Seventy-eighth session
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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights
questions, including alternative approaches for improving the
effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human
rights through the promotion of international cooperation
and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality
and objectivity

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report includes practical proposals and ideas from Member States
and intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on how to
strengthen United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion
of international cooperation. On the seventy-fifth and thirtieth anniversaries of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme
of Action, respectively, and against the backdrop of the report of the Secretary
General entitled “Our Common Agenda” and his call to action for human rights, the
present report serves to highlight the greater need to rekindle the spirit of this human
rights framework to dynamize global efforts to create policy pathways for
transformative change anchored in international cooperation.

* A/78/150.
I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 76/164, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to invite Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to present further practical proposals and ideas that would contribute to the strengthening of United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation, based on the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity, and to submit a comprehensive report on the question to the Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. The present report includes inputs received, in follow-up to a note verbale and letters sent by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on 28 November 2022, to invite contributions.

II. Rekindling the spirit of the human rights framework to dynamize global efforts to create policy pathways for transformative change

2. In its preamble, the Charter of the United Nations underscores the determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war; reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. To those ends, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world and was proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. It acknowledges that the advent of a world in which human beings enjoy freedom from fear and want is the highest aspiration of every society.

3. The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, proclaimed that human rights and fundamental freedoms were the birthright of all human beings and their protection and promotion was the first responsibility of States. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was aimed at achieving “substantial progress in human rights endeavours by an increased and sustained effort of international cooperation and solidarity”. Enhanced international cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights was recognized as being key to achieving the purposes of the United Nations. It served to reiterate that human rights were universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that the international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner and with the same emphasis.

4. In the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 75/1), Member States agreed that their challenges were interconnected and could only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism. Subsequently, in September 2021, in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982), the Secretary-General shared his vision for a sustainable future for people, the planet, prosperity and peace, underpinned by partnership and international cooperation. He also appealed for renewed global solidarity and innovative ways of working together for the common good. To this end, the Secretary-General calls for a new social contract between Governments and their people and within societies, anchored in human rights.

5. In Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General also recommitted to his call to action for human rights, in which he set out seven domains in need of particular attention. In keeping with “The highest aspiration: a call to action for human rights”,


he sought, in Our Common Agenda, to shift the narrative towards human rights as problem-solving tools and towards using all human rights more proactively, including towards strengthening institutions and increasing resilience.

6. Global policy pathways grounded in human rights involve several key areas identified by the Secretary-General. They include: strengthening the response to global shocks; establishing a global digital compact; engaging in reforms of the international financial architecture, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; setting a new agenda for peace; and developing a more networked, inclusive and effective multilateral system (A/75/982). Transformative pathways to achieve effective multilateralism were elaborated by the High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism in its report entitled A Breakthrough for People and the Planet: Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future. As emphasized therein, strengthened global governance through effective multilateralism, in the service of planet and people, is the only way to address contemporary global challenges, guarantee our collective survival and account for future generations.

7. Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation is essential to realizing sustained peace and sustainable development. As highlighted in A Breakthrough for People and Planet, the idea of collective security, which inspired the creation of the United Nations in 1945, is as important now as ever to ensure human security and collective well-being in a world engulfed by multiple crises, including conflict, deepening socioeconomic and political inequalities, the impacts of climate change and environmental damage, poor governance and the backsliding on human rights.

8. As also underscored in the same report, to make a genuine breakthrough for both present and future generations, international cooperation must be at the core of the six transformative shifts to global governance, namely: rebuild trust in multilateralism through inclusion and accountability; deliver for people and planet by regaining balance with nature and providing clean energy for all; ensure sustainable finance that delivers for all; support a just digital transition that unlocks the value of data and protects against digital harms; empower equitable, effective collective security arrangements; and strengthen governance for current and emerging transnational risks.

9. Global economic governance has a significant impact on national economies and on sustainable development at the national level. Reforming global economic governance and reshaping international public finance are therefore critical for the realization of human rights, including the right to development. International cooperation, aimed at constantly improving the well-being of all individuals and peoples in all countries, is key in this process.

10. The international financial architecture is inadequate in its ability to deliver stable and long-term financing at scale for investments needed to address multiple contemporary global challenges, including climate risks and massive social inequalities. The international financial architecture needs to be reformed in order to build trust in the system and prevent eventual fragmentation of international economic and financial relations. This restructuring should be aimed at supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of human rights, starting with more effective global economic governance (A/77/CRP.1/Add.5).
III. Member States

11. Contributions were received from Armenia, Burundi, Colombia, Ecuador, Iraq, Italy, Malaysia, Morocco, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. The submissions called for the Human Rights Council to be guided by the principles of universality, non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity and to move away from politicization and polarization. Proposals were made, inter alia, for the reinforcement of constructive international dialogue and cooperation for the effective implementation of its mandate to promote and protect all human rights for all in a fair and equal manner; increased attention to economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development; and impartiality in resource allocation. In the submissions received, Member States also advocated for international cooperation to strengthen mechanisms for preventing conflict and crimes; improving technical assistance and capacity-building; addressing the issue of migration; and ensuring the progressive development of human rights and a comprehensive approach to peace and security, based on the full, equal and meaningful participation of civil society. In their submissions, some States also proposed the strengthening of the rights of women, girls and young people; engagement with regional and national human rights mechanisms; and the strengthening of dialogue among cultures and civilizations to promote diversity and mutual respect, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and acceptance. It was also noted in some submissions that cooperation programmes should be conducted in accordance with national priorities and with full respect for their sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

12. Armenia stated that the United Nations should address human rights violations as potential precursors of conflict and atrocity crimes in conflict-affected areas and States potentially engaged in a conflict. The United Nations should improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its relevant mechanisms to act on early warning signs. A comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation and drivers of conflict would enable the United Nations to take system-wide actions to prevent greater violations.

13. Armenia highlighted the continuing need for impartial and objective information on the political, economic and social contexts and events in all countries, as well as the role of the media in raising awareness on public issues. Armenia indicated that monitoring the circulation of hate speech and xenophobic and bellicose rhetoric on social media and holding inciters accountable were important for prevention. Given the role of the media in the era of new technologies, effective tools needed to be elaborated to fight against the dissemination of hate speech that can lead to gross violations of human rights.

14. Burundi proposed that United Nations action could be strengthened in the following areas: expert advisory services; training of national executives and workshops and seminars to raise awareness in all spheres of society about promoting and protecting human rights; granting of scholarships and subventions; sharing of information and United Nations human rights documents; and assessment of national human rights needs. Burundi also suggested that OHCHR could provide legal advice on human rights issues, which could be incorporated into national policies and practices, facilitate learning, knowledge transfer and experience-sharing about the promotion and protection of human rights and strengthen national institutions. OHCHR could also conduct human rights education programmes to promote and sensitize various stakeholders to human rights issues, communicate on successful programmes and partnerships, facilitate dialogue among stakeholders and support cooperation with international human rights mechanisms.

15. Colombia suggested that, in its national context, the United Nations should continue to promote spaces for discussion to address the issue of migration from a
human rights perspective, including as a shared responsibility of the countries of origin, transit and destination. Building on international cooperation, that shared responsibility enhanced the ability of receiving States to provide sustainable responses to promote the effective enjoyment by migrant populations and host communities of their human rights.

16. Ecuador observed the progressive development of the international human rights framework. It reiterated that in honour of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, it was crucial to revive the rights enshrined therein and acknowledge the rights that have emerged through social struggles over time, further advancing human rights. In order to integrate the human rights principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity affirmed in the Vienna Declaration into international cooperation, it was necessary to include the five principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: ownership, harmonization, alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability. Ecuador emphasized the need to remind all Member States of the effective exercise of human rights, by respecting, protecting, guaranteeing and promoting human rights.

17. Iraq indicated that the universality of human rights, which was contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including in the preamble thereto and in section I of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, was still not clearly reflected in the effective implementation of human rights standards. Selectivity, a departure from neutrality and a lack of objectivity were common whenever human rights standards conflict with political interests. Treaty bodies required independence, impartiality and capacity for decision-making in order to enhance United Nations action on human rights. The interdependence of all human rights, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and consolidated in all international human rights instruments, should be considered in formulating future international commitments and mechanisms to ensure effective coordination and cooperation between different entities.

18. Italy highlighted the recommendations in the 2022 Rome Civil Society Declaration, entitled “SDG16+ in peril: an urgent call-to-action for safeguarding commitments to peaceful, just and inclusive societies”. The recommendations included the following: actively promote, protect and, where possible, enlarge an enabling environment for human rights defenders and fundamental freedoms; support an ambitious new agenda for peace that advanced a comprehensive and integrated approach to peace and security and ensured the full, equal and meaningful participation of civil society; facilitate partnerships between donors, the private sector and local actors to ensure long-term, sustained and flexible core funding to enhance the capacity of civil society; work collaboratively with Governments, civil society and donors to promote people-centred approaches, ensuring equal, universal, affordable access to justice through legal empowerment; and make additional investments in improving the quality and inclusivity of data on Sustainable Development Goal 16+ issues, data literacy and data communication to a broader audience.

19. Malaysia stated that the divergence of positions on human rights issues among Member States at the Human Rights Council was inevitable because human rights could not be interpreted outside their cultural and social contexts. Enhanced dialogue would improve the understanding of the national contexts and challenges of Member States in order to forge consensus for action. The work of the Council must be guided by the principles of universality, non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity, based on constructive dialogue and cooperation, towards enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights.
20. Malaysia noted that politicization and polarization within the Council had hampered genuine exchanges and had affected the implementation of key initiatives, in particular those on the rights of vulnerable groups. A selective focus on certain human rights issues and situations by the Human Rights Council was counterproductive. Malaysia encouraged the establishment of country-specific mechanisms only with the consent of the countries concerned and urged proponents of country-specific initiatives to prioritize engagement with the countries concerned and consider their perspectives and constraints, in order to encourage cooperation and create more tailored responses.

21. Malaysia emphasized the indivisibility of human rights and urged the United Nations system to promote and protect all human rights without distinction and in a fair and equal manner, including with respect to the allocation of resources. Malaysia encouraged the United Nations and OHCHR to pay more attention to and invest more in economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, and to support developing countries in building their capacities to promote and protect human rights. Malaysia called on all stakeholders to contribute to operationalizing the right to development as a matter of priority through constructive engagement in the elaboration of a draft convention on the right to development, notably by contributing constructive comments.

22. Malaysia encouraged special procedure mandate holders to pay particular attention to their respective roles in identifying gaps and providing advice on cooperation and capacity-building assistance. It encouraged the Human Rights Council to appoint suitable individuals as special procedure mandate holders, ensuring an adequate geographical and gender balance, and expertise in different legal systems.

23. Mexico highlighted the importance of optimizing the work of the special procedure mandate holders to avoid duplication with the treaty bodies, for example, the duplication of the functions of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. The Human Rights Council should follow an incremental approach when establishing the special procedure mandate holders, based on an assessment of the seriousness of the situation in order to ensure the adequate use thereof.

24. Mexico suggested creating communication channels with the regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights, specifically with the Inter-American Human Rights System, to establish synergies that contribute to international cooperation with States. International organizations should work constructively with States to strengthen their institutional capacities and avoid duplicating actions already carried out by them. The politicization of human rights forums should be avoided.

25. Mexico observed that gender equality and the human rights of women, girls and young people were essential in any international cooperation project in the field of human rights and that their perspectives must be transversal to all projects. Initiatives such as the Spotlight Initiative, carried out jointly by the Government of Mexico, the European Union and United Nations entities in Mexico, represent a local and intersectoral approach to address gender violence. Such initiatives should be strengthened and adapted to the needs of the countries and their legal frameworks in order to generate greater channels for cooperation and coordination.

26. Morocco reported that, in partnership with the Danish Institute for Human Rights and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, it had organized an international seminar on national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up in Marrakech on 7 and 8 December 2022. The seminar was attended by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, representatives of ministries and national mechanisms for implementation, reporting
and follow-up in 22 countries, as well as human rights experts. The participants adopted the Marrakech declaration on national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up in the field of human rights, which encourages, inter alia, the establishment of national human rights mechanisms, the provision of the necessary support to enable them to perform their role and functions and the strengthening of cooperation.

27. The Philippines attached importance to constructive dialogue and cooperation on human rights that would lead to practical results and called for collaborative action that strengthens national institutions. It highlighted the United Nations Joint Programme on Human Rights as an excellent example of specific technical cooperation, where the United Nations is part of the solution in addressing human rights challenges on the ground.

28. Qatar proposed that Member States adopt a preventive diplomatic approach to avoid potential serious violations of human rights in particular situations, regions or States. Dialogue among cultures and civilizations should be strengthened to promote a culture of diversity and mutual respect and to orient cooperation towards consolidating the values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and acceptance of others. International cooperation in implementing and promoting the right to development was a fundamental pillar for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that respect, there should be no politicization of development cooperation, exploitation of development assistance for political purposes or selective or double standard approach inconsistent with the purposes and objectives of the United Nations. All human rights, including the right to development, were universal, interdependent and indivisible and must be treated on the same footing.

29. Saudi Arabia called on the United Nations to observe the principles of objectivity, reliability and impartiality and to take strict action against any breach of such principles; reinforce constructive dialogue; abandon practices such as naming and shaming; identify common denominators; and recognize that diversity is a prerequisite for the enrichment of human rights at all levels. Saudi Arabia proposed that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights prepare periodic reports on good practices in the field of human rights to enrich experience-sharing and exchanges.

30. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that international cooperation in the field of human rights must be carried out through international human rights mechanisms that act in full compliance with their established mandates. Comprehensive and constructive dialogue, based on the principle of sovereign equality of States, was the means to establish, develop and review the international human rights framework.

31. The Syrian Arab Republic considered it important to preserve the nature of international cooperation programmes in the field of human rights as a means of supporting countries in fulfilling their international legal obligations. Such cooperation should be based on the requests or consent of the States concerned and national ownership. Cooperation programmes should be conducted in accordance with the national priorities of the countries concerned and in full respect for their sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

32. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that providing impartial and objective information on the political, economic and social situations of countries was of the utmost importance in international human rights work. United Nations mechanisms had the duty to fully consider, in a timely manner, the information provided by the States concerned and to avoid using unreliable sources of information. Providing regular briefings and issuing periodic reports on detailed financial allocations to different mechanisms and their activities were essential to enhancing transparency and ensuring the balanced use of financial resources.
IV. Intergovernmental organizations

33. Contributions were received from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. Other intergovernmental organizations that provided inputs were the South Centre and the Subregional Office for the Southern Cone of the Ibero-American General Secretariat.

A. United Nations system other than the Secretariat

34. UNCTAD indicated that it contributes to and supports the advancement and full enjoyment of human rights, focusing on its mandate across the three pillars of research and analysis, technical cooperation and consensus-building. UNCTAD also indicated that it would continue to mainstream human rights principles when supporting Member States in carrying out the structural and systemic reform of the international investment regime. In The Least Developed Countries Report 2022: The Low-Carbon Transition and Its Daunting Implications for Structural Transformation, UNCTAD highlighted that a green structural transformation required economic growth, the expansion of a country’s income and fiscal resources and the simultaneous strengthening of institutional capabilities to realize human rights. In the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, of which UNCTAD is the custodian, recognize that key consumer rights encompass access to essential goods and services, which are indispensable to fundamental human rights. Government authorities had ways of effectively addressing and enhancing consumers’ access to essential services.\(^1\) UNCTAD continued to advocate for women’s empowerment through trade, stressing the connectedness of trade and gender and how those issues were being addressed within trade policy circles.\(^2\) It also advocated for policies that enhance women’s beneficial participation in e-commerce. In order to mainstream human rights in accounting and reporting, UNCTAD indicated that it facilitates the use of core indicators for entity reporting on contributions towards implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD also emphasized, in a joint open letter with OHCHR on trade and the right to food,\(^3\) the multilateral policy and action coherence needed to achieve food security, concluding that UNCTAD and OHCHR stood ready to work with members of the World Trade Organization, within their respective mandates, to address anticompetitive and unfair business practices, particularly when exercised in times of crisis.

35. The United Nations Environment Programme highlighted the following activities as those that contribute to strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights:

(a) Mainstreaming a human rights-based approach in combating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, including by integrating this approach into multilateral environment agreements;

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\(^1\) *Access by Consumers to Essential Services: Energy, Water and Sanitation* (United Nations publication, 2022).


(b) Providing capacity-building, training and more information on the implementation of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/300;

(c) Continuing the work of the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights, in particular thematic area number five on the rights of future generations, especially climate justice;

(d) Promoting the integration of environment and climate approaches in national human rights institutions, which should pursue a human rights-based approach to environmental and climate action;

(e) Advancing and strengthening the environmental rule of law, namely through ensuring access to rights, such as the right to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters;

(f) Supporting efforts at the international level related to global environment litigation in order to clarify States’ obligations regarding the protection of the environment, such as ongoing processes at the International Court of Justice, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights;

(g) Supporting regional approaches for the advancement of the environmental rule of law.

36. UNODC considered that, in order to better apply the principle of non-selectivity, human rights issues could be addressed more broadly by theme and by geographical region to avoid a selective focus on specific human rights issues or specific countries. In order to enhance impartiality and objectivity in investigations of human rights violations, the role of fact-finding missions and the importance of international inquiries should be emphasized to ensure broad thematic coverage and reduce selectivity. UNODC emphasized the importance of a balanced approach to international drug control, based on public health principles, scientific evidence, human rights and gender considerations.

37. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation underscored the need to enhance United Nations actions on human rights by further strengthening its institutional capacities and allocating adequate human, material and financial resources in support of South-South and triangular cooperation to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation called for support for the implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, to support Member States, as requested, in leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation for the promotion of human rights.

B. Other intergovernmental organizations

38. The South Centre provided the following recommendations:

(a) Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals should remain a priority for international cooperation, taking into account the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights. Military spending should not reduce the financing needed to this end, including to address global health needs, climate change and an inclusive digital transformation;

(b) States should practice, not merely proclaim, international cooperation and solidarity as a means of strengthening public welfare and well-being, based on the
principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and respect for each State’s political status and economic, social and cultural development;

(c) Strengthening public participation and the oversight of public-private partnerships, guided by strong principles of transparency and the protection and respect for human rights, was necessary to support the transfer of technology, skills and knowledge for building back better for the future;

(d) States should actively participate in ongoing discussions on the adoption of a legally binding instrument on business and human rights, while promoting the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework;

(e) States should actively consider the catalytic role of South-South and triangular cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation in order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

39. The Regional Office for the Southern Cone of the Ibero-American General Secretariat proposed that the United Nations should build on the experience of Member States at the regional level in South-South and triangular cooperation projects and initiatives and disseminate that model of cooperation, based on the principles of solidarity, complementarity, mutual benefit and horizontality. The focus should be on identifying specific collaboration experiences that have an impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to development, such as the rights of women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, migrant populations and people of African descent, among others.

40. The Subregional Office for the Southern Cone of the Ibero-American General Secretariat proposed that United Nations entities enhance support for regional South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, in order to help Member States to incorporate a human rights perspective into the planning and implementation of such initiatives. That support could take the form of training activities, the exchange of experiences and collaboration on studies and specialized articles with academic institutions.

41. The Subregional Office recommended taking advantage of the expertise of United Nations entities, such as OHCHR, to promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences between different regions and cultures in the area of South-South and triangular cooperation with a focus on human rights. That would help to strengthen existing mechanisms and showcase practical solutions for international cooperation in the face of common challenges, regardless of government systems, ideologies, levels of development or other social and cultural contexts.

V. Non-governmental organizations

42. Contributions were received from the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, International Disability Alliance, the Association européenne pour la défense des droits et des libertés, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights and Polity Link International.

43. One organization proposed that every international cooperation-related process should uphold the fundamental principle of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action that “all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated”. All human rights were equally important and must be equally promoted and realized. Solidarity rights, including the right to development, the right to peace and the right to a healthy environment, were intrinsically linked to the spirit and
foundations of international cooperation. It was essential to strengthen these rights and advance their acknowledgement and implementation.

44. In order to tackle challenges in the field of human rights, one organization recommended that the Secretary-General use his power, as specified in Article 99 of the Charter, to discuss human rights in the Security Council and to consider pursuing the establishment of an international court for human rights. One organization identified the persistent debt crisis and lack of funding for realizing economic and social rights as the main obstacles to strengthening international solidarity and called on donor countries to recommit to target 17.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on official development assistance. Some organizations pointed to the need for securing sustainable resources for the United Nations human rights system and called for discussion on the best ways to increase funding for human rights through strengthening international cooperation.

45. According to one organization, human rights should be at the centre of systemic reforms at the international level, in particular those urgently needed to balance and democratize global governance to address the unfairness in international trade and investment regimes, and in international financial architecture and foreign debt mechanisms. Such reforms should be developed within the United Nations framework and driven by international cooperation initiatives deeply grounded in human rights and solidarity principles, including the promotion of more inclusive decision-making mechanisms. Shifting towards people-centred decision-making required adopting more democratic, transparent and participatory institutions and enhancing the legitimacy of the United Nations system in the international policy arena.

46. One organization stated that it was essential to further recognize the fundamental role of civil society in connecting peoples and communities with global institutions and to effectively promote the engagement and ensure the meaningful participation of civil society in all United Nations-based processes and international cooperation initiatives. That organization considered that under the current rules of procedure of the Human Rights Council, NGOs only had an indirect influence in the universal periodic review, because they did not have the right to make recommendations to States under review. It suggested that more inclusive rules of procedure, allowing civil society organizations to make recommendations, should be developed and that OHCHR should ensure the balanced representation of civil society organizations. Other restrictions that NGOs faced with respect to their engagement in advancing human rights, as identified by contributors to the present report, included a reduction in the space granted to those organizations to hold events on the sidelines of the Human Rights Council and delays in obtaining Economic and Social Council consultative status for some organizations working in the field of human rights.

47. One organization underlined the important role of the media in raising public awareness of human rights issues by providing objective, responsible and impartial information, as referred to in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and suggested that the United Nations should strengthen its advocacy work, including through social media.

48. One organization proposed that all development standards and policies be disability-inclusive and that the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of law and policy be ensured. Due regard should be paid to States’ obligations under article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the general comments issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the work of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/75/186).
VI. Conclusions and recommendations

49. On the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirtieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, it is imperative to rekindle their spirit and place human rights at the heart of a new social contract and a more networked, inclusive and effective multilateral system. Universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated human rights and fundamental freedoms provide the foundation for addressing global challenges, as envisioned in the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights.

50. As set out in article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration can be fully realized. Economic growth alone will not redress structural injustices in an increasingly polarized and unstable world. Renewed international cooperation grounded in all human rights, including the right to development, is urgently needed.

51. The work of OHCHR and human rights mechanisms in strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights, through the promotion of international cooperation, is key to realizing the vision, values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Adequate support and funding for human rights within the United Nations system will contribute to enhancing the role of the Organization in advancing human rights and supporting States to fulfil their obligations in this field.

52. The Human Rights Council should be guided by the principles of universality, non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity. Politicization and polarization undermine its effectiveness. Constructive international dialogue and cooperation lead to practical results and should be reinforced for the effective implementation of the Council’s mandate to promote and protect all human rights.

53. Sustainable Development Goal 17 on revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and strengthening the means of implementation thereof is vital to achieving all the Goals, making progress on global public goods and ensuring the fair distribution of the benefits of development and globalization, in line with the right to development and all human rights. All forms of global partnership, including North-South, South-South, triangular, regional and multi-stakeholder cooperation, must be strengthened and the objectives of cooperation centred on human rights. South-South cooperation, which evolved significantly during and after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, provides new opportunities and diverse means of promoting industrialization, infrastructure, science, technology, innovation and productive capacity.

54. Developing countries face similar challenges in building national development strategies and priorities. The proximity of experience is therefore a catalyst for capacity-building in developing countries and is vital to the South-South agenda. Other forms of proximity, such as cultural ties, are also significant in fostering effective partnerships. When advancing its agenda through international cooperation, the United Nations human rights system will continue to identify and take advantage of these synergies between States and stakeholders to facilitate partnerships to tackle common challenges.
55. Technical cooperation and capacity-building programmes remain essential means through which the United Nations supports countries in strengthening their institutions based on human rights.

56. As highlighted in Our Common Agenda and the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights, civic space is core to nurturing trust and building a new social contract between Governments and their people. Civil society is indispensable to the effective functioning of the international human rights framework. It has an influential role at all levels and facilitates the realization of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The broad participation and dynamic involvement of civil society, both domestically and in international human rights forums and mechanisms, must be ensured and enhanced.

57. Effectively addressing human rights issues requires access to objective, responsible and impartial information. The media has an important role to play in providing information and raising public awareness and should be able to operate in an enabling environment to carry out that role.

58. The human rights of vulnerable and marginalized people must be at the core of international cooperation. Gender equality, women’s empowerment and the rights of women and girls, particularly those in vulnerable situations, require specific attention. Efforts must be made to promote and support the exercise of their rights.