

41st. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

GENERAL DEBATE - ITEM 5

July 3rd, 2019

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES

Mr. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the UN Special Procedures¹ as well as a group of cross-regional countries² that have joined us.

The Group of Friends regularly meets with members of the Coordination Committee to share views on working methods and to explore options to further strengthen cooperation between special procedures and countries. We believe this kind of dialogue is valuable, both for mandate holders and for states. It generates mutual trust.

Regarding the mandates and the mandate holders:

- We welcome the fact that gender balance has improved, with 45% of the mandate holders now being women and 55% men.
- We encourage the Consultative Group of the HRC to continue paying attention to this matter and striving for a balanced regional distribution, while choosing the best candidates.
- The special procedures have submitted a total of 135 reports to the HRC and 46 to the General Assembly. We would like to express our thanks to the mandate holders for their sustained efforts. Your reports enrich our debates.

Regarding country visits:

- We note that last year a total of 84 country visits were carried out to 59 countries.
- It is important that a country is not overwhelmed with too many country visits. Therefore, keeping in mind the Member State's size and capacities, as a general rule one to three country visits per year is the average a country can engage in to ensure the quality of the country visit, and we want to acknowledge the efforts the Coordination Committee is making in this regard.

¹ . Group of Friends of Special Procedures: Belgium, Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Morocco, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay.

² . Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine.

- We are pleased that, as of today, 121 UN member states and 1 observer state have standing invitations.
- Since the system exists, 171 UN member states have received at least one visit.
- Only 22 UN member states have not yet been visited, although most of them have outstanding requests.
- We call upon the remaining states to follow the example set by so many others and to also issue a standing invitation.

Regarding communications:

- We are pleased that a new database has been put in place and that there is now a dedicated webpage where communications and replies are posted.
- Still, we regret the low reply rate of only 43% to communications sent out in 2018.

Furthermore, we wish to express our deepest concerns about reports of attacks against mandate holders and of reprisals against those cooperating with them.

Lastly, we welcome the trend that mandate holders are increasingly cooperating with other parts of the UN system as well as with regional mechanisms. This is important in view of better mainstreaming human rights concerns into the other pillars of the UN. Cooperation between mandates is also relevant, and we encourage intensified coordination among mandates to carry out joint reports or studies on issues that have synergies.

Thank you, Mr. President.