

Human Rights Council

50th session

Nordic-Baltic Statements

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Human Rights Council

50th session

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea

Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)

13 June 2022

Mr. President,

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his report.

We remain deeply concerned over persistent human rights violations in Eritrea, in particular the practice of indefinite national service, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and widespread sexual and gender-based violence.

We condemn the continuing involvement of Eritrea in the war in Ethiopia, including reports of the deployment of child soldiers and forced conscription of Eritrean refugees. We urge the Government to immediately and unconditionally withdraw Eritrean forces from Ethiopia and to investigate all alleged breaches of international law by Eritrean actors in Ethiopia.

We also condemn severe restrictions on the rights to freedoms of expression and religion or belief, and the continued closure of civic space in Eritrea. We call on the Eritrean Government to release all those arbitrarily detained, to end the practices of prolonged, incommunicado and arbitrary detention, and to develop independent rule-of-law institutions to protect human rights.

Finally, as a member of the Human Rights Council, Eritrea should uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council's mechanisms, including by granting the Special Rapporteur full and unhindered access to the country.

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue on High Commissioner's oral update on Myanmar
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
14 June 2022

Thank you, Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country Lithuania. Ferocious shelling and air strikes continue demolishing civilian infrastructure, leaving many persons forcibly displaced, injured or killed. The humanitarian and human rights crisis is grave.

The Nordic-Baltic countries condemn in the strongest terms the ongoing cruelty and call upon the Myanmar military and security forces to immediately end all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detentions, torture and extrajudicial executions. The civilian population, including the Rohingya and persons belonging to other ethnic and religious minorities, must be protected. Perpetrators must be held to account and persisting impunity has to end.

We also urge Myanmar's military authorities to immediately and permanently halt the imposition of the death penalty and commute all capital sentences handed down to date. We reiterate our urgent call on the military and security forces to fully cooperate with the UN human rights and international mechanisms and to allow unhindered humanitarian access to protect all persons in need.

The Nordic-Baltic countries continue to support the implementation of the ASEAN 5-point consensus and the efforts of the ASEAN Special Envoy together with the UN Special Envoy as the fundamental means toward a peaceful solution, democracy and the rule of law.

Madam High Commissioner,

How can we better protect the victims, especially people in the most vulnerable situations and help to ensure justice and accountability for past and ongoing human rights violations and abuses?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's annual report (Item 2)
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
14 June 2022

Thank you, President.

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

There is no doubt that during armed conflicts, civilians pay the highest price. Persons in already vulnerable situations are disproportionately affected, not least by sexual and gender-based violence.

This is alarming.

The international community has gone a long way in building up international rules-based order, grounded on the Charter of the United Nations. This order is constantly challenged, including most recently by Russia's attack on Ukraine.

As States bear primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil international humanitarian and human rights law, it is up to them to put an end to the immense suffering and irreparable harm caused by the armed conflicts.

Therefore, we urge all States to:

- uphold their obligations under international law,
- ensure that civilians caught in armed conflict situations are fully protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law,
- immediately end violence, and ensure full respect for the human rights of all,
- protect those in most vulnerable situations, including children and persons with disabilities, as well as women and girls, journalists and media workers, human rights defenders and other members of civil society,
- end impunity and ensure accountability for violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law.

The human rights of each individual are inalienable. Everyone deserves justice, dignity and peace.

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Panel discussion on human rights violations on Rohingyas
and other minorities in Myanmar
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
15 June 2022

Mr. President,

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

We remain extremely concerned about the continued deterioration of the human rights situation in Myanmar as a consequence of the military coup. We strongly condemn the coup and call on the military to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including for Rohingya Muslims and other ethnic and religious minorities. We call upon the Myanmar military leadership to end the state of emergency without delay, restore democracy and civilian rule, and immediately release all those arbitrarily detained.

We reiterate our deep concern about the escalating violence and the continued forced displacement of civilians, making conditions unsuitable for voluntary and safe return. Ensuring accountability for serious international crimes remains critical.

The crisis in Myanmar is also humanitarian. Safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured. The Nordic-Baltic countries continue to support ASEAN in their efforts to find regional solutions to the crisis. We call upon the Myanmar military leadership to engage constructively with ASEAN and stress the importance of implementing the Five-Point Consensus effectively and without further delay.

We would like to ask the panelists: How can we best contribute to addressing the root causes of human rights violations and abuses in Myanmar in this challenging context?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
High level commemorative event on the occasion of the 50th session of the Human
Rights Council: achievements and lessons learned
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
15 June 2022

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

As we commemorate the 50th session, we reflect on the Council's successes, challenges and opportunities.

Overall, the HRC is a success. It has shown its relevance and ability to respond to crises through rapidly established Commission of Inquiries.

The adoption of the resolution on prevention (45/31) was a milestone. The HRC is perfectly placed to prevent serious human rights situations from deteriorating further.

The HRC architecture is working. The special procedures publish bold and timely reports. UPR provides valuable recommendations to improve human rights nationally.

However, ensuring adequate and predictable funding is key. We must make sure that mandates established by the HRC get the necessary funding and expertise.

Our discussions are often subject to deep polarization. We need to build bridges and seek compromise. We need to work on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights at the same pace, always putting the individual at the centre. Civil society and human rights defenders play a crucial role, as well as national human rights institutions.

We have a strong normative framework, but the implementation gap is too large. We can all do more at home to implement the human rights that we call for in this room.

Finally, we would like to thank the High Commissioner for her tireless efforts for human rights during her mandate.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner
report on the Sudan
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
15 June 2022

Mr. President,

Iceland has the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic Countries. We thank the High Commissioner for the update.

Mr. President,

The situation for human rights in Sudan has deteriorated since the last time we met in this format.

We are appalled by the violence from the security forces towards peaceful protesters. More than 100 have been killed and thousands arbitrarily detained. We have seen widespread sexual and gender-based violence. Tensions are increasing nationally, including 200 people killed in inter-communal violence in Darfur.

A Sudanese-led inclusive dialogue is necessary to achieve a broad-based support for the path forward. We appreciate the commitment of UNITAMS, AU and IGAD to support the process. The de facto authorities must stop the violence and create a conducive environment for dialogue. The lifting of the state of emergency and release of prisoners are positive steps, more needs to be done.

We appreciate the work of the independent human rights expert in Sudan and call upon the Sudanese authorities to fully cooperate with his mandate.

Mr. President,

How can we and the Office best support the protection and advancement of human rights in Sudan?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's oral update on Afghanistan
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
15 June 2022

President,

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

We are deeply saddened by the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan. The arbitrary detentions and killings, torture, enforced disappearances, mistreatment of protestors and journalists – and impunity related to these violations – must stop.

Women, increasingly confined in their homes and dependent on their male relatives, cannot exercise human rights freely and are excluded from economic opportunities and the society at large. Secondary schools remain closed for most girls. These actions do not only violate human rights – they also pose a massive threat to the future of Afghanistan and hamper prospects for a prosperous nation.

We expect the Taliban to prove that they take their international obligations seriously. Granting the Special Rapporteur access is welcome, but not enough. Immediate action is needed from the Taliban. Afghanistan needs the continuous attention of this Council.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue on the interim oral update by the High Commissioner
on the situation of human rights in Nicaragua
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
16 June 2022

Mr President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries. We thank the High Commissioner for the latest update.

We remain deeply concerned about ongoing human rights violations in Nicaragua, including arbitrary detentions, violations of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and consistent attacks against human rights defenders, journalists and other media workers, political opposition, and civil society leaders.

The space for civil society in Nicaragua is shrinking dramatically. We strongly condemn the authorities' recent cancellation of 177 additional non-governmental organisations' legal status and urge the Nicaraguan authorities to immediately revoke these decisions and to guarantee, in all circumstances, the right to freedom of association.

We urge Nicaragua to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights, including civil and political rights. Impunity for human rights violations must end. We call on Nicaragua to cooperate fully with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the OHCHR.

Madame High Commissioner,

What concrete steps can be taken to encourage Nicaragua to restore the legal personality of the organisations that have been arbitrarily shut down?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue on the oral update of the High Commissioner on the grave human rights and humanitarian situation in Mariupol (Ukraine)
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
16 June 2022
Delivered by H.E Ann Linde, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Mr President,

On behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries I thank the High Commissioner for her crucial briefing on the devastating situation in Mariupol. A city I visited a year ago, passing the theatre now in ruins, where so many lost their lives.

The abhorrent violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law committed in Mariupol, including arbitrary detentions, executions, sexual and gender-based violence, shelling of hospitals and enforced displacement, are no exceptions in Russia's warfare. Rather the opposite.

This calls for continued and increased efforts to pressure Russia to end its aggression. We demand that Russia adheres to international law, including provisions of International Humanitarian Law relating to the protection of prisoners of war. Russia must immediately allow the safe return of Ukrainian civilians forcibly removed to Russia.

Those responsible must be held to account. The investigation by the ICC and other initiatives to this end, including the Commission of Inquiry, have our full support.

The violations committed by Russia in Ukraine cannot be undone. But Russia can decide not to extend the list of victims.

Slava Ukraini.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on protection against violence and
discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
16 June 2022

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

We thank the Independent Expert for his report and reiterate our strongest support to the renewal of this crucial mandate. We welcome the focus of the new report on the realization of the right to health in relation to the SDGs. Bringing a SOGI lens to the health-related commitments of the SDGs is of paramount importance to “leaving no one behind”.

The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights and the right to bodily autonomy, must be enjoyed without discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of SOGI and sex characteristics.

We would also like to underscore the importance of providing comprehensive sexuality education to reduce health risks for LGBTQI and gender-diverse youth, including with regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We strongly condemn all attacks on human rights defenders and civil society organisations, including those working to combat discrimination and violence based on SOGI and call on all States to create a safe, inclusive and enabling environment for the promotion of human rights and equality for all.

Mr. Independent Expert,

What advice do you have for States to address the serious gaps in the evidence-base regarding health-related discrimination and violence based on SOGI?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Working Group on
discrimination against Women and Girls
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
16 June 2022

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

Girls and women activists play crucial roles as agents of change. They promote democratic and equal societies and defend universal human rights.

Although many of them are at the forefront of defending gender equality, women and girls' rights, equal rights for sexual and gender minorities, SRHR, gender responsive and rights-based climate action, social and-economic rights, and access to land and resources, they are constantly faced with barriers to freely assemble, protest, express their views and participate meaningfully.

In addition, they are subject to negative social control, sexual harassment, threats and violence - including on online platforms - and even killings.

We all have a responsibility to promote and empower girls' and young women's activism and create safe, enabling spaces.

In your report, you draw attention to the root causes of the barriers to girls' and women's activism.

What specific measures would you recommend to initially address these barriers and thus ensure that girls and women activists experience increased inclusion and empowerment?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on
the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
17 June 2022

Thank you, President.

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his reports on access to funding and peaceful protests during crisis and express our full support for the renewal of his mandate this session.

Unfortunately, peaceful protests too often are met with repression, including the unlawful use of force, arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearance. Instances in which governments manipulate digital technologies to deprive individuals of their ability to participate in collective action are also deeply concerning.

We strongly believe that States must take every opportunity to support diversity of civil society participation, including by ensuring that domestic provisions on registration, funding, reporting and other activities are in compliance with international human rights law, and are not misused to hinder the work or endanger the safety of civil society actors.

We express our full support and solidarity with those who dare to protest, in spite of the obvious risks to their life and wellbeing. We call for accountability for all human rights violations and abuses in the context of peaceful assembly and association.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, how may we better support and protect human rights defenders and civil society actors who are targeted by the legislation that unduly restricts their work and are judicially harassed in their own countries?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women,
its causes and consequences
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
20 June 2022

Madam President,

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

Eliminating violence against women and girls in all their diversity must be a top priority for all of us. Violence against women and girls continues to be a global issue. Measures to prevent this violence and address its root causes are key. This fact, among many other important conclusions, is highlighted in the Special Rapporteur's report on violence against indigenous women and girls. We thank the Special Rapporteur for this report.

We are deeply concerned that indigenous women and girls often face complex and intersectional forms of violence, as well as multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned that threats and attacks against indigenous human rights defenders, including environmental human rights defenders, continue to escalate. Indigenous women human rights defenders experience complex, multidimensional and mutually reinforcing human rights violations and abuses; especially so if they challenge traditional gender roles.

Madam Special Rapporteur,

You conclude that violence against indigenous women and girls is drastically underreported, and that impunity is widespread. What measures can States and other actors take to encourage increased reporting, and what other measures do you see as most urgent in order to ensure accountability?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the
enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
Statement by Latvia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
20 June 2022

Thank you, Mister President.

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

We wish to thank the Special Rapporteur on presenting her latest report on violence and its impact on the right to health, and in particular on highlighting the importance of adopting an intersectional and rights-based approach to violence that addresses its root causes.

The Nordic-Baltic countries strongly believe that all survivors of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, are entitled to comprehensive health services, goods and facilities, including sexual and reproductive health services. The health approach must be survivor-centred and address all their needs, including by ensuring mental health and psychosocial support.

While providing all possible support to the survivors of violence, we must also work to address the underlying norms, structures and root causes and aim to prevent violence before it occurs.

Conflict-related sexual violence is not an inevitability of war but a violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. Nonetheless, we continue to hear of such cases in all recent and ongoing conflicts across the globe. The Nordic-Baltic countries strongly condemn all acts of conflict-related sexual violence, including when used as a method of war. All perpetrators must be held accountable.

Madam Special Rapporteur, how can we best respond to the needs of survivors, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, in conflict situations when access to health services may be greatly limited?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Working Group on Business and Human Rights
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
21 June 2022

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland. We thank the Working Group for the report.

During the COVID-19 pandemic labour rights violations and abuses have intensified around the world. Workers lower down the supply chain, particularly women, migrant workers and those employed in the informal economy, have been among the worst hit. We support the Working Group's recommendations on enforcing labour and employment laws and regulations as well as ensuring protection against human rights harm by businesses.

The attacks on human rights defenders and trade unionists are alarming. Every effort must be made to protect freedom of expression, association and collective bargaining.

We welcome the best practices in the report, including on the use of digital technologies for more effective due diligence.

Honourable Members of the Working Group, how can we ensure that those in vulnerable situations, including indigenous peoples, are protected from human rights violations and abuses in future crises?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Panel on Menstrual Hygiene Management, Human Rights and Gender Equality
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
21 June 2022

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries. Thank you for organizing this panel.

Menstruation is an ordinary part of life that occurs to half of the world's population. It is an essential part of life course and concerns us all, directly or indirectly. Yet menstruation is often associated with stigmatization and shame, exposing menstruating women, girls and others to violence, discrimination and vulnerable situations.

Misinformation, taboo and harmful societal structures and social norms surround menstruation. These can lead to excluding those who menstruate from work, education, society, even from their homes. A fundamental change, where everyone plays a role, is necessary.

Insufficient availability of safe and clean water, sanitation and hygiene and inexpensive hygiene products stops girls from participating in education. The beginning of menstruation can mistakenly be seen as a sign for maturity for marriage. Protection of girls and adolescents from violence and harmful practices needs to be our priority. Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Distinguished panelists, what are the best ways to support the removal of stigma and taboo against menstruation?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Panel discussion on good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights
during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
Statement by Latvia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
22 June 2022

Thank you, Mister President.

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

Digitalisation of justice and welfare systems, online submission and processing of taxes and other payments, and identity verification are just some of the examples of how countries around the world have introduced digitalisation to their governance processes. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this process by requiring governments more urgently to seek solutions to data collection and ensure continued access to public services.

New and emerging technologies, including AI, have an enormous potential for positive change. However, we must also be aware of the human rights challenges they can cause, such as digital discrimination and harassment, including against women and girls, and widespread dissemination of disinformation. Maximising the advantages and minimising the risks of new and emerging technologies calls for a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach that respects human rights and addresses protection gaps.

In order for digitalisation to be in line with good governance principles, we must ensure a human rights-based approach in the use and development of digital technologies, and promote transparency and comprehensive human rights due diligence.

In this regard we wish to ask the panellists, what role can the Human Rights Council take in promoting a human rights-based approach to digital governance?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial,
summary or arbitrary executions**
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
22 June 2022

Mr. President,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania and my own country Sweden. The Nordic-Baltic countries affirm our strong support to the Special rapporteur's mandate. Your work, Mr. Rapporteur, is more needed than ever.

We strongly condemn any acts of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions which are abhorrent and represent violations of human rights and the inherent right to life. States and non-State actors must respect the right to life of all persons. Human rights must be respected in all cases, including with regard to Russia's crimes committed as part of its aggression against Ukraine.

We reiterate the imperative for accountability for such killings and the need for all investigations be thorough, credible, transparent, and prompt, and that prosecutions must uphold internationally recognized fair trial and due process norms and standards.

Impunity for extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions undermines democracy, accountability and the rule of law and must be prevented.

Mr. Rapporteur, we thank you for the report presented here today. Could you elaborate on how member states can strengthen the investigation mechanisms to ensure that all medico-legal deaths are thoroughly investigated?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
23 June 2022

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland. We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report.

The need to expand connectivity and opportunities for digital learning has been growing in importance, further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digitalization should be used to promote the right to inclusive and equitable quality education for all and gender equality in and through education. We must ensure that digital technologies do not directly or indirectly discriminate against anyone. Addressing the digital divide is essential, including its gender and disability dimensions.

Our countries want to promote a safe digital space for all. Everyone should be able to use their voices without the threat of violence, harassment, including sexual harassment, or hate. Women and girls, minorities, including sexual minorities, and persons in vulnerable situations are particularly exposed to being subjected to these online human rights violations and abuses. We need to ensure that education systems equip young persons to recognize misinformation, to counter disinformation, discrimination and bias and to promote human rights and sustainable development.

Ms. Special Rapporteur, what should be done to ensure that all women and girls enjoy full and equal access to quality digital learning opportunities?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of
human rights in the context of climate change
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
23 June 2022

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

Mr. Fry, we congratulate you on your appointment as Special Rapporteur. You bring long-standing expertise as a climate negotiator supporting human rights-based approaches to climate action, a crucial approach in fulfilling this mandate.

We welcome the intention expressed in your report on assisting States to implement their human rights obligations and incorporate a human rights-based approach into their NDCs and adaptation plans.

The harmful effects of climate change impact negatively on the full enjoyment and realization of a wide range of human rights. Women and girls and persons in vulnerable situations, including indigenous peoples, are especially affected.

Dr. Fry, could you share more thoughts on how you plan to examine and highlight the gender dimension in your work?

We look forward to cooperate with you and to support your work.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of
the right to freedom of opinion and expression
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
24 June 2022

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries.
We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report.

We strongly condemn killing, harassment and intimidation of journalists and media workers. The disproportionate, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and gender-based violence directed at women journalists is extremely worrying. All journalists and media workers must be able to work without fear of reprisals, online as well as offline.

Freedom of opinion and expression is fundamental for resilient and democratic societies and protection of all human rights. Free, independent, strong and pluralistic media helps people make informed decisions and hold governments and public institutions accountable, both in peacetime and in conflict or war situations.

Protecting journalists and media workers requires further attention and constant commitment. We need strengthened cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders across sectors, regions and fora. States have the primary responsibility to protect freedom of expression and ensure the safety of journalists, including ending impunity for crimes against journalists. As media today is dependent on digital platforms, businesses also have a crucial role to play.

Honourable Special Rapporteur, what steps can governments take to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders?

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
27 June 2022

Mr. President,

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his important work in promoting human-rights based approach to social protection and for his report on “non-take-up” of social protection benefits. Our countries fully endorse effective social protection, accessible to all. We also implement policies that seek to tackle non-take-up.

Persons in vulnerable situations are often unaware of their entitlement to financial social benefits. Furthermore, they are often excluded from decision making processes. This should be properly addressed. Targeted information about social protection benefits and about the inclusion of individuals living in poverty, not least women and girls, in the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection schemes is key for take-up in practice, and for ensuring gender equality and that no one is left behind.

Mr. Schutter, according to you, besides the recommendations listed in the report, what is the most effective way to ensure participation of persons in vulnerable situations in decision making processes?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women
Panel 1: Exploring the nexus between climate change and violence against
women and girls through a human rights lens
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
27 June 2022

Madam President,

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

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to our lives and livelihoods. Climate change fuels shortage of food and water, loss of nature, conflict and poverty.

It also exacerbates existing gender inequalities and makes women and girls in all their diversity more vulnerable to sexual and gender based violence. Those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are most at risk.

During the pandemic we saw an increase in sexual and gender based violence globally. We must act now to ensure that the climate crisis does not amplify this negative trend.

We strongly believe that women and girls are key actors in climate action, standing up for their human rights. Therefore, we must ensure their full, equal, effective and meaningful participation.

When women and girls are active participants and change makers, they are also better protected against all forms of violence.

Women environmental human rights defenders risk attacks and violence. They must have our protection.

We are fully committed to strengthening the role and impact of women and girls in all their diversity in climate action.

Dear panellists, what are in your opinion the most effective ways to protect women and girls from sexual and gender based violence in situations where climate change places them at high risk?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women
Panel 2: Human rights-based and gender-responsive care and support systems
Statement by Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
27 June 2022

Mr. President,

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

Gender equality and full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls in all their diversity, including women with disabilities, is a priority for the Nordic and Baltic countries. We therefore welcome today's focus on inclusive, human-rights based and gender-transformative care and support systems.

Women carry the disproportionate burden of caring for children and elderly and domestic work all over the world. Before the pandemic started, women did nearly three times as much unpaid care work as men. The pandemic with school closures and overburdened health systems has exacerbated existing gender inequalities.

The overburden of unpaid care as well as underpaid work constrains women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation in social, economic and political life, their equal access to the labour market and contributes to the increase of the gender pay gap. According to studies there is a direct link between the unequal division of unpaid care in households and gender inequality in the labour market.

The Nordic and Baltic countries have taken significant steps to change the care and support systems in order to create a more gender equal society for all. Social infrastructure, in particular the accessible and affordable child-care and elderly care of good quality is a fundamental prerequisite to tackle inequality. To facilitate the work-life balance, well-compensated childcare leave and state funded child-care is needed for all. Especially in countries with aging population, well-developed home services for long-term care as well as institutional services must be provided. In addition, women's participation in the labour force contributes substantially to the national income. In short, these policies are beneficial for the individual and for the state.

The services alone do not change the uneven care burden. To change the patterns of inequality we need to address and eliminate patriarchal and gender stereotypes and harmful social norms in the public and private spheres. Structural inequalities across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection need to be addressed.

I thank you!

Human Rights Council
50th session
Panel on adverse effects of climate change on human rights of
people in vulnerable situations
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
28 June 2022

Mr. Chair,

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

We thank the distinguished panelists for their contributions. It is important to ensure a strong global message on the human rights impacts of climate change, disproportionately affecting persons in vulnerable situations.

The Human Rights Council has rightly underlined the interlinkages between human rights and climate change. It is our joint duty to tackle the adverse effects of climate change on the realization of human rights and to enhance a just and equal transition.

We must pay special attention to the protection and promotion of the rights of those who are more acutely impacted by climate change, including women and girls, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, persons in vulnerable situations and environmental defenders.

We thank the panel for highlighting that the integration of human rights into climate action will increase its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It is vital to empower women and persons in vulnerable situations and ensure their full, effective, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels.

Esteemed panelists,

How can we best promote the integration of a gender perspective in climate action?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation
of human rights in Belarus
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
28 June 2022
Delivered by H.E Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur for the report. We strongly support the mandate.

We are alarmed that that the human rights situation has continued to worsen in Belarus. The recent constitutional and other legislative changes cause concern, including the potentially expanded use of the death penalty. Political opponents, civil society organizations, human rights defenders and independent media face systematic repression.

We demand the Belarusian government and authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners, including those who are minors. Rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association must be respected.

The government and authorities have to engage in a credible and inclusive political process resulting in free and fair elections.

We strongly condemn the human rights violations, including unnecessary and disproportionate use of force, arbitrary detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence.

Impunity must end.

We strongly condemn Belarus' involvement in Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
**High-level panel discussion on countering the negative impact of disinformation on the
enjoyment and realization of human rights and on ensuring
a human rights-based response**
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
28 June 2022
Delivered by H.E Mantas Adomėnas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

We thank the panellists for their valuable insights.

There is no doubt that the spread of disinformation has negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights and the functioning of democracies all over the world.

It is even more alarming that often disinformation is created, disseminated and amplified by undemocratic States and their proxies. While, the States are the main duty bearers when it comes to promoting and protecting human rights and strengthening the resilience of societies against manipulative attempts.

Massive disinformation campaign, carried out by Russia in their own country and globally as a part of their ongoing unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, is the most recent and clear-cut example of state-led information manipulation, aiming to mislead audiences, to deflect the blame from Russia's responsibility and to justify its aggression.

We are convinced that there is no other way to counter this phenomenon than by raising societal awareness and promoting access to diverse and reliable information.

The Nordic-Baltic countries are actively promoting digital and media literacy education, digital inclusion, fact-checking and transparent technological solutions that empower individuals and build their resilience.

We, as States, are not alone in this effort. I am pleased to note the crucial role of our civil society and media in identifying, uncovering and debunking false information. These initiatives should be further encouraged.

How could we make sure that all the good practices are transformed into more unified global approach to countering disinformation in full compliance with the international human rights law?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry
on the Syrian Arab Republic
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
29 June 2022

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

After eleven years of a brutal armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, civilians continue to bear the brunt of gross violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed against them.

We are gravely concerned about continuous reports of targeted attacks, killings, torture and sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances.

As carefully documented by the Commission of Inquiry, the Syrian regime and its allies continue to indiscriminately target civilians. We demand all parties to the conflict to stop the systematic and widespread human rights violations and abuses, and to comply with international humanitarian law.

We are also concerned about the rising risk of hunger in Syria, particularly in view of increasing global food insecurity as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The extension of Security Council Resolution 2585 for cross-border humanitarian assistance is therefore vital. We express our unwavering support for the Commission of Inquiry and its mandate. The people of Syria deserve accountability for the crimes continuously committed against them.

What can States do to ensure that the war and the sufferings of the people of Syria are not forgotten, and support accountability?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights
situation in Myanmar
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
29 June 2022

Mr. President,

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

Thank you, Special Rapporteur, for your update on the human rights situation in Myanmar.

Since the military coup in Myanmar last year, the country has plunged into a deep human rights and humanitarian crisis.

We continue to strongly condemn the coup and call for an immediate end to all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, mass killings, torture, airstrikes and arson. Ensuring accountability for past and ongoing serious international crimes is critical.

We are deeply concerned by the Myanmar military's reported plans to resume executions. We call on the military to refrain from carrying out any death sentences. We also reiterate our call to release all those arbitrarily detained.

We are deeply concerned about the severe humanitarian situation in Myanmar. Full, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian access to all persons in need must be ensured.

Special Rapporteur,

We are horrified by your recent statement that the children of Myanmar are not only being caught in the crossfire, but that they are often the targets of the violence.

How can the international community act to protect the children of Myanmar?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive dialogue with the International Commission of
Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
30 June 2022

Mr. President,

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

We thank the Commission for its update. We fully agree there is a need to ensure complementarity with the work already done by other mandates.

We welcome recent positive steps taken by the government of Ethiopia in meeting with the Commission in Geneva and encourage the government to fully cooperate with the Commission, including allowing it full access to the country.

However, we remain deeply concerned about human rights violations and abuse by all parties to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia as well as in other parts of the country, especially in light of the recent unlawful killings of hundreds of civilians in the Oromia region on 18 June.

We urge all parties to seek negotiated political peace settlements to all ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia. The parties must ensure unhindered safe, humanitarian access and respect the human rights, security and safety of civilians. It is imperative that grave human rights violations and, in particular, sexual and gender based violence, are documented, investigated and prosecuted.

Commissioners,

Could you share your thoughts on how you will pursue cooperation with relevant stakeholders going forward, including with the Ethiopian government and the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce?

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Urgent Debate on the situation of human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
1 July 2022
Delivered by H.E Þórdís Kolbrún Reykjar Gylfadóttir,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

President,
I speak on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Afghanistan is facing dark times.

When our countries addressed this Council last August, we - as many others - appealed to the Taliban to “live up to their promises, and uphold their obligations under international law to protect civilians and respect human rights”.

Regrettably, the Taliban have shown no willingness to listen to such appeals - neither from the international community nor their own people.

Almost one year on, a hard-hit population has no representative government and is suffering a humanitarian, economic and human rights crisis.

The deteriorating situation for Afghan women and girls is of particular concern. No country of any religious persuasion of its people or government, denies girls the right to a secondary education – with one exception, Afghanistan.

This egregious policy comes in addition to multiple directives and practices significantly impeding women’s rights. This includes freedom of movement, the right to gainful employment and freedom of political, economic, and social participation and decision-making.

A country ravaged by 44 years of conflict, facing dire humanitarian and developmental challenges, can ill afford to exclude half of its population from participating in rebuilding society.

The international community must continue to support Afghanistan. The Security Council provided UNAMA with a comprehensive mandate to engage. We welcome the visit of Special Rapporteur Bennett to Afghanistan and anticipate his first report to the Council in September. We support the convening of an urgent debate and the establishment of a panel.

The UN and the rest of the international community must continue to support the Afghan people and promote the establishment of an inclusive government that represents its people and respects the human rights of all, including those of women and girls.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Annual Panel discussion on Technical Cooperation
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
4 July 2022

Thank you, Mr. President,

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

Today's discussion once again allows us to underline the importance of women and girls' full, equal, and meaningful participation in public life, in decision-making process and in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Only when every person of the society is equally included, we will be able to achieve gender equality, social progress and genuine democracy.

The international community and especially national governments play vital roles in addressing gender inequalities, fighting sexual and gender-based violence, and empowering women and girls. A policy that ensures empowerment of women through capacity building, contributes to the promotion of global peace, democracy, and security. It ensures women and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights with a particular emphasis on eliminating sexual and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, technical cooperation and especially implementation of recommendations of human rights mechanism should be at the core of building and strengthening national frameworks and institutions. These recommendations are given to create enabling legal and policy environment for the full, equal and meaningful participation of all women and girls.

Distinguished panellists,

How would you suggest that women and girls are better informed about their opportunities to participate in public life and decision-making at local level?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism,
racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
5 July 2022

President,

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

We welcome the comprehensive report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, which is an important contribution to the realization of a human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We stay fully committed to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We fully agree with you that the use of distorted allegations of neo-Nazism as a pretext to justify territorial aggression is unacceptable and seriously undermines genuine attempts to combat neo-Nazism.

President,

Let me highlight one advice from the report which we find especially important: development actors should prioritize the meaningful participation, representation, and leadership of racially marginalized peoples, including indigenous peoples, in the creation of alternative approaches to development and human well-being.

In the report, we see no reference to gender issues linked to racism and discrimination in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Women and girls often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on for instance their gender, race, and ethnicity. Is this an observation the Special Rapporteur shares?

Let me end by assuring that we will continue combating racism in our own countries, as well as internationally.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue on High Commissioner's oral presentation on Ukraine and Interim
Report of Secretary General on the situation of human rights in Crimea
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
5 July 2022
Delivered by H.E Mantas Adomėnas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

Thank you, President.

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

We thank the High Commissioner for the update and welcome the report.

After more than 4 months, we continue to be horrified by Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine. The killing of thousands of civilians, including children, and the apparent deliberate bombing of civilian infrastructure is unacceptable and may amount to war crimes. Russia must be held accountable for its actions.

The alarming situation of human rights in the Crimean Peninsula and in areas of eastern Ukraine not controlled by its government is deteriorating further. Reported arbitrary detentions, instances of torture and ill-treatment, forced relocation, placement in filtration camps and persecution of Crimean Tatars cannot be tolerated and must stop.

We urge Russia to grant international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms unimpeded access to Crimea and conflict areas in Ukraine, and ensure an impartial investigation of all allegations of human rights violations and abuses.

We urge Russia to unconditionally withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine. We reiterate our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine and for its democratic future.

Madam High Commissioner, what would be your suggestions to most effectively support human rights defenders in Ukraine?

I thank you.

Human Rights Council
50th session
Interactive Dialogue with the Fact-Finding Mission on Libya
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries (NB8)
6 July 2022

Mr. President,

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

We thank the members of the Fact-Finding Mission for their report and reiterate our full support for their mandate. Their work is critical to ensure accountability and to end impunity for human rights violations and abuses in Libya.

The human rights situation in Libya remains deeply concerning. It is unacceptable that reports of torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and sexual and gender-based violence remain largely unaddressed. We are also concerned about the use of arbitrary detention and shrinking civic space.

We condemn the resurgence of politically motivated violence. We call on all actors to work towards a peaceful political transition in Libya and to adopt a holistic National Human Rights Plan of Action to ensure full respect for human rights and a sustainable transition to peace and democracy through fair elections.

Mr. President,

The work of the Mission is not yet completed. It is essential that it is given the necessary time and resources to complete its mandate. We therefore urge for the extension of the mandate and encourage all parties to fully cooperate with the Mission.

I thank you.