

**Interactive Dialogue on  
report of Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar  
13 September 2021  
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries, Estonia, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

We welcome the report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. We reiterate our strong support for its mandate.

We commend the Mechanism for adapting to an environment disrupted by Covid-19.

The Mechanism's preliminary analysis indicates that crimes against humanity have likely been committed since the Military coup in February. Today, the human rights situation continues to deteriorate. This is deeply concerning. We join the call of the Mechanism, the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to respect human rights and end the violence in Myanmar.

There can be no lasting peace or meaningful enjoyment of human rights in a society without ensuring accountability. In this regard, the Myanmar armed forces must immediately halt the use of violence against civilians. Investigating sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children remains our priority

We call on all relevant parties to cooperate with the Mechanism.

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue on  
High Commissioner oral update on Tigray  
13 September 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam High Commissioner,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

We welcome the update and share the deep concern for the human rights situation in Tigray and other regions of Ethiopia.

Violence cannot solve the spiralling conflict in Northern Ethiopia. We urge all parties to immediately cease fire without preconditions and negotiate a solution. Starvation must not be used as a weapon. We urge all parties to ensure full, immediate, and unhindered humanitarian access to Tigray and surrounding regions.

All human rights must be respected. We call on all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian and refugee law and to protect civilians from sexual and gender-based violence, ethnic violence, displacement, and harm. Any act of refoulement or forced returns of refugees or IDPs must be prevented. Returns must be safe, voluntary, and dignified. All parties must refrain from incitement to hatred and violence.

Eritrea's role in the ongoing conflict is cause for deep concern. We call on the Eritrean Defence Forces to withdraw immediately.

We welcome the upcoming report of the joint investigation which is an important step to ensure that all allegations of human rights violations and abuses are investigated. Perpetrators must be held accountable in an independent, transparent, and impartial manner.

Madam High Commissioner, how can we support efforts to ensure accountability?

**Interactive dialogue on  
the report of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen  
14 September 2021  
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic Baltic countries.

We thank the Group of Experts for their reporting outlining a host of serious violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law; both of which may constitute war crimes. The disrespect for IHL and human rights must stop; parties to the conflict must uphold their obligations under international law.

An inclusive political solution to this man-made conflict is the only way forward. In its absence, one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world will reach new lows and the culture of impunity will continue to prevail and fuel abuses.

We strongly support the UN-led mediation efforts, the mandate of the UN Special Envoy, and the critical work of the Group of Experts. We call upon the parties to the conflict to meaningfully engage with the Special Envoy without preconditions, to fully cooperate with the Group of Experts and to partake in a political process towards a comprehensive and sustainable peace.

How can the Council support the promotion of human rights, inclusiveness, safety and dignity of the people of Yemen?

**Interactive Dialogue with  
special rapporteur on truth, justice, reparation and  
guarantees of non-recurrence  
16 September 2021  
Statement by Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country Estonia.

Mr. Special Rapporteur,

We would like to thank you for your report and hard work you have done in this field.

The duty of accountability is grounded in international law. The international human rights obligations of States are fully applicable to transitional processes. Each country has the duty to investigate and punish serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and have relevant national legislation in compliance with international law. It is vital to build strong institutions capable of preserving rule of law and ensuring human rights for all.

The use of the military and special militarized units to suppress peaceful demonstrations, in particular during processes of transition, accompanied by the use of mass violence, imprisonment, torture, ill-treatment and even murder, requires a swift international response – and the identification and the prosecution of the perpetrators. It is unacceptable that some countries, publicly or implicitly, support another country's violent regime in order to use the situation for their own interests. This further encourages an atmosphere of impunity.

Mr. Rapporteur,

States should not provide asylum or protection to persons who have committed serious violations of human rights in order to shield them from criminal prosecution. What tools could the international community use to maximize adherence to this important principle of international law?

I thank you Mme President.

**Interactive Dialogue on  
the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict  
situations on the 20th anniversary of UNSC resolution 1325  
17 September 2021  
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda reaffirms that ensuring women and girls' protection and participation in conflict and post-conflict situations is innately linked to respect for their rights.

The Council has recognized that conflict and post-conflict situations worsen pre-existing gender-based discrimination against, and inequality of, women and girls in all their diversity. This limits their democratic space, and is often part of a pattern of targeted threats, including against women human rights defenders.

When societies are torn apart and protective structures break down, women and girls face increased risks of SGBV. We must not ignore this devastating reality. It is our responsibility to address the dire consequences of conflicts on women and girls, including those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Their full, equal and meaningful participation is essential for ensuring a focus on gender-based risks.

The report concludes that this Council has paid insufficient attention to key issues affecting women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, including their access to SRH services and SGBV prevention and response services.

How can the Council further promote a holistic, multisectoral and survivor-centered approach to preventing and responding to conflict-related SGBV?

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention  
20 September 2021  
Statement by Latvia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, Madam President.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic States.

We thank the Working Group for presenting the report on its activities in 2020 and commend it for continuing its work under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The Nordic-Baltic countries continue to be alarmed by the high level of human rights defenders arbitrarily deprived of their liberty across the world, and we all endorse the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State relations. The situation is even more dire for women human rights defenders and those protecting the rights of children with disabilities, persons living with communicable diseases and LGBTI persons. We concur with the Working Group's recommendation in this regard and call on all States to ensure that human rights defenders are not deprived of their liberty as a result of their activities.

The Nordic-Baltic countries welcome the latest Working Group's deliberation on women deprived of their liberty.

Dr Šteinerte, what can we do to decrease the implementation gap between international norms, such as the Bangkok Rules, and the experiences of women deprived of liberty; and how can the engagement of arbitrarily detained women with the UN mechanisms, including the Working Group, be improved?

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with  
the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances  
21 September 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

We thank the Working Group for the report on their activities as well as its thematic focus on transnational transfers.

Enforced disappearance is a serious violation of human rights and no circumstances may be invoked to justify it.

It is alarming that there are more than 46 thousand cases under active consideration and the number continues to grow. We urge all states to immediately stop and prevent enforced disappearances, initiate impartial and independent investigations and protect the rights of the victims and their families.

The Nordic-Baltic countries are particularly concerned about the Working groups' reports on increasing practice of extraterritorial transfers that lead to enforced disappearances, as well as continued reprisals faced by families of victims and human rights defenders. These practices are unacceptable and should be thoroughly investigated.

In this context, we reiterate our call all States to respond positively to Working Groups' requests for visits and to extend all necessary cooperation in order to facilitate their important work.

What additional measures could this Council take to prevent the acts of intimidation and reprisals against those seeking justice for victims?

**Interactive dialogue with  
the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in Myanmar  
22 September 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, President.

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic States.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his update on the deeply concerning situation in Myanmar. We strongly support his mandate.

We continue to condemn the military coup in the strongest possible terms and reiterate our call on the military to immediately end all forms of violence and abuses against the people of Myanmar. The right to freedom of opinion and expression, both on- and offline, and the freedom of assembly, must be guaranteed. The systematic intimidation and persecution of the people of Myanmar for exercising their human rights must be stopped, and all those arbitrarily detained – including political leaders, journalists, human rights defenders, and others - must be released. We particularly emphasise our concern for the situation of women human right defenders, who have played a leading role in the civil protests. We also emphasize the importance of non-discrimination and of combatting SGBV.

Ensuring accountability for serious international crimes remains critical.

Special Rapporteur,

We are witnessing an escalating political, economic, and humanitarian crisis, impacting persons already in vulnerable situations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured.

Special Rapporteur,

How, can the international community at this time best support the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons in Myanmar and contribute to establish a peaceful path to democracy?



**Interactive dialogue on  
High Commissioner's written update on Myanmar  
22 September 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

We strongly support the work of the High Commissioner and her office, and thank for the written update.

The Nordic-Baltic countries continue to condemn the military coup in the strongest terms. We call upon the Myanmar military leadership to end the state of emergency and serious human rights violations, to immediately release all those arbitrarily detained, to end discrimination of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, sexual and gender-based violence, to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to fully respect and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

We echo the High Commissioner and urge to ensure accountability for any international crimes and human rights violations and abuses, and work with all stakeholders towards national dialogue. We also urge Myanmar to fully cooperate with the UN human rights and international mechanisms.

In our view, effective and meaningful implementation of the ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus is important for the country's way forward.

We stand in solidarity with Myanmar people and voice their aspirations for a democratic development, peace and stability.

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with  
Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan  
23 September 2021  
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

President,

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries [Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, and Norway].

Violence and insecurity are the fundamental obstacles to improving the human rights situation in South Sudan. We welcome progress in implementing the Peace Agreement, such as opening the Transitional National legislature, but the pace is too slow. In the vacuum, human rights violations and abuses such as arbitrary and extrajudicial killings, abductions, conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and detentions continue. Peace should mean more than just the absence of war.

All major armed groups are responsible, but the Government of South Sudan has the primary responsibility to protect the population. We urge the parties to make immediate progress on arrangements to improve security and rule of law.

We are deeply concerned by measures taken by the Government [of South Sudan] to restrict freedom of expression, assembly, association, and media freedom in response to planned demonstrations last month. The government [of South Sudan] must show their commitment to civil and political rights by allowing peaceful public discourse to take place.

Finally, a strong UN human rights mechanism is still needed in South Sudan. We urge the government to continue its history of cooperation with the Commission in recognition of this fact.

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic  
23 September 2021  
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The Commission of Inquiry has our unwavering support. Over the past year, the human rights situation continued to worsen for many Syrians. We are deeply concerned by the Commission's findings of widespread and systematic violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law committed across the country. They include indiscriminate attacks on civilians, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, targeted killings, torture and sexual and gender-based violence. In particular, we are concerned by the increased levels of violence in various parts of Syria during the reporting period.

The indiscriminate shelling and restrictions on movement of civilians during the recent violence in Daraa is a reminder that the violations and abuses continue. A safe and stable environment in Syria is needed for the sustainable and dignified return of 6.8 million Syrian refugees and the 6.7 million internally displaced.

The increased levels of violence exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation. Limited access to water, food and medicine is of particular concern. The recurring disruptions in the water distribution of Alouk water station are concerning. It serves as a lifeline providing directly or indirectly clean drinking water to around one million people. Access to safe drinking water is, in addition to sanitation and hygiene, integral in supporting the fragile public health of North-East Syria, especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

All parties must fulfil their human rights and international humanitarian law obligations. Impunity must be addressed for justice to prevail. International humanitarian and human rights organisations must gain unhindered access in every part of the country.

We continue to fully support the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM). Its work is crucial for efforts towards accountability. We reaffirm our support to the UN Special Envoy for Syria. We also reiterate our call for all parties to meaningfully engage in a political settlement in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254.

Commissioners: what needs to be done to ensure unhindered access of the humanitarian and human rights organisations in every part of the country?

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
Commission of Inquiry on Burundi  
23 September 2021  
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: [Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden and Norway].

We strongly support the recommendations given in the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi. Improved dialogue between Burundian authorities and the international community since the new administration came to power is encouraging, but unfortunately, there is little meaningful change in terms of human rights.

We remain deeply concerned about continued human rights violations and abuses and the shrinking civic space [in Burundi]. We repeat our call upon the government to end human rights violations committed by the security forces and the Imbonerakure, including against members of the opposition, human rights defenders, civil society and journalists.

All instances of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and sexual- and gender-based violence must be promptly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

We continue to urge the Government [of Burundi] to fully cooperate with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including on sensitive matters and to authorize them to conduct independent monitoring activities and publicize reports on human rights violations and abuses. These mechanisms must be granted full and unhindered access and be provided all the information necessary to fulfil their mandate to effectively report human rights violations and abuses [in Burundi].

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue on the interim oral update of OHCHR  
on the situation of human rights in Belarus  
24 September 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country Lithuania.

We welcome the update and express our strong support for the mandate.

No issue touched in the report should be left without proper attention as human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. Repressions against civil society, human rights defenders, journalists, and media actors are widespread.

We condemn systematic violations of human rights in Belarus, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, sexual and gender-based violence and torture and other ill-treatment of members of civil society.

As Lukashenko regime is trying to silence the voices of those suffering, we call for accountability, immediate cessation of all repressions and release of all political prisoners.

We strongly condemn the Lukashenko regime's efforts to instrumentalize irregular third-country migrants in an attempt to destabilize EU Member States, thus putting migrants in a vulnerable situation on the territory of Belarus.

International solidarity with the people of Belarus is more important than ever, as violations of human rights escalate.

I thank you.

**Annual Discussion on Integration of a Gender Perspective**  
**27 September 2021**  
**Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden and my own country Norway.

The Nordic-Baltic countries stress the importance of integration and implementation of a gender transformative perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council and the whole of the UN. Women and girls' rights, their full, equal and meaningful participation, as well as eliminating intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination must be integrated into Human Rights Council resolutions, and mainstreamed in the work of Special Procedures and in the mandates of fact-finding and monitoring missions.

We thank the panel for highlighting how the technological transformation can have a substantial and positive impact on gender equality and women and girls' enjoyment of human rights.

We have seen during the covid-19 pandemic examples of how women and girls have benefited from new technology, including better access to digital health services and education.

However, this is not equally available to every woman and girl. To reach the sustainable development goals, we must increase efforts to bridge the digital gender divide globally.

We must ensure equal access from a gender perspective, as well as for all children, so that everyone can benefit from information and communications technology, including capacity building and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Further, we must ensure that online content does not discriminate against women and girls or promote gender stereotypes. Most important, we must address the challenges of online sexual- and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

How can we ensure a unified approach to gender equality and digital transformation in the UN, including at country level? And in fulfilling the ambitions in the Secretary General's report Our Common Agenda?

Thank you.



**Interactive Dialogue with  
the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples  
27 September 2021  
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country Denmark together with Greenland.

Protection of indigenous territories is central for indigenous peoples' recovery from COVID. It promotes food security and sustainable livelihoods, and increases resilience in the face of future pandemics.

We are concerned with the failure of governments to control illegal incursions into indigenous territories, including amnesties for illegal logging, fishing and gold prospecting in clear breach of UNDRIP.

We share the High Commissioner's concern about attacks against the Yanomami and Munduruku peoples by illegal miners in the Amazon. In Central America, NGOs report the killing by settlers of at least 13 persons of the Miskito and Mayangna tribes.

These are but examples, but the problem is global: More than a third of all fatal attacks on land and environmental human rights defenders target indigenous peoples.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, what are the most pressing challenges concerning the rights of indigenous peoples in the COVID recovery?

**Interactive Dialogue with  
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)  
28 September 2021  
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

We appreciate the valuable work of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and welcome its annual report.

The report raises important issues with regards to the rights of the Indigenous Peoples. This includes proposals on participation of indigenous peoples in the Human Rights Council, and ensuring consultation with indigenous peoples and respect for their rights, including in the response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 crisis.

We support your call for protection of indigenous human rights defenders. Threats, harassment and violence is unacceptable. We also stand with you in condemning reprisals against indigenous leaders, human rights defenders and UN mandate holders for engaging in UN meetings.

Concerning the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, we encourage UNESCO and the international society at large to make a long-lasting commitment to save and strengthen indigenous peoples' languages. Full, equal and meaningful participation by indigenous peoples, both nationally and internationally, is crucial.

Madam President,

What is the best way to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples get more attention on the international agenda?

Thank you.

**Annual half-day panel discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples on the theme “The situation of human rights of indigenous peoples facing the COVID-19 pandemic, with a special focus on the right to participation”**

**28 September 2021**

**Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

Esteemed panellists,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic states.

While COVID-19 has affected us all, it amplifies pre-existing inequalities and has a disproportionate impact on those persons who are already being marginalized. In addition, many indigenous women and girls, indigenous LGBTIQ persons and indigenous persons with disabilities face multiple and intersecting discrimination.

It is with deep concern we note that some states have used the pandemic as a pretext to undermine the rights of indigenous peoples and that violence and harassment against indigenous human rights defenders have escalated. Human rights defenders are critical for the promotion and protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Perpetrators of violence, abuses and harassment against them must be held accountable.

Efforts in response to the pandemic may have serious repercussions on the enjoyment of human rights. The crisis should never be taken as an excuse for undue restrictions of democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Emergency responses must be necessary, proportionate, temporary in nature and non-discriminatory and in line with international law.

Including indigenous peoples, and their organisations and institutions, in both the planning of containment measures and of measures to build back better from the pandemic, is paramount. In so doing, it is essential to keep bridging the digital divide and ensure that participation is accessible, inclusive, and meaningful.

Esteemed panellists,

How can the rights of indigenous peoples best be ensured by putting the right to self-determination into practice?

I thank you.

**Half-day panel discussion on deepening inequalities exacerbated by the  
Covid-19 pandemic (HRC RES. 45/14)  
28 September 2021**

**Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Chairperson,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries, Estonia, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

As extreme poverty is rising for the first time in over 20 years, there is an urgent need for revitalized efforts on the SDGs in this “Decade of Action”. Agenda 2030, grounded in human rights, is our common roadmap towards inclusive, global recovery. Leaving no one behind must remain our top priority, also because it is the foundation of reaching the goals overall. We reiterate our support to COVAX and for equitable access of vaccines.

The pandemic entails enormous health, humanitarian, development and economic consequences and serious repercussions on the enjoyment of human rights. These include hunger and malnutrition, domestic and sexual gender-based violence, restricted access and participation for persons with disabilities, restricted access to SRHR services, discrimination against indigenous peoples and religious minorities, loss of income, widening education gaps and mental health challenges. It has particularly impacted those already discriminated against, including LGBTIQ-persons and women and children. This must not result in a lost generation. Our responses must, have human rights at its heart and target already existing forms of discrimination and marginalization.

Actions to combat the pandemic must be in line with international law and human rights-based approach is key. We are concerned of the use of Covid-19 restrictions to undermine and violate civic space, including on human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, online as well as offline, around the world. An open, pluralistic and strong civic society is critical for the full and equal realization of all human rights for all, and for development that is truly sustainable.

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue on  
the Secretary-General's report on cooperation with the United Nations, its  
representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights  
29 September 2021  
Statement by Latvia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, Madam President.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic States.

We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for presenting the annual report on allegations of intimidation and reprisals.

The high number of States cited in the report is alarming, as is the fact that many of these are members or candidate States of this Council. Even more cases are unreported or excluded due to protection concerns. The Nordic-Baltic countries are especially worried about recurring allegations and agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that repeated similar incidents can signal patterns.

We call on all concerned States to put an immediate end to all acts of intimidation and reprisals, investigate all allegations of such acts, combat impunity and provide victims with effective remedies.

Although our current modalities for online meetings offer opportunities for more global civil society participation, it has also highlighted the digital divide and risks of digital surveillance and online attacks.

Assistant Secretary-General, what can the UN and its Member States do to breach the digital divide and ensure the inclusion of underrepresented persons and groups in UN processes?

Thank you.

**Panel discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights  
in the context of peaceful protests  
29 September 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you Chair.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country Lithuania.

We thank the distinguished panellists for their contributions to this important discussion.

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of association and of expression, both online and offline, are indispensable pillars of democratic governance and open societies. There is no doubt that peaceful protests contribute to the full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Peaceful protests are increasingly met with repression, including excessive use of force, arbitrary detentions, torture and enforced disappearances. This is unacceptable. Protesters, human rights defenders, journalists and other media workers are facing the risk of assaults and reprisals. Combined with the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic, it results in an even more shrinking civil society space. In times when physical assemblies may be restricted due to crises or emergencies, it is all the more necessary to ensure the unhindered access to Internet for everyone. The growing trend of internet shutdowns and the misuse of new technologies ahead of critical democratic moments such as elections and protests, is particularly concerning.

Technology should be used to reinforce inclusive participation instead of restricting it. Our success in “building back better” depends on the ability to secure people’s participation and trust. Therefore, the Nordic-Baltic counties call upon all States to promote a safe and enabling environment to all individuals and groups to exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association.

Distinguished panellists, how do we ensure accountability for restrictions online, including internet shutdowns? What possible steps would help to maintain and strengthen the openness of the civic space?

**Item 8: General Debate follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action**

**4 October 2021**

**Statement by Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Estonia.

Gender equality, empowerment of all women and girls and their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights is one of the most important priorities for the Nordic-Baltic countries. A gender transformative perspective should always be taken into account in decision-making and resource allocation. More work is needed to mainstream gender across the Council's work, including in resolutions and mandates, in fact-finding missions and COIs.

In order to ensure durable peace, prevent conflicts and protect inclusive societies, it is crucial to ensure women and girls' full, equal and meaningful participation in all peace building efforts and decision-making processes.

We cannot ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls unless we ensure access to comprehensive sexuality education and the promotion, protection and fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Important discussions on these issues have been held also during this HRC session.

Generation Equality spearheaded by UN Women, Mexico and France, has been created to define ambitious investments and policies on gender equality in order to achieve tangible results on the ground in 5 years' time. In this framework, six thematic action coalitions and a Global Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action have been launched. We urge all countries and other stakeholders to engage in Generation Equality and join us in creating a gender equal world by 2026.

I thank you!

**Item 9: General Debate on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

**5 October 2021**

**Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country Iceland.

The Nordic-Baltic countries are committed to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The inherent dignity and equal rights of all individuals, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be self-evident. However, no society is immune from racism and racial discrimination.

All too often, individuals and groups of people are discriminated against – be it with regard to access to health care, education or employment – based on the way they look or as persons belonging to religious, national or ethnic minorities. This is unacceptable.

Online hate speech is another all too common manifestation of racism and racial discrimination, which contributes to hate crime. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic, made matters worse and the world witnessed an increase in racist comments in the online space. This cannot be tolerated and must be stopped. The responsibility lies with every single one of us as inhabitants of this planet.

As another urgent issue, we strongly condemn systemic racism and racially motivated violence, both in the virtual space and in our everyday life.

States bear a responsibility to combat and prevent racial discrimination. We must never forget that - it is our joint obligation to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We can only achieve this goal by working together.



**Interactive Dialogue on  
the High Commissioner's Oral Update on Ukraine  
5 October 2021  
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

On behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries, I thank the High Commissioner for her oral update.

We reiterate our support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. We do not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, and strongly condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Therefore, we do not recognise the so-called elections held in the occupied Crimean peninsula.

We urge Russia to uphold its obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and we underscore the need to fully implement the Minsk agreements. We call on Russia to take on its responsibility, as occupying power.

We likewise call on Russia to cease human rights violations and abuses and humanitarian law violations in Crimea and in the non-government controlled areas in eastern Ukraine. This total disrespect for the rule of law, humanitarian law, and human rights is unacceptable. Those responsible for violations and abuses must be held accountable.

We reiterate our firm support for the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission and commend Ukraine's successful efforts to keep Crimea on the international agenda.

I thank you.

**Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on  
the High Commissioner's report on the Democratic Republic of Congo and  
final report of experts on Kasai  
5 October 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Mme President,

I make this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Thank you, Madam High Commissioner, for your report on the situation of human rights in the DRC and to the Team of International Experts on the situation in Kasai for their final report.

The reported large number of attacks against civilians in eastern DRC remains a serious concern. We note the introduction of the state of siege in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. Human rights can be derogated from under certain circumstances. However, any such derogations must be limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, not inconsistent with other obligations under international law and non-discriminatory.

Madame High Commissioner, would you be able to elaborate more on the consequences so far of the state of siege on the respect for human rights in the region?

Those responsible for serious human rights violations or abuses must be held accountable. Daily reports of serious violations and abuses of human rights, including extra-judicial killings, attacks against civilians and sexual and gender-based violence call for increased attention to the plight of the civilian population in the area. Justice should also be brought on those responsible for the murder of UN experts Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp in 2017. It is of utmost importance that the trial takes all evidence into consideration.

Thank you.

**Enhanced interactive dialogue on HC report on Sudan**  
**6 October 2021**  
**Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

We thank the High Commissioner for the report and welcome the Transitional Government's strong efforts and commitment to peace, democracy, and human rights under difficult conditions. We remain concerned about the continued violence, particularly in the marginalized areas of Sudan.

There are challenges to a successful transition towards a fully civilian rule, as manifested by the foiled coup attempt in September. We stand firmly behind the civilian-led government in rejecting any attempts to derail or disrupt the Sudanese people's efforts to establish a democratic and peaceful future.

We urge the government to create an enabling environment for human right defenders and protect the rights of all, including women and minorities.

As the HC report outlines, the decisions Sudan has taken to promote and protect human rights must be implemented. This includes the National Plan for Protection of Civilians and Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. It is urgent to establish the Transitional Legislative Council and start revision of the constitution, to ensure accountability and end impunity. All cases of human rights violations and abuses must be investigated.

We affirm our support for the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in Sudan and its continued technical support and capacity-building.

**Interactive dialogue with  
the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia  
6 October 2021  
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his written report.

While there have been some positive developments, the human rights situation in Cambodia remains concerning. We are alarmed by reports of judicial harassment and repression of opposition members, journalists and human rights defenders, including youth and environmental defenders. In that regard, we call on the Government of Cambodia to fully implement the UPR recommendations which it has accepted, as a matter of priority.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, civic space has been further reduced. We urge the Government of Cambodia to respect the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, in the digital, print and public space.

Failure to do so will result in unjust and stifled elections and further delay Cambodia's 2050 Vision to become a prosperous country guided by social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

We express full support for the mandate extension of the Special Rapporteur and in conclusion ask what is needed for a pluralistic democracy based on respect for and protection of all human rights and the rule of law to materialise in Cambodia?

I thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with  
the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia  
6 October 2021  
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

We welcome Ms. Dyfan's report and her efforts to produce it, under difficult circumstances.

While we recognise the progress Somalia has made, including on human rights, many serious challenges remain.

We are deeply concerned that Somalia is the conflict where most children are subject to rape and other sexual violence and abductions, and that children in overwhelming numbers are recruited to participate in armed conflict. We urge Somalia to address this.

We note with serious concern that violence against women and girls has increased during COVID-19 and encourage the adoption of sexual offenses legislation. We also encourage Somalia to ratify CEDAW. It is key that women are supported and perpetrators held to account.

We underscore the importance of commencing a legitimate election process in line with agreed timelines, ensure freedom of media, and to adopt a constitution that reflects Somalia's human rights obligations.

*Ms. Dyfan; how can we best support you in your mandate?*

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with  
Independent Expert on Central African Republic (CAR)  
6 October 2021  
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.

We want to highlight findings in the report issued jointly by the UN Human Rights Office and MINUSCA, the UN Mission, which documents an increase in violations and abuses of human rights in the Central African Republic.

We are deeply concerned by the reported incidents, including extrajudicial and summary killings, torture and conflict-related sexual- and gender-based violence, as well as serious violations and abuses of the rights of the child. These acts are committed by all parties to the conflict. The report indicates that the national army, internal security forces and Russian instructors and employees of private security companies are responsible for several violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law.

The human rights and humanitarian situation gives reason for extreme concern. All use of violence against the civilian population must stop. Protection from sexual- and gender-based violence remains a serious challenge. We reiterate that the dire situation for women and children must be urgently addressed, and women be involved in the process.

We are alarmed by actions hindering MINUSCA's civilian protection mandate and their human rights monitoring. Strengthened monitoring of human rights is needed in the evolving context, and we call on all actors involved to ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses, to end impunity.

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with  
the Fact Finding Mission on the human rights situation in Libya  
7 October 2021  
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries. We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Libya, with thousands of civilians being killed and injured, in enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, in arbitrary arrest and detention, and in sexual and gender-based violence.

We thank the Fact Finding Mission for its report and reiterate our strong support for its mandate. We commend the continued cooperation by the Libyan authorities with the mission, as evidenced by the visit in August. The work of the mission is essential in ensuring accountability. Thus, its mandate should be renewed for one year.

However, we are concerned that many witnesses have declined to engage with the mission because of fears for their safety. We echo the call by the mission to the Libyan authorities to ensure that everyone is free – and feels free – to cooperate with the mission.

We would like to ask: What immediate measures should the Government of National Unity take to best support the victims of torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and sexual and gender-based violence in Libya?

I thank you.

**Item 9: General Debate on technical assistance  
and capacity-building  
7 October 2021  
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries; Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

We thank the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) for its valuable cooperation with states and all other relevant stakeholders to strengthen national frameworks to promote and protect human rights. We call on all States to fully cooperate with the Office.

We welcome the Philippines commitment to cooperate with the UN. The national-level UN joint programme on human rights agreed in July is an encouraging step forward. It helps strengthen the capacities of government offices, including in terms of accountability and civic space.

However, concerns remain. The Philippines must ensure that reports of enforced disappearances and deaths in the campaign against illegal drugs are investigated and that perpetrators are brought into justice. Government officials should take immediate steps to address reports of harassment and killings of human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, indigenous peoples and others.

Realisation of the right to education is essential for meaningful participation in public life. In this regard, we encourage the Philippines to reinstate in-person education, limiting COVID restrictions to the strictly necessary. We welcome recent decisions by the government to move in this direction.



A vibrant civil society is a key cornerstone of a wellbeing society. We encourage the government to engage in genuine dialogue with civil society and human rights defenders as a step towards full respect for its international obligations.

The Nordic-Baltic countries are committed to cooperating with the Philippines in the promotion and protection of human rights and look forward to the full implementation of the UN Joint Programme. The UN Human Rights Office, the Special Procedures and the treaty bodies have our unwavering support for their work.

Thank you.

*[Check against Delivery]*