

42 HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

GENERAL DEBATE - ITEM 5

September 19 2019

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES¹ AND OTHER COUNTRIES²

Mr. President,

I speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of the UN Special Procedures as well as a group of cross-regional countries that have joined us.

As said by the High Commissioner during her informal conversation with the Council a few weeks ago, “the work of Special Procedures is valuable to the cause of human rights. Their independent voice has been crucial on many occasions, and they have often been at the origin of important actions taken by the Council. Mandate-holders have acted with great efficiency and expertise, despite holding demanding – and unpaid – positions “. We fully support this view.

This Council has progressively built a system of Special Procedures to bring an independent, and sometimes thought provoking, voice to the human rights debate. This can sometimes come with tensions and disagreements. However, Special Procedures have helped deliver crucial human rights achievements. We should be proud of their work and defend their independence.

When disagreements or misunderstandings occur, dialogue and open discussion should always prevail. In this context, we welcome the recent measures taken to enhance dialogue and cooperation with States and improve their working methods. Just to highlight a few: Coordination Committee engagement with States twice a year; short documents summarizing reports available on the HRC extranet; communications not sent after business hours other than in urgent cases and a recently created webpage with good examples of impact of the work of special procedure mandate holders.

We also look forward to engaging with the Coordination Committee in the months to come in line with the steps announced by its Chair on 2 September, in particular, the update of the Manual of Operations.

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

² . Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Fiji, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Palestine, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine.

In relation to the Code of Conduct, the Chair of the Coordination Committee clearly recalled that mandate holders have the obligation to respect the Code of Conduct, the Manual of Operations and additional rules and guidelines developed over the years. The Committee has a facilitation role and should always be available to engage with all stakeholders individually or in group. May I recall that there is also a formal channel to raise complaints through the Internal Advisory Procedure, open to member states, civil society or mandate holders themselves.

Mr. President, all those actions and decisions demonstrate that mandate holders are open to cooperation and dialogue and have demonstrated their ability to improve their working methods. This council should support them in fulfilling their mandates, not disrupt them. We invite all States to demonstrate their support for this important human rights protection mechanism.

Thank you, Mr. President.