation and policies through technical advice to State authorities. For example, it supported the development of an affirmative action programme for indigenous peoples in Uganda, strengthened indigenous peoples' participation in land reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and collaborated with the United Nations country teams in Nepal and Thailand to ensure the implementation of the system-wide action plan for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, OHCHR continued to promote compliance with the standards of free, prior and informed consent. OHCHR also engaged in a dialogue with the European Commission to advocate for the European Union to develop a human rights-based strategy on Roma.

62. As a member of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, OHCHR also supported the Technical Group on Indigenous Peoples in Africa, which was launched in October 2019, to foster collaboration between the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights Working Group and United Nations country teams.

63. In August 2019, the High Commissioner addressed the Security Council in an Arria-formula meeting on advancing the safety and security of religious minorities in armed conflict.

4. Gender equality and women's rights

64. OHCHR helped countries to align legislation under review on combating violence against women, including in Morocco and North Macedonia, and on the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health with human rights standards, for instance in Nepal. It

¹⁹ OHCHR, *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders* (Geneva, 2014).

²⁰ See OHCHR, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Organization for Migration, Save the Children, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, the European Council for Refugees and Exiles, and Child Circle, "Guidance to respect children's rights in return policies and practices: focus on the EU legal framework" (Geneva, 2019). Available at https://europe.ohchr.org/EN/Stories/Documents/2019_Guidance_childrens_rights_in_return_policies.pdf.

also worked to harmonize criminal codes with international norms and standards, for example in the Gambia.

65. In Central and South America, OHCHR rolled out workshops for the judiciary on gender stereotyping in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Costa Rica and Paraguay. In Tanzania, OHCHR conducted a dialogue, with national partners, on sexual and reproductive health rights and the role of the judiciary in eliminating gender stereotyping.

66. In El Salvador, OHCHR technical work and advocacy facilitated the release of women condemned to long sentences for homicide after suffering obstetric emergencies.

67. In July, OHCHR organized an expert meeting to discuss progress, gaps and challenges in the application of human rights norms, standards and principles to the prevention and elimination of female genital mutilation in various contexts, including in migration and displacement contexts.

68. In November, the High Commissioner participated in the Nairobi Summit to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, OHCHR organized a session on delivering on the Programme of Action's agenda for the most marginalized communities.

69. OHCHR also developed a research paper on the human rights impact of restrictions on wearing religious attire in public spaces in some European countries.²¹

5. Persons with disabilities

70. OHCHR supported the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, a transformative strategy to mainstream disability throughout the work of the United Nations, which was launched in June. In addition, it helped develop the guidelines of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to strengthen the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, which were launched in November.

71. OHCHR also continued to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in various countries, including in Guatemala, where it carried out capacity-building to empower persons with disabilities to promote their right to work, and in North Macedonia, where it helped to build a national monitoring mechanism for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

6. Sexual orientation and gender identity

72. OHCHR continued to raise awareness about and advocate for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons, including through leading the United Nations Free and Equal public information campaign. It supported such efforts in Albania, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, the Gambia, Guatemala, Haiti, Mongolia, Peru, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, Uruguay and Viet Nam. OHCHR presented a legal brief to the Constitutional Chambers of the Supreme Court of Honduras concerning a case on the recognition of same-sex marriage. It also supported regional efforts to share best practices, for example by organizing a Caribbean joint consultation on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in October 2019.

7. Older persons

73. In November, OHCHR helped convene an African regional high-level conference in Abuja on the human rights situation of older persons in Africa.

8. Children and youth

74. 2019 marked the 30th anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which OHCHR and the United Nations Children's Fund celebrated jointly throughout the year, culminating in a commemorative conference in November 2019 in Geneva, which examined key issues affecting the well-being, future and rights of children.

²¹ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/VeilinEuropereport.pdf.

75. OHCHR supported the Independent Expert on the final delivery of the global study on children deprived of liberty (see A/74/136), and the Social Forum, which discussed the promotion and protection of the rights of children and young persons through education (see A/HRC/43/63).

76. OHCHR further intensified its engagement on youth, including through the deployment of five youth officers to field presences to engage directly with youth- and student-led movements. Moreover, in the European Union, as well as in Barbados, Cambodia, Lebanon, Ukraine and Tunisia, among other countries, OHCHR increased its support to facilitate the participation of young persons.

9. Persons with albinism

77. In November, OHCHR and UNESCO, together with the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, organized consultations with civil society on the rights of persons with albinism in Mozambique and provided support to a conference of Portuguese-speaking countries to review national action plans to protect the rights of persons with albinism.

E. Accountability

1. Transitional justice

78. OHCHR continued to support States and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of context-specific, victim-centred and human rights-based accountability and broader transitional justice processes.

79. In El Salvador, OHCHR supported the Office of the Attorney-General in the adoption of a policy for the investigation and prosecution of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during the armed conflict. In Colombia, it remained a key partner in the implementation of a comprehensive transitional justice system and successfully advocated for the extension of the law on victims and land reparation. In Haiti, it assisted civil society in the elaboration of a national action plan to fight impunity and to document past and current human rights violations. In Mexico, it supported the work of the Presidential Commission for Truth and Justice in the Ayotzinapa case.

80. In Tunisia, OHCHR supported the follow-up process for the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Dignity Commission, monitored trials before the Special Chambers, provided capacity-building for the domestic prosecution of cases of gross human rights violations, and facilitated the coordination of civil society efforts on transitional justice.

81. In the Central African Republic, OHCHR supported the national consultative process on the bill to establish a truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation commission. In the Gambia, OHCHR and partners supported the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission in carrying out reconciliation dialogues. In Liberia, following sustained advocacy by partners, with the support of OHCHR, the President requested Parliament to provide guidance on all legislative and other measures towards the implementation of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including the establishment of a war crimes court. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the Kasai Province, OHCHR and partners supported the development of a transitional justice strategy.

2. Death penalty

82. OHCHR continued to advocate with States for the establishment of moratoriums, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/175, and for the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, including in Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United States. OHCHR also participated in the 12th International Meeting of Justice Ministers on the abolition of the death penalty organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio.

3. Counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism

83. OHCHR continued to work with security forces in various countries to ensure respect for human rights in the context of counter-terrorism, for example in Nigeria. It also intensified its efforts to strengthen the human rights perspective in United Nations counter-terrorism policy and programming, including through its active participation in regional conferences co-organized by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and host countries in preparation for the second United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, in July 2020.

84. OHCHR chaired the Global Compact Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism and Supporting Victims of Terrorism. It contributed to the Working Group's *Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming Principles, Dimensions and Priorities for the Prevention of Violent Extremism*,²² which was developed by UN-Women. It further contributed to a project conducting training of trainers workshops on human rights in Jordan for Iraqi, Jordanian and Tunisian law enforcement officers.

4. Administration of justice and law enforcement

85. OHCHR continued its support for effective, accountable and human rights-based national law enforcement institutions and administration of justice systems, including in Afghanistan, Angola, Belarus, Fiji, Jordan, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Somalia, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. It also supported integration of the theme of human rights in law enforcement in activities organized by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the International Ranger Federation.

86. OHCHR continued to engage with the expert-led initiative to develop a set of universal guidelines for non-coercive investigative interviewing methods and procedural safeguards. It further developed practical tools to support law enforcement institutions to integrate human rights into their organizations, including the revised OHCHR guidance and training package on human rights and law enforcement and the "United Nations human rights guidance on less-lethal weapons in law enforcement".²³

87. In October and November, OHCHR conducted the first training sessions on the implementation of international human rights treaties, for judges of the Palestinian sharia court system and for judges and prosecutors of the Palestinian military court system, respectively. In November, OHCHR trained senior Russian Federation officials from security agencies on practical measures for preventing torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment during police custody and pretrial detention.

88. In follow-up to the first ever Geneva Drug Policy Week, OHCHR continued to build a constituency to advocate for a human rights-based approach to drug policy, as provided for in the United Nations system common position supporting the implementation of the international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration (see CEB/2018/2, annex I) and the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy.²⁴ In that context, it co-organized and participated in multi-stakeholder events in Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland.

89. Ahead of a revision of the national drug policy strategy and legislation in Belarus, OHCHR and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime organized a study trip for the authorities of Belarus to introduce them to the practices of Portugal in the field of drug control, including human rights-centred alternatives to criminal penalties.

90. In Uzbekistan, OHCHR raised the awareness of the various duty-bearers about the mandate of the new Ombudsman's Office on torture prevention, including through capacity-building seminars conducted throughout the country.

²² Available at www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/gender-mainstreaming-principles-dimensions-and-priorities-for-pve-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5046.

²³ Available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf.

²⁴ Available at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hiv-aids/international-guidelines-on-human-rights-and-drug-policy.html.

F. Participation

1. Enhancing and protecting civic space and people's participation

91. OHCHR continued to advocate for the protection and expansion of civic space and for meaningful participation throughout the world. In Ethiopia, Fiji, Kiribati, Mongolia, Somalia and Tanzania it provided technical advice on draft legislation to increase participation and protect public freedoms. In a number of States, OHCHR commented and provided advice on human rights-compliant responses to protests.

92. OHCHR facilitated an exchange of good practices related to the participation of civil society in decision-making and responses to attacks and threats against, and the killings of, human rights defenders and widely disseminated and promoted the use of the Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs.²⁵

93. Together with UN-Women, OHCHR led an initiative to improve civil society engagement with the United Nations and to strengthen the Organization's approaches to civic space, building on good practices across the system.

94. OHCHR advocated for the protection of human rights defenders, including in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. In Southern Africa, OHCHR mapped civic space-related developments and held a regional consultation with defenders' networks.

95. OHCHR continued its global campaign #IStandWithHer to promote women human rights defenders, movements and their stories, including highlighting the work of sexual and reproductive health and rights activists and women indigenous leaders.

96. OHCHR also collaborated with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the framework of the Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas.

97. OHCHR continued to address acts of intimidation and reprisals against those who cooperated with the United Nations on human rights, including through the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

98. OHCHR increased its attention on the challenges faced by human rights defenders and other threats to civic space posed by the use of new technologies. In that regard, it convened workshops with human rights defenders, journalists and representatives of businesses, including in Belgium, Thailand and Tunisia, to identify ways to enhance civic space online. OHCHR is also developing, with partners, tools to better document and report restrictions on online civic space and attacks against defenders on social media.

99. OHCHR provided capacity-building for 35 indigenous young people from 28 countries, and 30 fellows from 27 countries through its Indigenous and Minorities Fellowship Programmes. In addition, it provided capacity-building to 11 fellows under its programme for people of African descent. With the support of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, OHCHR facilitated the participation of 114 indigenous representatives in key United Nations meetings on indigenous issues.

2. Digital space

100. OHCHR continued its advocacy for using international human rights law as a basis for regulations, policies and practices pertaining to the use of digital technologies. The High Commissioner engaged with senior technology executives and leaders from civil society, academia and Governments during visits to, among others, Australia and Senegal, and through speeches in the United States, advocating for a human rights-based approach in developing and using new technologies, including artificial intelligence.

101. The collaboration of OHCHR with the University of Berkeley's Human Rights Centre contributed to United Nations investigations and monitoring in the Central African Republic and to the drafting of an International Protocol on Open Source Investigations.

²⁵ Available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/PublicAffairs/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web.pdf.

102. OHCHR actively supported follow-up to the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation and held consultations with stakeholders in that regard.

103. Following the launch of a global project on business and human rights in technology to embed respect for human rights in business practices related to digital technology, OHCHR held broad-based multi-stakeholder consultations and finalized a paper²⁶ outlining the project's aim and focus.

3. Electoral processes

104. OHCHR monitored human rights in electoral contexts and conducted related advocacy and assistance for the promotion and protection of human rights, including in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Guatemala and Pakistan. In Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mozambique, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, OHCHR supported the United Nations country teams, the national human rights institutions and civil society with human rights monitoring in the context of elections.

4. Support to national human rights institutions and regional mechanisms

105. OHCHR continued to assist States in establishing national human rights institutions, providing related legal advice to the Governments of Botswana, Kiribati, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, among other countries. It also provided advisory services to strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions, including in Bangladesh, Haiti, Mozambique, Tajikistan and Turkey.

106. OHCHR continued its fellowship programme for staff of A status national human rights institutions to expose them to its work and the international human rights system.

107. OHCHR further strengthened its cooperation with regional organizations. It signed memorandums of understanding with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to formalize long-standing partnerships. In October, it participated in the third African Union-United Nations technical dialogue on human rights, in the Gambia.

5. Human rights education

108. In preparation of the new phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, dedicated to youth, OHCHR stepped up its work promoting human rights education for youth and by youth. In August, it published a manual on human rights training methodology to enhance the impact of human rights training.²⁷ OHCHR continued to work directly with States, for instance, in launching the first nationwide programmes on Tunisian national television promoting human rights.

III. Reflections of the High Commissioner on 2019 and conclusions

109. **During the first year of the High Commissioner's mandate, she focused on inequalities and discrimination in all their forms as key drivers for human rights violations. Inequalities in income, wealth, access to resources, and access to justice constitute fundamental challenges to the principles of equality, dignity and human rights for every human being. They result from poor governance, corruption, lack of rule of law, discrimination and weak or biased institutions: they are generated as much by violations of civil and political rights as of economic, social and cultural rights. Indeed, these two aspects feed into each other – each force intensifying the direction and strength of the other, to create a virtuous cycle, or a vicious one.**

²⁶ Available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Business/B-Tech/B_%20Tech_Project_revised_scoping_final.pdf.

²⁷ *From Planning to Impact: A Manual on Human Rights Training Methodology* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.XIV.1).

110. Assisting States to create and maintain a positive dynamic, so that civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights work in synergy for maximum positive effect, is an essential role for the United Nations as a whole. OHCHR participates very robustly in that task, and the genuine collaboration by many States is very much appreciated.

111. The eruption of street protests across a large number of countries in 2019, underscores the imperative of applying an inequalities lens to their analysis. While each of the protests takes place in its own context, for its own reasons, inequalities are a factor in most, or many, of these situations.

112. Many of the demands in these recent protests relate to economic and social inequalities and rights. However, to the extent that those economic and social rights cannot be claimed without the ability to speak, assemble and protest, they are, intrinsically, about civil and political rights, too. We therefore need to view civil and political rights, together with economic and social rights, as a comprehensive and integrated picture. Today's protests may be triggered by economic measures; but they are bridging traditional sectarian and political divides and raising issues across the entire spectrum of the human rights agenda – bringing the indivisibility of those rights into heightened perspective.

113. While continuing to emphasize indivisibility, many high-income and middle-income countries have failed to take economic, social and cultural rights seriously, as rights. Under international laws and treaties, they are legal obligations. States are bound to maximize available resources to measurably improve the lives of all individuals living in their country.

114. The 2030 Agenda is about realizing an economic transformation that promotes greater freedom, well-being, justice and rights for current and future generations. For the first time in human history, we have the capacity to end extreme poverty, and advance universal social protection and universal health coverage. The cost of doing nothing is far too expensive.

115. Reacting to demonstrations by restricting civic space does not make anyone safer. In fact, by shutting down people's voices, it leaves injustices festering, generates rising social tension, and essentially forces people onto the streets. It fuels insecurity, extremism and involuntary migration.

116. Climate change, rising nationalism and hatred, and forced displacement and migration pose fundamental questions about our future. All of these problems require multilateral responses. However, it is precisely at this moment of growing complexity and interconnectedness that some leaders are turning away from cooperative, global efforts to seek solutions.

117. Nationalism, hatred, and discrimination are interlinked and can severely impact the future of our world. Nationalism is on the rise in many countries, accompanied by outspoken racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and other forms of discrimination, including attacks on women's rights, and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Pushbacks against the rights of racial and religious minorities in some countries are also a source of concern. Demonizing society's most vulnerable and marginalized people for political gain is anathema to our shared commitment in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. It is our shared responsibility to call out such abuses and to protect those at risk.

118. There are some 272 million international migrants around the world. Walls and barriers are built, children are detained and people risk their lives in more dangerous journeys. Yet, women, men and children seeking safety and dignity are not criminals. Most are moving because they have no other choice. Denying these realities will bring security to no one. It can only create danger and death, and more suffering.

119. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States in 2018, recognized that we do not have to trade our humanity for security, and that by working together we can both protect the rights of all people on the move, and ensure greater safety and opportunity.

120. In the statement of the High Commissioner to the Human Rights Council in September, she highlighted climate change as an unprecedented threat to human rights that demands immediate action. Those most affected by climate change already endure multiple forms of discrimination – because of their gender; because of their economic status; because they are members of indigenous peoples or minorities; because they are migrants or internally displaced; because of their age; or because they are persons with disabilities.

121. Climate change discriminates on the basis of geography. Entire nations may sink beneath rising tides, while droughts, floods and worse strike others; whole ecosystems and ways of being may cease to exist.

122. The full and informed participation of all members of affected communities is essential to the design and implementation of all climate measures. The heightened risk exposure of women and girls to climate and environmental harms is exacerbated by their exclusion from participating in decisions, and the online and real-life suppression of their voices. It is essential that their rights to raise their voices and effectively share in decision-making be protected and upheld.

123. Human rights principles, and human rights law, can inform and strengthen international, regional and national policymaking in the area of climate change. Rights-based climate action can promote policies that increase our resilience and ability to adapt to climate harms; policies that protect the most vulnerable communities; and policies that enable us to benefit from the skills and ideas of every member of society.

124. Women need to be empowered, as economic and climate actors, and as workers and employers, to help shape a just transition to a low-carbon economy. Climate funds need to systematically integrate women's equality, and benefit the countries and people most affected by climate change.

125. Indigenous peoples, although among those most deeply harmed, through their ancestral knowledge and leadership they may be able to assist in developing the best climate policies. Traditional fire management; early warning weather systems; rainwater harvesting; traditional agriculture techniques; and coastal marine management are examples of their potential contributions.

126. We need to effectively address climate threats with internationally coordinated responses that are based on equity, and a just transition to more sustainable economic structures. To prevent the steadily worsening impacts of climate change on human rights, we need incentives, regulations, and laws to protect our human rights, including the right to a healthy environment. We need to implement massive energy efficiency and conservation practices, and root out the discrimination that exposes people and communities to climate harms. States need to strengthen their mitigation commitments and nationally determined contributions. Existing State commitments also require international cooperation, including financial, technological and capacity-building support, to achieve low-carbon, climate-resilient, and sustainable development, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We need to implement the principle of intergenerational equity that the Paris Agreement explicitly lays out.

127. OHCHR stands ready to support States and civil society to do more to protect the rights of those most affected by the climate crisis, and to prevent the climate crisis from worsening.