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Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace

Project Report: Exploring Special Procedures

November 2023

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Foreword

'[...] human rights in their entirety – economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights – are at the heart of national prevention strategies, as human rights are critical to guarantee conditions of inclusion and protect against marginalization and discrimination, thus preventing grievances before they arise' António Guterres - Secretary-General of the United Nations¹

The report 'Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace: Exploring Special Procedures' is based on a joint project undertaken by QUNO in Geneva, the OHCHR in New York, and OHCHR's Special Procedures Branch in Geneva, in collaboration with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' PBSO (DPPA/PBSO).

The joint project sought to pilot activities to explore how special procedures of the Human Rights Council (HRC) could better integrate human rights and sustaining peace in their work and enhance prevention of both conflict and human rights violations across all pillars of the United Nations (UN). The findings from desk research and joint activities, key developments, opportunities, and challenges of this multiyear project are reflected in this report

in three parts: first, the report outlines how key features of special procedures enhance their contribution to sustaining peace, including peacebuilding; next is outlined their thematic contributions to sustaining peace, including through the special procedure mandates that engage with the joint project; and finally, the report suggests areas for strengthening collaboration and coherence, particularly through effective engagement with and from special procedures to better sustain peace.

This work and the focus on special procedures builds on previous joint projects and ensuing reports on human rights and sustaining peace.² The focus on special procedures was also a response to the Secretary-General's (SG) call to the peace and security, and development pillars to make better

¹ Guterres, Antonio. "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace." United Nations: July 2023, p.19.

² Cahill-Ripley, A. and D. Hendrick. "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Sustaining Peace: An Introduction." Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, QUNO and Lancaster University, March 2018; Foster, F. and D. Hendrick. "Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace Project Report: Exploring the Universal Periodic Review." QUNO, April 2018. ; Foster, F. "Sustaining Peace: A report on how human rights can help - 2016-2020 Retrospective." QUNO with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2021.

use of all the human rights mechanisms, including special procedures.³ This builds on similar calls in the SG's reports on sustaining peace,⁴ including his prevention prerogative in the 'Call to Action on Human Rights'⁵ and in 'Our Common Agenda',⁶ as well as in 'A New Agenda for Peace'.⁷ The report's focus also follows up on previous reports of independent experts on the contribution of the HRC to the prevention of human rights violations,⁸ the study on the contribution of the special procedures

in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses,⁹ and several HRC and General Assembly (GA) reports by special procedures that focus on the prevention and peacebuilding aspects of their mandates. The report is published in the lead-up to 2024 Summit of the Future, when the UN system is prioritizing prevention as illustrated in the policy brief on 'A New Agenda for Peace'.¹⁰

Joint project outline

The joint project on special procedures had several components running in parallel with, at its centre, direct engagement with and support to thematic mandate-holders of special procedures.

Working within selected thematic mandates:

Selected mandate-holders¹¹ represented different stages of interest, understanding and previous experiences regarding sustaining peace as a conceptual framework, and different peacebuilding networks in the context of their thematic work, country visits or engagement with stakeholders in New York. The joint project supported them to frame human rights challenges through a sustaining peace lens, provided human rights-based responses to peacebuilding challenges, and articulated recommendations with short, medium, and long-term goals and corresponding milestones. To achieve this, the project also facilitated engagement with local and international peacebuilding organizations and practitioners.

Engaging with the Peacebuilding Architecture:

The joint project helped enhance synergies and information exchange between special procedures and peacebuilding practitioners, including the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, and peace and security stakeholders, including Member States of the

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and UN Secretariat staff working on peacebuilding issues, including DPPA/PBSO. This took the form of joint activities with the Coordination Committee of special procedures in New York, the organization of joint informal conversations or public events, and collaborative events during Geneva Peace Week. The project also facilitated dedicated experiences sharing sessions on sustaining peace during the Annual Meeting of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Chairs of Working Groups.

Engaging in policy and awareness-raising around the concept of sustaining peace through special procedures and beyond:

The joint project contributed to a number of processes to bridge human rights and peacebuilding, including: ensuring that the Geneva Peace Week included human rights focus areas in its programme; working towards having more human rights organizations on the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform Advisory Board; speaking on the joint work during OSLO+2 – The Contribution of Human Rights and Development Cooperation to Prevention;¹² continuing engagement with the Caucus on Prevention and Human Rights in Geneva and New York; and facilitating a human rights session during Geneva-based consultations on 'A New Agenda for Peace'.¹³

³ Also including commitment from States in the twin resolutions on sustaining peace (2016, 2018, 2020) and pursuant SG's reports (2018, 2020); inputs to the Peacebuilding Architecture Review 2020 process that focused on human rights; the 'prevention' HRC resolutions (2018, 2020) and pursuant OHCHR reports.

⁴ Which went beyond the specific reference to the UPR in the twin resolutions and extended the call to the peace and security and development pillars to make better use of all the human rights mechanisms, including special procedures and treaty bodies - United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. "Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: report of the Secretary-General." GA 72nd Sess., January 18, 2018, [A/72/707-SC. 73rd yr., 18 January 2018, S/2018/43](#).

⁵ Guterres, Antonio. "The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights." United Nations: 2020.

⁶ Guterres, Antonio. "Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General." United Nations: 2021.

⁷ Guterres, Antonio. "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace." United Nations: July 2023.

⁸ Human Rights Council (HRC). "Overview of Consultations on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations – Report of the rapporteurs." 43rd Sess., January 14, 2020, [A/HRC/43/37](#).

⁹ HRC. "Study on the contribution of the special procedures in assisting States and other stakeholders in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses." 48th Sess., September 13 – October 1, 2021, [A/HRC/48/21](#).

¹⁰ Guterres, Antonio. "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace." United Nations: July 2023.

¹¹ See chapter two on 'Mandates' thematic focus to sustain peace' to explore the mandates that collaborated closely with the project.

¹² Universal Rights Group. "OSLO+2 – The contribution of human rights and development cooperation to prevention." Montreux: 2022.

¹³ Guterres, Antonio. "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace." United Nations: July 2023.

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Special procedures: multifaceted relevance to sustaining peace

Following a brief overview, the next sections will explore how the various activities of special procedures contribute to sustaining peace.

Overview

The special procedures of the HRC are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. They report annually to the HRC and the overall majority also report annually to the GA. They are often characterized as the eyes and ears of the HRC, receiving information from people all around the world. To date, there are 46 thematic and 14 country mandates.

With the support of OHCHR, special procedures:

- undertake country visits;
- act on individual cases of alleged violations and concerns of a broader, structural nature by sending communications to States and others;
- conduct thematic research and studies, and convene expert consultations, contributing to the development of international human rights standards; and
- engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and provide advice for technical cooperation.

In addition to the work of individual mandates, special procedures have increasingly sought to act jointly or in a coordinated way in areas of common concern, thereby enhancing their impact and engagement with various stakeholders, in particular within the three pillars of the UN. The number of joint initiatives has also grown and many mandate-holders interact collectively with various bodies and stakeholders, including within the UN, and contribute to important UN processes and initia-

tives, including in relation to prevention, peace and security, or development,¹⁴ even if some resistances persist.

Special procedures have the ability to detect early warning signs of human rights violations and abuses, and respond promptly, as documented in recent reports.¹⁵ Their preventive potential first and foremost lies in their position as **independent, neutral and objective experts within the UN system**. This enables them to inquire about particular situations proactively; to draw the attention of the international community to emerging crises involving human rights violations in a direct and timely manner; and to recommend early action to mitigate risks of escalation, violence and conflict. Through their monitoring and investigative activities that are not bound by fixed review cycles, they can identify emerging patterns of abuse, address root causes holistically, and alert the international community, governments, and relevant stakeholders to potential risks. Thematic special procedures are able to address concerns in any country, and their reach does not depend on treaty ratification, thus they are able to observe and respond quickly to root causes of conflict. The attention of country mandates is confined to the prescribed country, but they are able to address a broad range of issues in the country, and act at any time.

In comparison to other human rights mechanisms,¹⁶ special procedures have a variety of tools and activities that contribute to their added value. At the heart of their added value is their proximity with *all* stakeholders. Such contact enables them to receive daily information relevant for their respective mandates as well as ‘warnings’ from rights

¹⁴ HRC. “Activities of special rapporteurs, independent experts and working groups of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council undertaken in 2022, including updated information on special procedures and information on the twenty-eight annual meeting of special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairs of working groups – Report of the Secretariat.” 52nd Sess., March 22, 2023, [A/HRC/52/70](#) & “Facts and figures with regard to the special procedures in 2022 – Addendum 1.” [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#). For further information see OHCHR. “[Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council](#).”

¹⁵ HRC. “Overview of consultations on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations – Report of the rapporteurs.” 43rd Sess., January 14, 2020, [A/HRC/43/37](#); HRC. “Study on the contribution of the special procedures in assisting States and other stakeholders in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses – Report of the OHCHR.” 48th Sess., October 13, 2021, [A/HRC/48/21](#), p.4.

¹⁶ It should be noted, that engagement with and implementation of the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms should be approached holistically and in a coherent manner. Their respective mandates, reach, analyses, as well as their recommendations—identifying root causes and drivers of crisis; proposing responses to mitigate risks and prevent the lapse or relapse to conflict; and providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration across sectors at the international and national levels—are [complementary and mutually-reinforcing](#).

holders and stakeholders from all around the world including during their country visits. This arguably makes special procedures the most accessible and inclusive human rights mechanism.

During **country visits**, special procedures mandate-holders assess and address human rights situations on the ground. These visits provide an opportunity to interact directly with individuals, communities and key stakeholders on the front line of protection. Within the framework established by the GA and the UN Charter, mandate-holders engage with a range of international, regional, and national stakeholders, as well as with UN representatives, State officials, and civil society from a range of disciplines. They also regularly engage with non-traditional stakeholders, including non-State actors such as businesses. These conversations can result in preventing human rights violations or abuses before they escalate by raising awareness and encouraging positive reforms. Their access to people and territories that frequently are not accessible to others therefore constitutes a great opportunity in particular in post-conflict, conflict or crisis situations.

Furthermore, mandate-holders' messaging can take the shape **of public statements, urgent appeals and communications, and formal reports**. These can guide governments in adopting preventive measures and policies, including legal and institutional reforms, to ensure compliance with human rights standards to help prevent violations from occurring or recurring. Their provision of technical expert advice to States and other stakeholders, including other UN bodies, on how to implement their human rights obligations also has an important preventive role. In addition to sounding the alarm, mandate-holders can also propose concrete and innovative solutions to overcome challenges and rebuild societies after a crisis based on the implementation of international standards and recommendations for technical assistance to States.¹⁷ In addition, special procedures mandate-holders can also acknowledge and commend positive actions by governments and other entities implementing

positive human rights policies. Such statements can encourage those entities to continue and expand their efforts in this direction, contribute to constructive relations and cooperation by acknowledging and reinforcing the positive steps taken, help build trust and confidence among stakeholders or even offer inspiration for other entities to emulate, leading to the spread of best practices.

With 60 mandates comprising the special procedures system, they **cover the whole spectrum of human rights**, forming a rich network of expertise. Such coverage is critical as the drivers of destructive conflict and violence often lie in 'a complex of interacting factors, which may be political, economic, social and/or environmental'.¹⁸ For example, combinations of systematic discrimination and inequalities, such as in access to education or in the context of competition over scarce resources such as water, 'may lead to, or exacerbate, social or political tensions leading to destructive conflict or violent confrontation, which in turn perpetuates cycles of deprivation and exclusion.'¹⁹ Any mandate – thematic or country-specific – can also exercise their prevention role through reports focusing on conflict, social cohesion, remnants of war, etc.

Special procedures' activities: how they help sustain peace

Country visits – advocacy, access, and relationship building

The capacity to reach out directly at the country level and to bring diverse and far-reaching perspectives to the forefront is one of the main added values of the special procedures, enabling them to identify and share matters of concern in a timely manner. Their timeliness helps **bridge information flows between country level engagement and what can feel like very remote policy spaces in regional or multilateral UN fora**.

Mandate-holders have access to rights holders, communities and territories that frequently are not

¹⁷ HRC. "Study on the contribution of the special procedures..." 48th Sess., 2021, [A/HRC/48/21](#), p.4.

¹⁸ Cahill-Ripley, A. and D. Hendrick. "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Sustaining Peace: An Introduction," p.21; see also OHCHR. ["Early Warning and Economic, social and cultural rights."](#) OHCHR, 2016.

¹⁹ HRC. "Study on the contribution of the special procedures..." 48th Sess., 2021, [A/HRC/48/21](#), p.4.

accessible to other human rights mechanisms, and their visits to countries in post-conflict, conflict affected, or crisis situations offer a **unique opportunity to hear directly from rights holders and survivors**. They also meet with representatives of national authorities, including judiciary members and parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, United Nations programmes and funds, and other intergovernmental agencies. This proximity to a **diverse range of stakeholders** and the approach of the special procedures system has also made it possible for mandate-holders to engage with non-traditional stakeholders, including non-State actors such as armed groups or businesses operating in high-risk environments. Such reach is one of the assets of the special procedures mechanism that should particularly be preserved as engaging with non-traditional stakeholders contributes to more inclusive strategies to sustain peace.

Importantly, **country visits are carried out upon invitation with the relevant States**, giving mandate-holders the opportunity to build trust with said States ahead of the visit. In turn this can help create space to address sensitive and critical human rights issues with relevant governmental stakeholders. Mandate-holders carry out country visits to assess the situation of human rights at the national level: at the request of a mandate-holder, the gov-

ernment will send an invitation for a fact-finding mission. Two-thirds of the countries have issued standing invitations, which means that they are, in principle, prepared to receive a visit from any mandate-holder.²⁰

Special procedures can also conduct promotional, academic or advisory visits. During such visits, no public statements or official reports are made, but these are important avenues for special procedures to connect with civil society and other actors, and to follow up on issues already raised with States. Such visits can be important for early warning and prevention.

In April 2022, following his country visit to Brazil the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association published preliminary observations in which he stated his alarm at recently adopted legislation that facilitates access to guns and ammunition.²¹ He emphasized that the evidence shows that more guns lead to more violence, instead of preventing it – a concern echoed by those he met during his visit, notably in light of upcoming election processes. Many raised their concerns regarding the possible violent interference of armed groups or individuals to prevent protests.



Clément Nyaletsossi Voule in Brazil (Free Assembly and Association)

²⁰ OHCHR. [“Country and other visits. Special procedures.”](#)

²¹ Houdmont, Virginie. [“Brazil country visit – preliminary observations by Special Rapporteur Voule.”](#) Free Assembly and Association, April 11, 2022.

Arms transfers, their acquisition by civilians, and their presence within communities are highly relevant concerns to the principles and rights recognized in international human rights law and international humanitarian law – including the right to life, right to liberty, and right to security amongst many others, and is also included in prerogative under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. At the time of writing, the Universal Human Rights Index and the search term ‘arms’ returned 51 recommendations or observations among 14 mandates.

Prior to the 2022 elections in Kenya, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association conducted an academic visit and discussed the preparations for the elections, with the view of preventing repetition of possible violations related to freedom of assembly.

Since he took office, the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan visited the country several times and engaged with the de facto authorities. During its visit to Cyprus, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances held a meeting with the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community.²²

In 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, undertook a technical visit to the United States and the detention facility at the U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, during which the Special Rapporteur met with detainees at the Guantánamo Bay and former detainees.²³

Communications – early warning and prevention pathways

Communications by special procedures in the form of public allegation letters, urgent appeals, or other letters, can provide timely insight into patterns and the nature and scale of human rights violations, and help to raise concerns at an early stage. These are timely ways to act on a fast-evolving situation or to address findings from a country visit that cannot wait the (often longer) time lag between the visit and presentation of the report at the HRC.

It is important to recognize that the preventive impact of communications may not always be immediate or guaranteed but depends on various factors, including the response of the government, the level of cooperation from relevant stakeholders, and the broader political and social context. However, the ongoing use of communications by special procedure mandate-holders remains an essential tool in conflict prevention. Communications can put an end to ongoing human rights violations and deter perpetrators from committing such violations, thereby contributing to preventing future harm. In particularly sensitive cases, communications can provide a useful channel to address specific situations of concerns.

In January 2018, following reports of evictions of the Sengwer community in Kenya to develop European Union (EU)-funded conservation and climate change projects, several actions were taken, including a communication by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples regarding the EU Water Towers Protection and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme. The joint pressure by the Special Rapporteur and civil society led to the suspension of the projects, thereby preventing the forced eviction of members of the Sengwer indigenous community from their ancestral lands and reducing social tensions.²⁴

²² HRC. “Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on its visit to Cyprus.” 51st Sess., 2022, [A/HRC/51/31/Add.1](#).

²³ OHCHR. “[U.S. and Guantanamo Detention Facility](#).” OHCHR, 2023.

²⁴ OHCHR. “[Indigenous rights must be respected during Kenya climate change project, say UN experts](#).” Press Release, January 15, 2018.

Ongoing engagement with stakeholders across silos

In this section we focus on special procedures' engagement with UN Country Teams, States, and the UN Secretariat, programmes and funds. Their ability to engage directly with these stakeholders and across the UN's pillars both in country and in Headquarters contributes to overcoming the fragmentation of the UN which all too often inhibits effective work on sustaining peace.

In line with HRC resolution 42/6,²⁵ special procedures have increased their engagement with other UN entities and representatives, including the UN Country Teams, as well as with several inter-governmental bodies. They have done so individually, but also as a system, with the Coordination Committee of special procedures promoting the system of special procedures throughout the UN. The diversity of their expertise and engagement has allowed them to interact in multiple ways with other parts of the UN such as with the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Architecture, and the UN Country Teams, etc.

UN Country Teams

The reform of the UN development system constitutes an opportunity for even greater engagement of special procedures and other human rights mechanisms with UN Country Teams and greater integration of human rights mechanisms' recommendations in UN's common analyses and programming at the national level. Furthermore, with their strengthened role on human rights and in implementing the SG's 'Call to Action' and 'Our Common Agenda', Resident Coordinators are now critical interlocutors at the country level. By working together, special procedure mandate-holders and Resident Coordinators can leverage their respective expertise and mandates to enhance the UN's response to human rights challenges in country. Recommendations from the special procedures system continue to be used by OHCHR field presences and UN Country Teams

– with OHCHR playing a pivotal role in summarizing, prioritizing, and clustering the recommendations of the HRC's mechanisms, so that they are more accessible to the rest of the UN system including the UN Country Teams and better integrated in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. These are critical collaborative developments that contribute to overcoming the silos mentality that has been recognized to undermine the 'efforts to build and sustain peaceful societies and to respond early and effectively to conflicts and crises'.²⁶

As an example of good practice, the UN in Jordan developed a background paper²⁷ on the UN human rights mechanisms that explains what the human rights architecture, the Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and the special procedures look like. Hyperlinks are provided to relevant information, be it Jordan's State reports to these bodies, their findings, dates for upcoming reviews by these mechanisms as well as other resources.

Member States and governments

Direct, early, and continued engagement with States is an asset of special procedures. Engagement ahead of and during country visits was mentioned earlier, but that is often the continuation of a longer process in which mandate-holders can leverage their capital and their independence skilfully such as by balancing public criticism or advocacy and informal negotiations to follow up on the implementation of their assessments and recommendations. Similarly, mandate-holders have engaged with Member States at the multilateral level to ensure that human rights-based approaches are also mainstreamed into peace and security discussions – notably with the Caucus on Human Rights and Prevention in both New York and Geneva.

²⁵ HRC. "The role of prevention in the promotion and protection of human rights." 42nd Sess., October 3, 2019, [A/HRC/RES/42/6](#).

²⁶ United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. "Peacebuilding and sustaining peace – Report of the Secretary-General." GA 72nd Sess., January 18, 2018, [A/72/707-SC](#). 73rd yr., 18 January 2018, [S/2018/43](#). Paras.7, 38, 45, 46 and Section II. Operational and policy coherence to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

²⁷ United Nations Jordan. "[United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms: Jordan's Engagement](#)." OHCHR, 2023.

While their primary role is to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective, their social capital and independence have also been instrumental in facilitating dialogue between states and other stakeholders.

In 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples engaged directly with governments, particularly during academic visits,²⁸ to provide advice on international law and to offer and to facilitate mediation efforts between governments and indigenous peoples. These efforts included the Rapporteur's time in Ecuador in August, where he participated in a dialogue organized by the Episcopal Conference between the Ecuadorian government and indigenous peoples represented by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.



Peace and security actors in the UN Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes

Special procedures have engaged with UN entities working on peace and security, for instance through the exchange of information for country visits and exchange of advice on country situations or thematic areas. Such information exchanges have also been in the context of **programmatic responses supported by the Peacebuilding Fund** at the request of Member States, for instance. In 2018 and 2019, **OHCHR and DPPA/PBSO organized working sessions** with the special procedures on prevention, early warning, and implementation of recommendations, and discussed entry points and possible areas of collaboration going forward.

A similar working session was not possible in 2020 due to the global pandemic. Engagement on specific mandates continued under the auspices of the OHCHR-PBSO joint workplan 2021-2022 and throughout 2023.

Progress in raising awareness and improving the work of special procedures mandate-holders on prevention and peacebuilding was made through active participation in various cross-Atlantic meetings or the inclusion of special procedure mandate-holders in relevant opportunities in New York. For instance, a meeting focusing on the role of special procedures in relation to prevention and to sustaining peace was organized by OHCHR and the Coordination Committee with PBSO and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland in 2022. This collaboration between OHCHR and PBSO also helped disseminate relevant reports and written inputs to the peacebuilding community in New York.

DPPA/PBSO periodically organizes informal brown bag discussions with guest speakers and has on several occasions invited special procedures mandate-holders to support staff's learning on human rights issues and exposure to new and diverse ranges of thematically focused stakeholders. Similarly, by engaging with UN peacebuilding actors, special procedures mandate-holders may enhance the integration of peacebuilding perspectives into their human rights work. This complementarity is useful to provide critical insights into the root causes of conflicts, build national capacities and contribute to preventive action. In addition to those highlighted later in this report (on business and human rights, counter-terrorism and sexual orientation and gender identity), DPPA/PBSO has held discussions with mandate-holders on incorporating a peacebuilding perspective in relation to: transitional justice processes; access to water and sanitation; freedom of association and assembly; trafficking in persons; the rights of internally displaced persons; and the rights of persons with disabilities. These small group discussions and the brown bag format has proven to be a fruitful, candid, and informal way to share and discuss cross-cutting human rights and peacebuilding developments, analyses and reports.

²⁸ "The Indigenous World 2023: UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." IWGIA, March 30, 2023.

There has also been mutual benefit in discussions around country contexts, in particular where mandate-holders have provided reflections in advance and following country visits and sought input from DPPA regional departments.

Following-up its project on business, human rights, and conflict affected regions,²⁹ the Working Group on Business and Human Rights collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) **to develop a toolkit for companies, governments and international entities engaging with businesses and focused on the role of businesses in conflict prevention and peacebuilding**, to develop a road map for United Nations agencies.

While engagement with the Security Council remains a challenge, some mandate-holders have participated in **Security Council** Arria-formula meetings, providing critical human rights-based inputs to peace and security concerns. These are not formal meetings of the Security Council but are a way for Security Council members to hear views of individuals, organizations or institutions on matters within the competence of the Security Council, at the initiative of a member or members of the Security Council. Others have participated in more informal meetings and formal briefings, supporting the fostering of human rights-based responses to peacebuilding challenges. Mandate-holders have also engaged with the Security Council via the annual letter sent by the Chair of the Coordination Committee to the Security Council as a means of sharing information about the work of the special procedures, as relevant to the work of the Security Council in terms of country and thematic issues.

While there have been some attempts to engage with multiple UN bodies in New York, the engagement with the PBC remains marginal. The PBC primarily focuses on conflict affected countries and it

recognizes the critical role that human rights play in sustaining peace. Mandate-holders can contribute to the PBC's conflict analysis by providing human rights assessments and early warning information, helping therefore the PBC in understanding the root causes of conflict.

It is worth noting here again, that only one mandate has the specific prerogative to engage with New York-based peace and security bodies. Indeed the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism is a member of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact and works closely with all members, particularly its secretariat, the UN Office of Counterterrorism and the Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate, contributing policy briefs, position papers, quarterly briefings, and technical guidance to over 40 UN members of this Compact every year.

In 2020, the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights participated in a virtual Arria-formula meeting on 'End unilateral coercive measures now', and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus participated in a virtual Arria-formula meeting³⁰ on the deterioration of the human rights situation during and after the presidential election in Belarus. In 2021, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues participated in a virtual Arria-formula meeting³¹ on the situation of national minorities and the glorification of Nazism in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. The Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances participated in the Security Council's monthly briefing on the Syrian Arab Republic³² set against the backdrop of the tenth anniversary of the conflict.

²⁹ OHCHR. "The business, human rights and conflict-affected regions project." OHCHR, 2021.

³⁰ "Statement of Mrs Anais Marin, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, at the Arria Formula meeting at UN Security Council." September 4, 2020.

³¹ "Arria-Formula Meeting on the situation with national minorities and glorification of Nazism in Baltic and Black Sea regions." UN Web TV, December 22, 2021.

³² "Bernard Duhaime (Working Group on Enforced Disappearances) on the situation in the Middle East (Syria) - Security Council VTC Briefing." UN Web TV, March 15, 2021.

In 2022, numerous mandates engaged in Arria-formula meetings including: the Special Rapporteur on the right to food – on conflict and hunger; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression – on the protection of journalists; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran – on the ongoing protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism participated in a special meeting held by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in Delhi, India, focused on new and emerging technologies.

and development pillars. At the Annual Meeting of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Chairs of Working Groups, a joint declaration was adopted, ‘underscor[ing] the critical role of human rights as a tool for transformative change that is urgently needed to meet all the [Sustainable Development] goals by 2030’.³³

Engagement with **regional bodies** is not always systematic. One such example is the adoption, in 2012 in Addis Ababa, of a roadmap for increased cooperation between the special procedures and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. The special procedures system has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.

Several mandate-holders have participated in the meetings of the **high-level political forum** on sustainable development, including the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, the Special Rapporteur on education and the Special Rapporteur on poverty, constituting a further bridge between the UN’s human rights

The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has launched in 2023 a Framework for Joint Action with all regional human rights mechanisms to strengthen the collaboration for the realization of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and in particular countering the global restriction of civic space.



Flags in front of the UN Office at Geneva (Unsplash)

³³ “Joint Declaration on SDG Summit adopted by the 29th Annual Meeting of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, and Chairpersons of the Working Groups of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.” Geneva, June 16, 2023.

Mandates' thematic focus to sustain peace

This section first outlines the early thinking around special procedures, prevention, and sustaining peace. This section later provides an overview of special procedures mandates that collaborated with the joint project from 2021 to 2023 – including joint piloted activities and their ensuing reports' key messages. These mandate-holders represent different stages of interest, understanding and previous experiences regarding sustaining peace as a conceptual framework, and different peacebuilding networks in the context of their thematic work, country visits or engagement with stakeholders in New York. The project's engagement with and support to them varied accordingly. Not all activities undertaken by the joint project have been listed here.

Prevention as the starting point

To date, 19 of the 60 special procedure mandates already include a specific dimension on prevention.³⁴ However, the mandates' wording focuses on prevention of and accountability for human rights violations in their own right, rather than extrapolating that to the contribution to sustaining peace writ large. Interestingly, only one special procedures mandate has an explicit mandate to work in close coordination with the UN's peace and security architecture.³⁵

While all special procedures mandates are relevant to preventing human rights violations, saying that

everything special procedures do also contributes to the prevention of violence or conflict fails to acknowledge shifts needed to meaningfully address the complexity of violent conflict through human rights-based responses and to strategically engage in UN-wide efforts to 'prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of crisis and conflict and its aftermath'.³⁶ The need for a more strategic, systematic and intentional engagement with peace and security related topics, has led to an increasing number of mandate-holders exploring their contributions to sustaining peace through thematically focused projects and reports.

In 2017, in the light of the ongoing reform initiatives of the UN to place prevention at the centre of the organization's work, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, proposed the development of a substantive, comprehensive framework approach to prevention. Subsequently, the Rapporteur collaborated with the Special Advisor on the prevention of genocide to produce a 'Joint study on the contribution of transitional justice to the prevention of gross violations and abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and their recurrence'.³⁷ The collaboration also built on the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes – a tool to guide integrated analysis and assessment of the risk of atrocity crimes worldwide (genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes).³⁸

³⁴ Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples; Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights; Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

³⁵ The counter-terrorism mandate includes the mandate to coordinate with the UN Security Council and its Counter-Terrorism Committee and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, along with all members of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, including entities such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs, and more.

³⁶ United Nations General Assembly. "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 April 2016." 70th Sess., May 12, 2016, [A/RES/70/262](#); United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 2282 (2016)." [S/RES/2282](#), 2016.

³⁷ United Nations General Assembly. "Joint study on the contribution of transitional justice to the prevention of gross violations and abuses of human rights and serious gross violations and abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and their recurrence." 37th Sess., February 26, 2018 – March 23, 2018, [A/HRC/37/65](#).

Additionally, HRC resolution 42/6 mandated a study by the OHCHR on the contribution of the special procedures in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses in 2019,³⁹ while HRC resolution 45/31 urged all HRC mechanisms to ‘integrate prevention into their work and, where appropriate, into their reporting in accordance with their respective mandates’ in 2020.⁴⁰

These developments with regards to prevention feed into the broader sustaining peace impetus brought on since the twin resolutions on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture by the GA (70/262) and the Security Council (2282) of 2016.⁴¹ They are significant for their contributions to the concept of prevention in the context of peace, security, and development. Both resolutions emphasize the importance of prevention as a fundamental principle in maintaining international peace and security and promote a comprehensive approach to prevention, recognizing that peace, security, development, and human rights are interconnected. In their operative paragraph 11, the twin resolutions particularly ‘encourage[...] United Nations Member States participating in the universal periodic review process of the HRC to consider the human rights dimensions of peacebuilding, as appropriate’.⁴² Subsequently, the SG acknowledged that ‘the collective work of the United Nations system to advance human rights should help to identify the root causes of and responses to conflict’ and called for ‘the peace and security and development pillars to make better use of the existing human rights mechanisms, such as special procedures, the treaty bodies and the universal periodic review, and their recommendations in support of Member States’⁴³ to expand the focus from the UPR to all mechanisms, and from prevention to sustaining peace writ large.

Prevention framework

In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence advanced ideas of how to operationalize prevention through a framework approach⁴⁴ that aspires to contribute to ‘breaking existing silos of knowledge and expertise, which hamper effective preventive work, and will help to widen the scope and to ‘upstream’ prevention in a systematic and orderly way [...] to shed light on important links between prevention, human rights and sustaining peace’.⁴⁵ Rather than a one size fits all blueprint, the mandate argues for a framework approach to prevention that ‘presents a structure of interrelated elements’ that decision-makers can adapt and contextualize to create their own strategy fit for a particular situation. While not putting only special procedures at the center of that framework, and rightly so, the mandate outlines important strategies to leverage human rights mechanisms, including special procedures towards sustained peace.⁴⁶

Examples of thematic reports on sustaining peace: transitional justice, protest, counterterrorism, LGBT+ and business

Thematic reports raise awareness of the human rights impact of emerging issues. Such awareness is key to crafting an effective prevention strategy. An increasing number of mandates have addressed conflict, peace, and other topics relevant to sustaining peace, including looking at arms related risks to human rights, the SDG16 and other, broader, thematic foci for their reports. This has helped and continues to help mandates to reflect on their specific mandate’s relation to issues such as conflict or

³⁸ United Nations General Assembly. “Letter dated 22 January 2016 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council.” 70th Sess., January 22, 2016, [A/70/741-S/2016/71](#).

³⁹ HRC. “Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 26 September 2019.” 42nd Sess., September 9-27, 2019, [A/HRC/RES/42/6](#).

⁴⁰ HRC. “Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 October 2020.” 45th Sess., September 14 – October 7, 2020, [A/HRC/RES/45/31](#).

⁴¹ United Nations General Assembly. “Resolution adopted...” 70th Sess., 2016, [A/RES/70/262](#); United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 2282 (2016).” 2016, [S/RES/2282](#).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace...” GA 72nd Sess., January 18, 2018, [A/72/707-SC](#). 73rd yr., 18 January 2018, [S/2018/43](#), pg. 6.

⁴⁴ United Nations General Assembly. “Promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.” 72nd Sess., October 12, 2017, [A/72/523](#).

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.3.

⁴⁶ United Nations General Assembly. “Promotion of truth...” 72nd Sess., 2017, [A/72/523](#).

peacebuilding and has paved the way for more effective engagement with peace and security actors.

Inclusion and transitional justice

Ahead of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence's report on 'The Roles and Responsibilities of non-State Actors in Transitional Justice Processes'⁴⁷ we supported the mandate in identifying and engaging with key peacebuilding stakeholders working at the intersection of corporate accountability and transitional justice, as well as those engaging with non-State armed actors. The Special Rapporteur subsequently stressed in the report that 'transitional justice processes must address corporate responsibility for serious human rights abuses'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in assessing businesses' direct and indirect responsibilities for these abuses, truth commissions should make recommendations to businesses to remedy the harm inflicted. Similarly, transitional justice processes must ensure the proper investigation of the lines of accountability between State and non-State actors. Specifically reflecting on inputs from the aforementioned stakeholders, the report insists that '[N]on-State armed groups and ex-combatants have a legal, political and moral duty to engage with truth-seeking processes concerning their involvement in past violations of humanitarian and human rights law' and their commitment to reparations should be part of any negotiated peace agreement.⁴⁹



QUNO subsequently also participated in consultations ahead of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence's report on 'Sustainable Development Goals and transitional justice: leaving no victim behind'.⁵⁰ Additional stakeholders from the peacebuilding community who work on justice and peace were recommended to attend those consultations. Reflecting those consultations, the report highlights that **transitional justice alone cannot bring about change**; other interventions in the areas of development and peacebuilding are needed to complement and continue the work on the ground. **The SDGs framework provides an important process in this respect, where linkages between justice, development and security are made and where policies for the years to come are set.** The report also states that in 'order to solidly anchor transitional justice in this framework, not just rhetorically but also operationally, it is important to aim to break the cycles of violence'.⁵¹

Other special procedures mandate-holders have also been actively involved in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which strives, through 17 cross-cutting SDGs, to place people at its centre and leave no one behind. Several special procedures mandate-holders have advocated for including human rights in the SDGs from their inception. In addition, either as requested by several HRC resolutions or on their own initiative, many mandate-holders have used their thematic reports, country visit reports, and other associated activities to promote and assist States as well as other stakeholders with implementing the 2030 Agenda using a human rights-based approach. Special procedures have a dedicated resource that lists their collective work on SDG 16.⁵² The Universal Human Rights Index also has a dedicated search page on SDGs.⁵³

⁴⁷ HRC. "Role and responsibilities of non-State actors in transitional justice processes: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli." 51st Sess., July 12, 2022, [A/HRC/51/34](#).

⁴⁸ HRC. "Role and responsibilities of non-State actors in transitional justice processes." [A/HRC/51/34](#), p.19.

⁴⁹ HRC. "Role and responsibilities of non-State actors in transitional justice processes." [A/HRC/51/34](#), pp.19-20.

⁵⁰ UNGA. "Sustainable Development Goals and transitional justice: leaving no victim behind – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli." 77th Sess., July 14, 2022, [A/77/162](#).

⁵¹ Ibid, p.20.

⁵² OHCHR. "[SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.](#)" OHCHR.

⁵³ OHCHR. "[SDG's.](#)" OHCHR.



Clément Nyaletsossi Voule (Sri Lanka Brief)

Protection of human rights in the context of protests in crisis situations

Ahead of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association's report on 'The protection of human rights in the context of protests in crisis situations',⁵⁴ the joint project ensured that peacebuilding actors and experiences were included in regional consultations in Mexico in March 2022 and expert consultations in Geneva in April 2022. Their inclusion notably helped to better clarify the role of the fundamental right to freedom of peaceful assembly as being often the only **channel of dialogue** between people and State or de facto authorities in crisis context while also providing an **inclusive way** for those marginalized to speak out and raise their grievances and calls for seeking solutions for a crisis. Participants highlighted that protecting this procedural or access right also allowed underrepresented viewpoints and the participation of otherwise excluded groups to be heard.

These features of protest were critical to helping the Rapporteur change the narrative surrounding protest: shifting from seeing protest as a deepening of a crisis and something that needs to be repressed, to a process that provides a vital avenue for dialogue to resolve a crisis and therefore a process to be upheld. The report itself emphasizes how the right to peaceful assembly, and, in particular, instances of peaceful protest, are 'vital

to the life of healthy societies' and 'represents an important means to facilitate dialogue and prevent further destructive conflict'.⁵⁵ Importantly, the Special Rapporteur called on States to shift their approach to peaceful protest, and to 'halt hostile rhetoric that stigmatizes peaceful protests, such as portraying them as destabilizing and as a threat',⁵⁶ and to ensure they facilitate 'a dialogue with protesters and inclusive processes to ensure meaningful participation of all groups in society when seeking solutions for resolving a crisis'.⁵⁷

The report also includes an important section on **protests taking place in situations of international and non-international armed conflicts, and in contexts of military occupation**, highlighting that 'any use of force in such contexts must strictly be in compliance with international human rights standards, including the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials'.⁵⁸ The use of unnecessary or excessive force, including lethal force, against peaceful protesters may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. The Special Rapporteur also specifically **called on the UN's peace and security pillar**, in cooperation with relevant entities within and outside the UN system, to 'develop specific guidance for peacekeepers, mediators and peacebuilders to ensure that peaceful protests are facilitated and an enabling environment is fostered, including in transitional, armed conflict, military occupation and post-conflict environments'.⁵⁹

The joint project co-organized a follow-up workshop with the **rapporteur during Geneva Peace Week** in November 2022 on 'Intersectional Approaches to Prevention: Protecting the Right to Protest in Conflict and Crisis'. The workshop's aim was to start an exchange of ideas between practitioners from the peacebuilding and human rights community, to gather best practices and recommendations to strengthen protection of peaceful assemblies in contexts affected by armed conflict. It also sought to create new collaborations and part-

⁵⁴ HRC. "Protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests during crisis situations – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule." 50th Sess., May 16, 2022, [A/HRC/50/42](#).

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.5.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.16.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.8.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.21.

nerships among practitioners across the UN pillars to enhance prevention of conflicts, peacebuilding, and transitional justice efforts through strengthening the protection of the right to freedom of assembly as a key enabling right for protecting all other human rights. The workshop was part of a series of consultations mandated by the HRC to develop 'specific technical and practical tools based on international standards and best practices to assist law enforcement officials in promoting and protecting human rights in the context of peaceful protests'.⁶⁰

These networks and ensuing substantive contributions from peace practitioners also contributed to the report of the Special Rapporteur on 'The importance of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in advancing sustainable peace and democratic transitions'.

The joint project also supported the mandate with additional peacebuilding networks and contact for country visits, including Brazil and Niger.



Fionnuala Ní Aoláin (Abdulla Yashau/Dhauru)

The impact of counterterrorism on peacemaking, peacebuilding, sustaining peace, conflict prevention and resolution

As part of the ongoing efforts to include peacebuilding actors into special procedures work, **QUNO's Peace & Disarmament Representative and the Executive Director of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform participated in consultations**

ahead of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism's report on 'The impact of counter-terrorism on peacemaking, peacebuilding, sustaining peace, conflict prevention and resolution'.⁶¹ Their inputs included warning about how counter-terrorism measures have undermined the ability of peace actors to facilitate inclusive dialogue processes, as these all too often require them to engage with designated groups. If excluded, processes risk being defunct at best, and at worst excluding belligerents may also put communities and staff at risk of reprisals.

In recognizing the interlinkages and essential functions of human rights based approaches to peacebuilding, the report formulates critical words of warning to the peace and security architecture that centre on the Rapporteur's central **concerns about the 'delinking of core peace and security functions of counter-terrorism within the United Nations** from efforts to otherwise move towards a 'single, integrated' peace and security pillar'.⁶² She critically 'observes a level of growth and practice without adequate human rights due diligence, conflict and peace analysis, including gender sensitivity analysis controls or institutionalized constraint of other peace and security mandates'.⁶³ The Special Rapporteur also urged '**caution in the nascent practice of United Nations counter-terrorism entities mobilizing the language of peacebuilding activities in their activities**'.⁶⁴

For example, she notes several positive practices of UN entities working in peacebuilding, in particular on gender markers, the adoption of conflict sensitive principles, the emphasis on national and local ownership and effort to meaningfully engage youth through a human rights-based perspective.⁶⁵ She also observes 'a steady encroachment of such securitized programming frameworks in peacebuilding work at the country level', which in her view include programmes with prevention and countering violent extremism components.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ HRC. "The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests." 50th Sess., July 14, 2022, [A/HRC/RES/50/21](#).

⁶¹ United Nations. "Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism – Note by the Secretary-General." 77th Sess., September 16, 2022, [A/77/345](#).

⁶² Ibid, p.8.

⁶³ Ibid, para. 18.

⁶⁴ Ibid, para. 22.

⁶⁵ Ibid, para. 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

At the end of the report, the Rapporteur addressed the need for **the SG's forthcoming regular budget proposals to consider how the financing of the Office of Counter-Terrorism can be tied to overall UN objectives**, critically 'assessing the levels of regular budget funding towards peacebuilding, gender equality and human rights, as well as with measured analytics as to how the overall goals of the United Nations towards peace and human rights tied concretely to the observations and concerns raised during the seventh biennial review of the Global Counter-Terrorism on human rights due diligence, monitoring and evaluation and overall balance in the United Nations system'.⁶⁷ Importantly, the Rapporteur called on **the UN to ensure the 'immediate operationalization and consistent application of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy across all United Nations activities'**,⁶⁸ as a way to uphold human rights, 'do no harm' and ultimately prevent further violence.

The Special Rapporteur presented the main findings and recommendations of her report during the closing ceremony of Geneva Peace Week in November 2022 – where a peacebuilding community in Geneva was able to engage with the Rapporteur on her findings.⁶⁹

In January 2023, DPPA/PBSO organized a brown bag discussion on the impact of counter-terrorism on peacebuilding during which the Special Rapporteur presented the findings and recommendations of her 2022 report (A/77/345).⁷⁰ The discussion provided **an opportunity to discuss the interface of counter-terrorism with peacebuilding**, with the Special Rapporteur emphasizing the need to 'critically assess the scope of work on preventing and countering violent extremism carried out by peacebuilding entities and ensure a separation of mandates' so as to ensure that such programming does not '[operate] in ways that undermine international human rights law, principles of "do no harm", the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality'.⁷¹



Victor Madrigal-Borloz (Wikimedia Commons/Alexandre Leal de Freitas)

Peace and security, and the human rights of LGBT+ persons

The Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity's report on peace and security, and the human rights of LGBT+ persons was published in November 2022, and addresses the call for greater awareness of how gender and sexual orientation and gender identity dynamics operate in the context of armed conflict, and within peacebuilding and peacekeeping.⁷² As consultations for the report were being prepared, the joint project continued to **support the mandate in mapping critical actors working at the intersection of conflict management with a gender-lens**. It was vital to identify experts throughout the conflict cycle the Independent Expert was interested in addressing; complementing the expertise and networks that approach sexual orientation and gender identity as a matter of right as a starting point, rather than with conflict as a contextual starting point. Building on these networks, Protection Approaches – a UK based charity working to tackle all forms of identity-based violence – invited the Independent Expert to contribute to their own **publication launch on 'Queering Atrocity Prevention'**⁷³ in March 2022.

The joint project was honoured to be part of the expert reference group of the report in July and August 2022. The joint project's focus was to sup-

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.22.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.21.

⁶⁹ Geneva Peace Week. "GPW22 Closing Session: A conversation with Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism & human rights." November 15, 2022.

⁷⁰ UN. "Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism." September 16, 2022, A/77/345.

⁷¹ Ibid., para. 22.

⁷² United Nations General Assembly. "Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz." 77th Sess., November 11, 2022, A/77/235.

⁷³ Gifkins, Jess, Dean Cooper-Cunningham, Kate Ferguson, Detmer Kremer, Farida Mostafa. "Queering atrocity prevention." Protection Approaches, London, UK, March 2022.

port the mandate in framing human rights challenges through a sustaining peace lens, using relevant peacebuilding jargon and addressing recommendations to relevant peace and security stakeholders.

In the report, the Independent Expert aims to provide insight on the application of a comprehensive set of legal resources to foster prevention, participation, protection, relief and sustainable peace for persons, communities and peoples suffering violence and discrimination in war-torn contexts around the world. **The Independent Expert seeks to establish a basis for an inclusive reading of existing policies within the UN system to promote compliance by State and non-State actors.**

The report highlights that while the policies related to conflict-related sexual violence in the UN system have been at the forefront of acknowledging differentiated sexual orientation and gender identity-based impact, the exclusive focus on conflict-related sexual violence as the paradigmatic form of gender-based violence might lead to a narrow understanding of the gendered and sexuality-related dimensions of conflict and thus to **limited responses addressing their causes and consequences, particularly detrimental to LGBT+ and gender diverse persons.**

The report recommends that official databases on conflict should disaggregate data on gender identity and sexual orientation, promote an assessment of differentiated experiences, and avoid conflating the acronym with the general experience of all

LGBT+ and gender diverse victims of conflict. Subsequently, the report also calls for States and non-State **humanitarian institutions to promote the effective support, relief, reallocation, and protection of LGBT+ and gender diverse persons in conflict affected contexts**, including refugees/ internally displaced persons in and from conflict affected contexts. Additionally, the report calls on the **UN peacekeeping and peace operation agencies to also promote the recognition of gender diversity** as an asset to enhance a culture of peace whenever their bodies are deployed. Importantly, the report highlights the need for the **UN Security Council** to expand the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, with the purpose of including an **intersectional approach**.

To socialize the report and its findings to a peace audience, **the Independent Expert also met stakeholders in New York during a DPPA/PBSO brown bag discussion in October 2022**, presenting the main findings and recommendations of the report and discussing entry points for the UN system. The Special Rapporteur also collaborated with Protection Approaches on an event at **Geneva Peace Week in November 2022** titled **'Queering peace: LGBTI communities in armed conflict and mass atrocity'**.

Business, human rights and conflict affected regions: towards heightened action

The Working Group on Business and Human Rights produced a report on 'Business, human rights and conflict affected regions: towards heightened ac-



UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (X - WGBizHRs)

tion⁷⁴ – as part of a broader intention to engage on conflict affected regions. While the report was developed and published prior to the Working Group on Business and Human Rights' engagement in the joint project, QUNO Geneva had been involved in consultations for the report, facilitating outreach to peacebuilding communities and those working on arms control, and the joint project contributed to follow-up activities.

The 2022 High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Financing for Peacebuilding that included a focus on 'Peace-responsive investing through the private sector' was identified by the joint project as a key opportunity for the Working Group on Business and Human Rights to engage with peace and security stakeholders in New York. In early conversations, facilitated by the joint project between the Working Group on Business and Human Rights and PBSO colleagues organizing the High-Level Meeting, the Working Group on Business and Human Rights emphasized how critical it was to ensure that States, as they continue to develop their thinking on the role of businesses, including financial institutions, should use 'their key policy tools and levers to ensure that business engages in conflict-sensitive heightened due diligence when operating in conflict-affected areas. This may include linking access to export credit, investment approvals, and access to investment finance, to demonstrable heightened human rights due diligence'.⁷⁵

The engagement of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights around and after the conference also focused on the Peacebuilding Architecture itself. The Working Group on Business and Human Rights explored ways to 'develop a strategy on business, peace and security that embraces the Guiding Principles as a foundational component' and to 'ensure that an appropriate level of awareness is incorporated into its peace and se-

curity pillar on the issue of business, human rights and conflict, including by disseminating information about news, tools and research both within and outside the United Nations system, and by organizing regular awareness-raising sessions for staff and Member States'.⁷⁶

Building on this opening to address issues arising from engaging with the private sector in the peace and security arena, the joint project organized a DPPA/PBSO brown bag discussion in May 2022 to explore key considerations when engaging on and with the private sector. As follow-up, it would be important to outline potential entry points to guide DPPA/PBSO colleagues when it comes to engaging with and on business, peace, and conflict, and to expand the capacity of staff, for example by using guidance developed by UNDP and the Working Group on Business and Human Rights.⁷⁷

Building on a previous conversation on conflict in the Forum, the 11th Forum on Business and Human Rights included a plenary session on 'Advancing Business Actions on Human Rights in Conflict Situations'⁷⁸ that discussed the need for heightened human rights due diligence in conflict situations. Following the Working Group on Business and Human Rights' 2020 report, the plenary showcased the range of tools and guidance developed by the Working Group on Business and Human Rights, UNDP, and others that have elaborated on the specific steps business can take to manage the heightened human rights risks in these contexts.⁷⁹ Using examples from recent conflict situations, the session considered how businesses can respond, including discussion of the actions businesses can take to prevent and mitigate harm, the human rights risks businesses must address, and the role of businesses in fostering an enabling environment for peace and stability.

⁷⁴ United Nations General Assembly. "Issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises." 75th Sess., July 21, 2020, [A/75/212](#).

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.21.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.22.

⁷⁷ United Nations Development Programme. "[Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence for business in conflict-affected contexts: A Guide.](#)" June 16, 2022.

⁷⁸ OHCHR. "[11th UN Forum on Business and Human Rights.](#)" 2022.

⁷⁹ UNDP. "[Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence for business in conflict-affected contexts: A Guide.](#)".

The Working Group on Business and Human Rights also produced a complementary information note in 2022, focusing on 'Responsible business conduct in the arms sector – Ensuring business practice in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights'.⁸⁰ **QUNO's Peace & Disarmament Representative** was able to provide substantive inputs and put the Working Group on Business and Human Rights in touch with arms control experts.

*The joint project also ensured that the Working Group on Business and Human Rights and its work on business in conflict affected contexts – along with other stakeholders' work on non-State armed groups – was included in the research, consultation and report on non-State actors by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.*⁸¹

Other thematic reports

- Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities reports on 'Rights of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict'⁸² and on 'The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of military operations'.⁸³
- Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression report on 'Disinformation and freedom of opinion and expression during armed conflicts'.⁸⁴
- Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief report on 'The rights of persons belonging to religious or belief minorities in situations of conflict and insecurity'.⁸⁵

- Special Rapporteur on minority issues report on 'Conflict prevention through the protection of the human rights of minorities'.⁸⁶
- Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence report on: 'Accountability: Prosecuting and punishing gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law in the context of transitional justice processes',⁸⁷ 'Transitional justice measures and addressing the legacy of gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in colonial contexts',⁸⁸ 'Memorialization processes in the context of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law: the fifth pillar of transitional justice'⁸⁹ and 'The gender perspective in transitional justice processes'.⁹⁰
- Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders report on 'Human rights defenders operating in conflict and post-conflict situations'.⁹¹
- Special Rapporteur on the right to food report on 'Conflict and the right to food'.⁹²
- Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association report to the HRC on 'Advancing accountability and ending impunity for serious human rights violations related to the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association'.⁹³
- Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities report to the General Assembly on 'Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities'.⁹⁴

⁸⁰ OHCHR. "Responsible business conduct in the arms sector: Ensuring business practice in line with the UN Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights – Information Note by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights." OHCHR.

⁸¹ HRC. "Role and responsibilities of non-State actors in transitional justice processes." July 12, 2022, [A/HRC/51/34](#).

⁸² OHCHR. "[A/76/146: Report on the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict](#)." July 19, 2021.

⁸³ OHCHR. "The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of military operations." 77th Sess., June 20, 2022, [A/77/203](#).

⁸⁴ United Nations General Assembly. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Disinformation and freedom of opinion and expression during armed conflicts." 77th Sess., August 12, 2022, [A/77/288](#).

⁸⁵ OHCHR. "[A/HRC/49/44: Rights of persons belonging to religious or belief minorities in situations of conflict or insecurity - Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief](#)." June 3, 2022.

⁸⁶ HRC. "Conflict prevention through the protection of the human rights of minorities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes." 49th Sess., March 15, 2022, [A/HRC/49/46](#).

⁸⁷ HRC. "Accountability: Prosecuting and punishing gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law in the context of transitional justice processes." 48th Sess., July 9, 2021, [A/HRC/48/60](#).

⁸⁸ OHCHR. "[A/76/180: Promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence - Note by the Secretary-General](#)." July 19, 2021.

⁸⁹ HRC. "Memorialization processes in the context of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law: the fifth pillar of transitional justice." 45th Sess., July 9, 2020, [A/HRC/45/45](#).

⁹⁰ United Nations General Assembly. "The gender perspective in transitional justice processes." 75th Sess., July 17, 2020, [A/75/174](#).

⁹¹ HRC. "Human rights defenders operating in conflict and post-conflict situations." 43rd Sess., December 30, 2019, [A/HRC/43/51](#).

⁹² OHCHR. "[A/HRC/52/40: Conflict and the right to food - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri](#)." December 29, 2022.

⁹³ HRC. "Advancing accountability and ending impunity for serious human rights violations related to the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association." 53rd Sess., May 19, 2023, [A/HRC/53/38](#).

⁹⁴ UNGA. "Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities." 78th Sess., July 13, 2023, [A/78/174](#).

- Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders report to the General Assembly on 'Pathways to peace: women human rights defenders in conflict, post-conflict and crisis-affected settings'.⁹⁵
- Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of nonrecurrence report on:
'International legal standards underpinning the pillars of transitional justice'⁹⁶ and
'Financing of reparation for victims of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law'.⁹⁷
- Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association report to the UNGA-78 on the 'Importance of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in advancing sustainable peace and democratic transitions'.⁹⁸

Upcoming thematic reports⁹⁹

- Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights report to the HRC on cultural rights in conflict and peacebuilding.

- Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons report to the HRC on mediation and peace processes, peace agreements, peacebuilding and internal displacement.

The list of reports referring to peace and security is made available annually in the Secretary-General's report on special procedures' conclusions and recommendations presented to the HRC¹⁰⁰ and the special procedures' annual report.¹⁰¹

This section provided a temporal overview and is not an exhaustive list. Mandate-holders have also issued many relevant reports to sustaining peace prior to 2020 and will likely continue doing so, beyond the currently planned for reports in 2024.

While no country mandates were included in the project itself, it is worth noting that most **country mandates**¹⁰² cover conflict affected or post-conflict contexts, as well as places affected by high levels of violence.



Palais des Nations, Geneva (ATI Project)

⁹⁵ UNGA. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders - Pathways to peace: women human rights defenders in conflict, post-conflict and crisis-affected settings." 78th Sess., July 7, 2023, [A/78/131](#).

⁹⁶ HRC. "International legal standards underpinning the pillars of transitional justice - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli." 54th Sess., July 10, 2023, [A/HRC/54/24](#).

⁹⁷ UNGA. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli - Financing of reparation for victims of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law." 78th Sess., July 14, 2023, [A/78/181](#).

⁹⁸ UNGA. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule - Importance of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in advancing sustainable peace and democratic transitions." 78th Sess., July 27, 2023, [A/78/246](#).

⁹⁹ For a further updated list of reports: OHCHR. "[Themes of the reports to be presented in 2024](#)."

¹⁰⁰ See latest one: HRC. "Conclusions and recommendations of special procedures - Report of the Secretary-General." 52nd Sess., December 13, 2022, [A/HRC/52/19](#).

¹⁰¹ See latest ones: HRC. "Activities of special rapporteurs, independent experts and working groups of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council undertaken in 2022...." 52nd Sess., March 22, 2023, [A/HRC/52/70](#); and "Facts and figures with regard to the special procedures in 2022 - Addendum 1." [A/HRC/52/70/Add.1](#).

¹⁰² OHCHR. "[Country Mandates](#)." OHCHR.

Suggestions and ways forward

This section brings together some of the recommendations the joint project was able to identify through the desk research and joint activities undertaken and by reflecting on key developments, opportunities, and challenges encountered. This is not an exhaustive list.

Special procedures mandate-holders

- Mandates should **engage on sustaining peace** themes and in country affected contexts **as a matter of principle and strategy**. **That strategy** should be upheld by:

- o the fostering of commitment and dedication of resources to meaningfully engage on sustaining peace long-term;
- o the creation and nurturing of expert networks of peace practitioners – such as civil society working at the frontline of protection, social cohesion and peace; or existing fora such as the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform; and
- o the development of in-depth thematic research and reports on respective mandates' relation to peace and security. This would help develop an integrated approach recognizing the interlinkages between human rights, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. Providing such a conceptual lens not only helps engage with peace and security stakeholders in New York and beyond, but also provides a framework of analysis when engaging in contexts affected by conflict or heightened levels of violence.

- **In their thematic and country visit reports, mandate-holders should consider articulating specific recommendations:**

- o to and for peace and security institutions and stakeholders; and
- o with short, medium, and long-term goals and corresponding milestones according to their level of risk to social cohesion, peace and security.

This could be done by also providing human rights-based responses to peacebuilding challenges, including those that could be implemented at country level. Such recommendations could then form the basis for further actions and projects by peace and security actors at Headquarters and at country level.

- Similarly, **integrating cross-cutting issues**, such as the SDGs – particularly SDG16, the Women, Peace and Security,¹⁰³ and Youth, Peace and Security¹⁰⁴ agendas **more systematically** into mandates' analyses and recommendations remains critical.

- Further inclusion of arms related risks to human rights should be considered in mandates' analysis and reporting. This could enhance their contribution to the growing understanding of how weapons negatively impact human rights and of the root causes of armed violence and offer recommendations to curb that harm.

- **Each mandate should continue exploring closer and more systematic cooperation with:**

- o other mandate-holders. This not only provides useful opportunities for horizontal experience sharing on engaging with the sustaining peace agenda but also a stronger voice on emerging crises or patterns of violence.
- o the members of the PBC, including through exchanges with the Chair and Vice-Chairs, to make them more aware of their work and provide expert advice where requested. Mandate-holders may also make themselves available to partici-

¹⁰³ United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "[Women, Peace and Security](#)." UN.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations, Peacebuilding. "[The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda](#)." UN.

pate in discussions that facilitate exchanges of experiences, good practices and lessons learned.

- o the thematic work of DPPA, including guidance and strategy on better integrating human rights issues in peacebuilding and the country/regional work of DPPA, whereby mandate-holders may share reflections in advance of and following country visits.

- o Resident Coordinators' Offices and other UN representatives in-country where Member States have requested the assistance of the Peacebuilding Fund. This includes programming in eligible countries,¹⁰⁵ with particular attention to projects as part of the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative,¹⁰⁶ and elsewhere.¹⁰⁷

- o Treaty Bodies on country reviews and the consultation processes that lead to the adoption of General Comments. For example, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights is developing a General Comment on economic, social and cultural rights in the context of armed conflicts.¹⁰⁸

- o Investigative Bodies to ensure that findings on human rights violations and analysis and recommendations from investigations on specific conflict affected contexts are included in the work of other human rights mechanisms, such as special procedures.

- o Peacebuilding civil society, including local peacebuilders and/or peacebuilding international NGOs in country, by systematically including them in country visits and consultations for thematic work. Special procedures could use the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and other relevant peace fora and networks to help identify relevant practitioners.

Coordination Committee of special procedures

- It would be desirable to formalize dedicated experiences sharing sessions on sustaining peace during Annual Meetings of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Chairs of Working Groups, that the joint project has been facilitating. This would ensure systematic and regular moments to foster synergies and exchange of information amongst special procedures mandate-holders. It would also provide a formal space to invite and engage with peacebuilding practitioners as relevant.
- The Coordination Committee, with the support of OHCHR's Special Procedures Branch, should finalize guidance outlining entry points with peace and security stakeholders in New York, such as DPPA/PBSO, to be discussed during the aforementioned experiences sharing session on sustaining peace.
- Avenues for cooperation with other departments of DPPA on select peacebuilding issues in focus need to be strengthened and systematized, including through their inclusion in the Annual Meeting discussions and official Coordination Committee visits to New York.
- The Chair of the Coordination Committee of special procedures should regularly share relevant information about the work of mandate-holders to the PBC Chair, building on this good practice with the President of the Security Council.
- Early warning information and conflict-related risks should be systematically included in the annual report of special procedures presented to the HRC.
- Progress on follow-up to priority recommendations could be included as a standing agenda item for the Annual Meeting of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Chairs of Working Groups. Key findings could then be

¹⁰⁵ United Nations, Peacebuilding. ["List of countries declared eligible to the PBF by the Secretary-General."](#) UN.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations, Peacebuilding Fund. ["Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative."](#) UN.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, Peacebuilding. ["PBF investments 2022."](#) UN, 2022 & UN Peacebuilding Fund. ["2022. Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund."](#) March 23, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. ["Report on the seventy-first and seventy-second sessions \(14 February–4 March and 26 September–14 October 2022\)."](#) [E/2023/22, E/C.12/2022/3](#), February 22, 2023, p.16.

shared with the HRC, which should also envisage allocating more time under agenda item 5 for States to share information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of special procedures.

- Further joint activities between mandate-holders and Regional Organizations' experts should be replicated, such as joint activities, visits, and advocacy, which so far have only happened on an ad hoc basis.

HRC

- The HRC should explore ways to exploit better the assessment and expertise of mandate-holders, especially after their country visits, by inviting them to join dedicated country discussions and debates.¹⁰⁹ This would help share early warning information and the concerns in a timely fashion, thus mitigating the frequent time lag between mandate-holders' country visits and discussion of their reports by the HRC. The HRC should consider the inclusion of a sustaining peace prerogative in all special procedures mandates and explore ways to include linkages to the sustaining peace agenda, and peace and security bodies at Headquarters and country level, as relevant.
- It is critical that the HRC continues to seek a closer institutional working relationship with the Security Council, including by sending relevant special procedures' reports and assessments to the Security Council, and by actively recommending inclusion of relevant special procedures when mandates for peacekeeping missions are discussed.
- The HRC and its mechanisms, including special procedures, should systematize and strengthen its working relationship with the Special Adviser to the SG on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Representatives of the SG on Sexual Violence in Conflict and for

Children and Armed Conflict by inviting them more regularly to its sessions and/or requesting them, through specific resolutions, to report to it on their areas of work and activities or conduct joint activities, including joint reporting, with its special procedures.¹¹⁰

- The HRC should expediate the systematic sharing of relevant reports, including those of special procedures, to the PBC and to the Security Council.

Relevant UN Secretariat, agencies, and funds

- UN agencies and funds should develop thematic and country-specific engagement with relevant mandate-holders and consider their recommendation in developing projects, particularly those in conflict affected contexts. This could be facilitated by the use of the Universal Human Rights Index, which now links the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms with key themes, including conflict, SDG16 etc.
- DPPA/PBSO should develop further the cooperation with special procedures and its Coordination Committee, on relevant thematic issues, countries of concern, and policy processes.
- OHCHR should propose ways to upscale its capacity to support the type of cooperation needed to undertake system-wide work – either through additional dedicated staff in New York, or a Prevention and Sustaining Peace Section focal point in Geneva.
- DPPA/PBSO should continue inviting special procedures mandate-holders to their informal brown bag discussions to share their findings and recommendations on select peacebuilding topics in focus and to engage in discussions with staff members.
- The senior representatives of UN country

¹⁰⁹ as was done with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence to discuss the situation in Sri Lanka in 2018. See HRC. "Report of the Human Rights Council on its thirty-seventh session." 37th Sess., November 2, 2020, [A/HRC/37/2](#), para. 91-92 & HRC. "Overview of consultations on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations – Report of the rapporteurs." 43rd Sess., January 14, 2020, [A/HRC/43/37](#), p.16.

¹¹⁰ HRC. "Overview of consultations on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations – Report of the rapporteurs." 43rd Sess., January 14, 2020, [A/HRC/43/37](#).

and regional presences should also be encouraged to include inputs from the HRC's mechanisms, including special procedures, in their reports to the Security Council.

- UN Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes should consider including relevant special procedures in discussions and configurations aimed at devising strategies for responding to and preventing crisis.
- UN Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes should consider how to provide relevant resources for supporting the work and engagement of special procedures mandates to carry out the type of cooperation needed to undertake system-wide work, including outreach in New York such as bilateral consultations with several UN entities, civil society and others, that go well and above workplans and capacities.

Member States

- Work to enhance the possibility of having mandate-holders invited to HRC sessions during country briefings (as opposed to waiting for the final report) by organizing a session at the HRC that brings together Special Rapporteurs and peacebuilders to discuss the interaction between human rights and peacebuilding with civil society.
- Member States engaged in the HRC may consider that institutional working relationships and collaboration on key issues linking human rights and peacebuilding are established with members of the PBC.
- Member States of the PBC may consider including the work of special procedures on their agenda and invite mandate-holders to participate in their deliberations – both on country situations as well as thematic areas of work.
- Permanent and elected Members States of the Security Council may consider including the work of special procedures in their work

and invite mandate-holders to participate in deliberations, exploring ways to engage with them beyond Arria-formula meetings.

- Permanent and elected Members States of the Security Council may consider inviting mandate-holders to intervene, in person or through video links, in country-specific discussions.

Civil society and academia

- Local peacebuilding civil society organizations and international peace organisations should:
 - systematically engage with mandate-holders, especially during country visits, to ensure information pertaining to social-economic justice, social cohesion, and peacebuilding are included in mandate-holders' work to help frame human rights challenges through a sustaining peace lens.
 - engage with the Coordinating Committee, and attend, when possible, the NGO sessions during Annual Meetings of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Chairs of Working Groups or their dedicated session on sustaining peace.
 - include mandate-holders as relevant in their own research or public events.
- The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform – and other civil society platforms that work on sustaining peace – should consider including OHCHR in their membership or advisory boards to ensure special procedures along with other HRC mechanisms are included into discussion, as relevant.
- Peacebuilding thinktanks and academic institutions should build partnerships with mandate-holders on thematic and country portfolios – ensuring stronger integration between human rights and peacebuilding approaches.

Conclusion

“Full compliance with human rights is the best antidote to the inequalities, unaddressed grievances and exclusion which are often at the root of instability and conflict.” Volker Türk - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights¹¹¹

This paper reflects on a selection of key developments, opportunities, and challenges in integrating human rights in sustaining peace through special procedures, that have contributed to joined-up action across the three UN pillars. It highlights initiatives that have yielded results and identifies opportunities and entry points offered by relevant intergovernmental outcomes, policy frameworks and instruments, and UN reform processes to address remaining gaps.

Throughout the work of special procedures as an HRC mechanism, the integration of human rights information, analysis, approaches and mechanisms in coherent and multidimensional prevention and sustaining peace policies, strategies and programmes has made some gains.

At the same time, despite growing recognition and understanding of the concept of sustaining peace, further operationalization and integration into policies and programming is required, particularly considering the continuing fragmentation across sectors and pillars in the UN system.

It should be noted, however, that engagement with and implementation of the recommenda-

tions of the human rights mechanisms should be approached holistically and in a coherent manner — through national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up for instance. The analyses derived from their work, as well as their recommendations — identifying root causes and drivers of crisis; proposing responses to mitigate risks and prevent the lapse or relapse to conflict; and providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration across sectors at the international and national levels — are complementary and mutually-reinforcing.

To that end, to respond to the SG’s call for ‘a more deliberate and explicitly universal approach to the prevention of conflict and violence’¹¹² it will remain imperative to explore areas for strengthening collaboration and coherence across all three UN pillars - and effective engagement with all human rights mechanisms.

Please note that this paper does not claim to be comprehensive but is intended to be the basis for continued reflection and discussions ahead of the Summit of the Future, including the ‘New Agenda for Peace’, and the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review.



Palais des Nations, Geneva (European Large Families Confederation)

¹¹¹ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. “High-Level Open Debate on “Futureproofing Trust for Sustaining Peace.” UN Security Council: May 2023.

¹¹² Guterres, António. “Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace.” United Nations: July 2023.

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