

**Interactive Dialogue on  
High Commissioners report on State response to pandemics  
21 June 2021  
Statement by Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

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

We thank the High Commissioner for her report on State responses to pandemics that once again very clearly manifests the need to step up our efforts in ensuring human rights for all.

We are concerned to see that despite the many calls to remain vigilant and not allow responding to the pandemic at a prize of weakening democracy, the respect of rule of law and human rights, the pandemic has been used as a pretext by some for shrinking democratic and civil society space.

Disproportionate measures to fight the pandemic have hit hard against many societies and especially those in vulnerable circumstances, including women and children. It is worrying that the attacks on media freedom and independence of the judiciary have been on a rise, leaving governments to act without almost no oversight and no opportunity to hold them to account.

This crisis is still far from over. We therefore need to learn our lessons and to ensure that human rights are at the center of our actions. We fully support the High Commissioners call to ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual- and gender-based violence, and access to effective, gender-transformative judicial and other remedies.

The Nordic and Baltic countries believe that to build back better we need a transformative change, with the key words being empowerment, participation and democracy. A crisis should never be used as an excuse for undue restrictions on democracy or violations of human rights.

I thank you!

**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Special Rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea  
21 June 2021**

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

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

We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for his update.

We reiterate our grave concerns of Eritrean forces presence and continuing reports of serious human rights violations [, including arbitrary killings, SGBV, destruction of food-production, looting of humanitarian aid, mass displacement of civilians and forced returns of refugees.] in Tigray. We welcome the March agreement between President Afwerki and Prime Minister Abiy on the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Tigray and call for immediate implementation of the withdrawal

We welcome the ongoing investigation by OHCHR and Ethiopian Commission for Human Rights of alleged human rights violations and abuses in Tigray. Impunity cannot be accepted; perpetrators need to be brought to justice in full respect of fair trial guarantees.

We remain concerned about persistent human rights violations and abuses in Eritrea [, including indefinite National Service, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, inhumane prison conditions, and restrictions on freedoms of expression, religion, or belief]. We call upon the Government to ensure the respect for all human rights of all its citizens. We strongly encourage the Government to implement accepted recommendations from the Universal periodic review.

Finally, we urge the Government to strengthen its engagement with the Council's mechanisms, including by granting the Special Rapporteur full and unhindered access to the country.

Dr. Babiker,

How can the international community support necessary efforts to improve the human rights situation in Eritrea [and address the situation of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers still present in Tigray/Ethiopia and those alleged being forcefully repatriated to Eritrea]?

Thank you.

**High-level panel discussion on the multisectoral prevention of and response, including the global response, to female genital mutilation  
23 June 2021**

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

Madam President, Excellencies, distinguished colleagues.

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

We welcome this important – and timely – panel discussion.

A little over a year ago, the number of girls subjected to Female Genital Mutilation, was decreasing. One year later, we fear that achieving the SDGs by 2030, including the elimination of FGM, is much less realistic.

Covid-19 reinforces existing inequalities. Violence and harmful practices against women and girls are increasing. Because of the pandemic, there may be 2 million additional cases of female genital mutilation towards 2030.

FGM is an extreme form of SGBV and must be averted. To eliminate FGM we must use a wide range of interventions; from legislation, policies, change of norms, access to essential health services and education, [including comprehensive sexuality education,] and not least broad and general measures for gender equality and SRHR.

2021 should be an opportunity to unite for action and to increase the resources and investments needed to see a complete end to FGM by 2030.

We, the Nordic and Baltic countries are committed to continue to work against FGM, one of the most extreme forms of violence against women and girls, and a gross violation of their human rights.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Special Rapporteur on the right to health  
23 June 2021**

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

Madame President,

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

We warmly welcome Madam Tlaleng Mofokeng as the new Special Rapporteur on the right to health and congratulate her on her appointment.

The current global pandemic has highlighted glaring disparities between people's enjoyment of all human rights. The overloaded health systems, reallocation of human and financial resources and disruption in global supply chains have undermined the right to health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly for women and girls.

Madam Special Rapporteur, we thank you for your first report to the Human Rights Council outlining the priority themes for your work in the coming years. We warmly welcome your intended focus on SRHR, with special attention to the needs of adolescents, access to information and education, the role of digital technologies and accountability mechanisms, and participation of all stakeholders in this context. The ability for all women and girls to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, and to have access to the information they need to make healthy decisions plays a critical role in their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

Madame Mofokeng,

In your report, you refer to the work of different Special Rapporteurs. Do you already foresee some form of cooperation in support of promotion of the right to health including SRHR?

To conclude, we stand ready to support you in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights.

I thank you!

**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants  
23 June 2021**

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

Madam President,

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his presentation and welcome his report. We are deeply concerned by its findings of severe human rights violations.

Safe, orderly and regular migration is an important part of relationships between countries and regions.

Mixed migration, however, can present complex challenges. It requires effective and comprehensive migration management systems, including registration, evaluation of protection needs, and processing of asylum claims. It also requires well-functioning return and readmission for those without a legal right to stay.

While each state's interest in governing their borders is legitimate, we strongly affirm our commitment to protect human rights of all refugees and migrants - irrespective of their status, in particular children.

An asylum system that is efficient in compliance with the rule of law and sustainable, implies an obligation to ensure the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution. We uphold this human right by guaranteeing that those seeking asylum in our countries will have access to an individual examination of the grounds for their applications and that they are protected from refoulment.

This is a responsibility that we will continue to assume.

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Special Rapporteur on the right to education  
24 June 2021**

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

Madame President,

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

Quality education for all must respond to and reflect learners' identities and lived realities in all their diversity such as gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, ethnic, linguistic or religious background, disability, diversity linked to socio-economic situation and migration background.

Learners should receive the necessary support in learning – especially in early childhood education and care– and have the opportunity to learn their own mother tongue, including sign languages. According to UNESCO, some 40% of the global population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand. This is a clear challenge for everyone's right to education.

At all levels of education, curricula must be based on human rights and fact-based learning materials promoting knowledge and tolerance. The promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights lay the basis for multicultural learning.

Thank you!

**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity  
24 June 2021**

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

Madame Chair,

Mr Independent Expert,

Human rights must be universally enjoyed by everyone irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity. We, the Nordic Baltic states, have repeatedly stated so and we continue to stand by this contention. But what does it mean?

It means rejecting violence, discrimination and stigmatization based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Embedded norms and stereotypes concerning sexual orientation and gender identity are often combined with a lack of adequate legal protection to safeguard LGBTI persons' enjoyment of all human rights.

It means respecting that gender is not necessarily perceived or experienced binary, and that gender identity and gender expression do not always correlate with biological sex. Discrimination and intolerance for diversity are predominantly, but not exclusively, seen in countries where the space for civil society and democracy is already limited or shrinking.

It means recognizing that love is love and precious in its own right. Still, consensual same-sex relationships are criminalized in almost 70 states – in some cases even by death penalty. This is utterly unacceptable.

Mr Independent Expert,

How can comprehensive sexuality education best contribute to achieving the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights?

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced  
persons (IDPs)  
25 June 2021**

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

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

Thank you to Special Rapporteur Cecilia Jimenez-Damary for the report and briefing.

Housing, land and property constitute critical components in achieving durable solutions for internally displaced persons. These issues can also drive displacement. Tensions and conflict related to land and housing are likely to increase, also due to an increased number of IDPs. According to UNHCR's new Global Trends report, there are now 48 million IDPs, a sharp increase from one year ago.

The situation of internally displaced women is often particularly challenging. Discrimination based on tenure is prohibited under human rights law. However, in many societies, patriarchal, statutory, customary, religious and social norms disadvantage women in terms of access to land and in terms of ownership and inheritance of land. Women's insecurity of tenure in relation to land and housing threatens food security and the well-being of their families. These forms of discrimination are unacceptable, and no efforts should be spared to rectify this injustice. situation.

Limited adequate housing opportunities also represent an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

We must strengthen the international efforts to enhance the situations of internal displacement, including on housing, land and property issues. The report by the High-Level Panel for Internal Displacement to be launched later this year will be important in this regard.



**Interactive Dialogue with  
The Secretary General's Special Advisor  
on the Prevention of Genocide  
25 June 2021**

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

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

We welcome Special Advisor Nderitu on her first visit to the Human Rights Council and reaffirm our firm commitment to atrocity prevention and our full support to her Office.

We welcome today's exchange with the Special Advisor, as we consider it natural and necessary for the Human Rights Council to contribute to atrocity prevention. Natural because the Council's mandate includes prevention. Necessary because it is well established that atrocity crimes such as genocide do not occur over night, but are often the result of patterns of violations and abuses of human rights. We therefore also look forward to the upcoming High Commissioner's report to build on February's successful intersessional on the prevention of genocide.

We seek to continue this work in Geneva and urge you, Madame Special Advisor, to contribute by strengthening efforts to continuously provide Member States and UN organs with assessments of country situations as well as concrete and timely advice on how to prevent genocide and other atrocity crimes.

From a human rights perspective, we also encourage regular updates from your Office about its initiatives regarding hate speech, the responsibility of social media companies and the role of religious leaders and actors. Practical examples will help increase our understanding on how to more effectively translate prevention into concrete action and also provide new opportunities to collaborate.

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
Working Group on discrimination against women and girls  
25 June 2021  
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

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

Crises, conflicts and humanitarian emergencies have dire consequences for all affected, but particularly for women and girls. But human rights do not end, when crisis strikes.

Just as,

- Pregnancies do not end, when crisis strikes.
- Sexual and gender-based violence does not end, rather it increases, when crisis strikes.
- At times of crises, women and girls face particular risks of human rights violations and abuses.

The full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights is indispensable to all women and girls' ability to exercise their rights and for the achievement of gender equality. Access to sexual and reproductive health services, goods, and information is essential at all times, but particularly in times of crisis.

In your report, you draw attention to the widespread failure of States to adequately recognize, respect, protect and fulfil SRHR, both before and during times of crisis. We cannot turn a blind eye to this. States have a duty to continue to meet their core obligations when crisis strikes. The failure to ensure SRHR is discriminatory and constitutes a major crisis in itself.

What concrete measures would you recommend to ensure SRHR is integrated into crisis prevention, response, and recovery plans?

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and  
consequences  
25 June 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

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.

First of all, let me express our countries' firm commitment to achieving gender equality, at home and globally. Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, online and offline, is a prerequisite for successfully doing so. We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report on rape as a grave, systematic and widespread human rights violation, a crime and a manifestation of gender-based violence against women and girls, and its prevention.

Madam Special Rapporteur,

In your report, you conclude that in the past 30 years, the explicit inclusion of lack of consent has emerged as the central and constitutive element of the definition of rape. In line with the Istanbul Convention, you recommend States to, inter alia, incorporate international human rights standards on rape into their national laws, and to explicitly include lack of consent as the basis for the legal definition of rape.

Beyond legislation, what concrete measures would you recommend States to take in order to promote a culture of consent, including among young persons?

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with  
the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and  
children**

**28 June 2021**

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

Madam President,

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

We highly welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur, Ms Siobhán Mullally.

Safeguarding the protection and human rights of victims of trafficking are crucial. More must be done to prevent trafficking including in conflict and other humanitarian situations. Following the principle of non-punishment of victims, trafficked persons should not be subject to arrest, charge, detention, prosecution, or be penalized or otherwise punished for illegal conduct that they committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked.

We constantly need to enhance our knowledge and efforts on how to ensure the rights and protection of victims. The Nordic and Baltic countries are therefore grateful for the Special Rapporteur's set of recommendations aimed at supporting the application of the non-punishment principle.

Madame Special Rapporteur,

As a part of the crime scheme traffickers can use victims to commit acts proximate to the exploitation itself. By doing so they expose victims to greater risk while they also shield themselves from prosecution. What needs to be done to ensure that traffickers do not evade criminal liability and that victims of trafficking are not punished for the crimes of their perpetrators?

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with the  
Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational  
corporations and other business enterprises  
28 June 2021  
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

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

We thank the Working Group for the stocktaking report on the first 10 years with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and reiterate our strong support for the Guiding Principles as the consensual, global framework to promote the effective prevention of business-related human rights harm, and remedy for the victims.

As is noted in the report, the endorsement in 2011 marked only the end of the beginning. While a lot has been achieved, the untapped potential for broader and deeper implementation of the guidelines is vast. The Nordic and Baltic countries are committed to continue pursuing the best smart mix of measures – national and international, mandatory and voluntary – to foster business respect for human rights.

The report notes that the UNGPs have been largely absent from efforts to achieve the SDGs. How could the UNGPs and the 2030 Agenda be better linked, in recognition of human rights being the foundation of both?

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with the  
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions  
30 June 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, Madam President,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries, including my own country Sweden.

We warmly welcome the incoming Special Rapporteur, Mr. Morris Tidball-Binz, to his position and thank him for the update of the report by his predecessor.

We strongly condemn any instances of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Such acts are abhorrent and represent serious violations of human rights, including of the inherent right to life. Impunity for extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions undermines democracy, accountability and the rule of law and must be prevented.

We welcome the approach on prevention of extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions and on femicide as a preventable violation of the right to life including a review of the extension of application of the Minnesota Protocol and recommendations for its effective implementation.

We look forward to the first report of the incoming Special Rapporteur to the forthcoming 76th session of the General Assembly. We hope that the engagement of the mandate will continue to be discharged in a proactive way and with a gender focus.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, so far, what are the key strategic priorities identified for your tenure?

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom  
of peaceful assembly and of association  
1 July 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

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 justice and internet shutdowns and express our full support for his mandate.

Access to justice is fundamental to ensuring that human rights are respected, including the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. It is crucial to uphold the rule of law based on independent, competent and impartial judiciaries, and to create, strengthen and expand an enabling environment in the societies. We encourage all states to ensure unobstructed access to justice (as it helps) to prevent future violations and abuses and assists in the fight against impunity.

We are deeply concerned about the growing number of governments imposing internet shutdowns, deliberately obstructing functioning of the internet and targeting applications and services used by the protesters. This practice cannot be tolerated.

The current pandemic has reminded us of the importance of access to internet as a precondition for the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms online, including the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. All States must ensure that internet remains open, free, accessible and secure at all times.

Mr Voule, could you please elaborate on the challenges to ensure accountability for restrictions to the rights to freedom of peaceful association and of assembly online, including internet shutdowns, and possible steps that this Council should take to further advance the access to justice and fight against impunity?

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with the  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to  
freedom of opinion and expression  
1 July 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her important and timely report.

A democratic society depends on the respect for freedom of opinion and of expression. It is essential to ensure individuals' opportunities to participate in political processes, society at large and enables a number of other rights to be enjoyed.

We are concerned by an increasing public mistrust in journalism, media and in democratic institutions. Disinformation – including online - is contributing to this worrisome trend. The negative consequences of the pandemic have been aggravated by undue restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion, expression, and media freedom in many countries.

Responses to the underlying factors of disinformation should be in full compliance within the international human rights framework and requires active engagement by states, companies, civil society and media.

We welcome multi-stakeholder consultations on safeguarding and promoting human rights online and offline, which is essential to the right to freedom of expression.

Ms. Special Rapporteur, what would you say are the most essential responses to address disinformation without infringing upon the right to freedom of expression?



**Interactive Dialogue with the  
Working Group on arbitrary detention  
2 July 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, Madam President.

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

We welcome the Working Group's continued efforts to prevent and end the practice of arbitrary detention, and thank them for presenting their latest report on arbitrary detention relating to drug policies.

The Nordic-Baltic countries are alarmed that some States use drug charges to suppress the activities of human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents and other critics of the Government. We concur with the Working Group's recommendations in this regard and call on all States to ensure that human rights defenders, activists and journalists are able work free from persecution, violence, arbitrary arrests, threats of criminalisation or other forms of harassment.

We agree that civil society should be granted a meaningful consultative role in developing national policies, including on drug issues.

To this end, what are the best practices in ensuring meaningful civil society participation in all levels of policy development?

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with the  
the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy  
2 July 2021  
Statement by Latvia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, Madam President.

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

We thank Prof. Cannataci for his work as the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy. However, we would like to underscore the importance of timely reporting, active engagement and a vocal and independent voice, to fulfil the mandates of the Special Procedures.

AI solutions offer a wide range of benefits in all areas of human development. However, we must also be aware of the risks they may pose for the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to privacy and prohibition of discrimination. We echo the Special Rapporteur's call for human rights based use and development of AI.

Ensuring children's right to privacy is especially pertinent in the 'digital age'. One year after the start of the pandemic, many children across the world continue their education online. [The report observes that the shift to online learning has amplified the existing power imbalances between children and other stakeholders, and that privacy is often set aside in favour of other considerations.]

In this regard, we would like to ask: what are the best means to ensure that children's right to privacy is respected when using online education tools?

Thank you.

**Annual Discussion on Women's Rights**  
**Panel 1: Violence against women and girls with disabilities**  
**5 July 2021**  
**Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President, distinguished panelists,

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

Due to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, women and girls with disabilities face unique and pervasive barriers to the full realization of their human rights. They have a much higher risk of being victims and survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence and harassment than others. Increased online abuse towards persons with disabilities has far-reaching impacts.

The emergence of a shadow pandemic of violence has put women and girls with disabilities at an even greater risk. It has not only increased risk factors for sexual- and gender-based violence but also increased barriers to accessing essential support and health services that enable independent living. Confinement measures have meant that women and girls with disabilities have often been confined to the same premises as their perpetrators.

The Nordic-Baltic countries are committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities, and achieving gender equality for women and girls in all their diversity. We encourage all states to join the Istanbul Convention. It is an important instrument to eliminate violence against all women and girls once and for all, because every woman and girl has the right to a life free from violence.

We have a question for the panelists:

How could we be more effective in ensuring accountability as well as addressing the root causes and negative stereotypes at the intersection of disability and gender?

I thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with the  
the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus  
5 July 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

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

I would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for her report, which outlined the extent of serious human rights violations committed by Belarusian authorities in the context of the fraudulent elections of August 2020. It also reflects the long-standing, chronic patterns of systemic human rights violations in the country unprecedented in scope and gravity.

Recently we witnessed the new wave of harassment, intimidation, and persecution of human rights defenders and especially journalists. We urge Belarus to stop this practice, to release immediately, unconditionally and rehabilitate all those arbitrarily detained for exercising their human rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of opinion and of association.

International community sends a clear message to Belarussian authorities that all perpetrators of serious human rights violations, including torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, and enforced disappearances must be brought to justice.

Continued international scrutiny of the worsening human rights situation in Belarus should be maintained and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation in Belarus should be extended.

I thank you.

**Annual Discussion on Women's Rights**  
**Panel 2:**  
**Gender-equal socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**  
**6 July 2021**  
**Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you Chair.

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

We thank distinguished panelists for their contributions to this important discussion.

As the pandemic continues to affect our lives in many negative ways including increase in gender based violence, unintended pregnancies and child marriage. Setbacks in gender equality and women's and girls' equal economic participation are unprecedented. In addition to pre-existing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities in labour market, women and girls absorbed majority of care needs during the pandemic, sacrificing their retention and return to employment, livelihood and education.

We applaud the courage of women who have been and still are at the frontline of responding to the pandemic. At the same time the worrying trend of their underrepresentation in decision making processes continues.

Now it's the time for change. Covid-19 should be seen as an opportunity to build back better, greener and more gender equal. We encourage all states to develop gender-transformative economic recovery plans, ensure full, equal, effective and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes and take measures to achieve financial inclusion, equal pay and equal opportunities for all women and girls.

The Nordic-Baltic countries firmly believe that women are drivers of change. What concrete steps should be taken to ensure the creation of enabling environment for all women and girls – in all their diversity - to achieve their full empowerment?

**Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on  
the Syrian Arab Republic  
6 July 2021  
Statement by Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

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

The conflict in Syria, which has lasted more than a decade, has caused enormous human suffering and widespread violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. A political process in line with UNSCR 2254 is the only way forward to finding a lasting peace and stability in Syria.

We notice with regret the lack of substantive progress in the political process. The so-called Presidential elections held in May this year were neither free nor fair, did not represent the will of the Syrian people and were not in line with Resolution 2254.

The CoI-report highlights that over the past 10 years, grave crimes, violations and abuses have been committed by the parties to the conflict, including acts which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. These acts have taken place with almost absolute impunity, perpetrators have not been held accountable. Millions have been displaced, nearly half a million have perished, tens of thousands remain arbitrarily detained or missing in Syria, including those subject to enforced disappearance. We remain deeply concerned by the terrible scale of grave violations committed against women and children during the conflict.

The dire humanitarian situation requires our continued support to the people in Syria. All modalities to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to all people in need in Syria are necessary. Cross-line deliveries still remain limited and do not meet growing humanitarian needs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore imperative that the Security Council extends and expands the mandate for humanitarian cross-border access for humanitarian assistance in the coming days. A failure to extend the Security Council's authorization for the cross-border operations would disrupt life-saving assistance to millions of people whom are among the most vulnerable.

A lasting and sustained nationwide ceasefire is needed to provide a path to a broad and inclusive political transition and to national reconciliation. Impunity must end and the respect for human rights for the people in Syria must be restored.

Commissioners; in view of the protracted conflict, we must remain committed to finding a sustainable and just peace in Syria. What is - in your opinion – the best way forward to ensure justice and accountability for the Syrian people?

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue on HC oral update on Myanmar**  
**6 July 2021**  
**Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

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

We welcome the update by the High Commissioner on Myanmar and echo the concern for a deepening humanitarian emergency.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the coup in Myanmar and the military's use of deadly violence against peaceful protestors and call for the systematic repression of civil and political rights to immediately end. The international community must refrain from any measures that risk lending legitimacy to the military regime. All arbitrarily arrested must be released including political leaders. Internet and media restrictions and shutdowns must be lifted. We are also worried about the impact on and protection needs of women and girls , especially sexual and gender-based violence and the worsening situation for the Rohingyas and other minorities.

It is imperative to ensure accountability for the most serious international crimes and violations of international law. We reiterate our strong support for the IIMM and underline the importance of access for all UN bodies and international mechanisms to Myanmar.

Madam High Commissioner, how can the international community promote dialogue to get Myanmar back on the path to democracy?

Thank you.

**Quadrennial Panel on Sports & Olympic Ideal**  
**7 July 2021**  
**Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

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

We wish to thank the panelists for their valuable insights.

In today's focus on leveraging sport as a way to promote human rights for young people, the link to the right to health seems obvious. Participating in sports fosters not only physical but also mental health of young people.

But sports can have a much larger impact on young people's experience with, and perception of, human rights. Participation in sports should encourage social inclusion of children and youth from different cultural or socio-economic backgrounds without discrimination of any kind, and promote gender equality. As such, sports can play an important role in promoting the values of equal treatment and non-discrimination in children and youth, including amongst those with disabilities.

These values should of course also be respected in the world of professional athletes. We cannot expect young people to realize the positive potential sports can have on human rights, if they at the same time witness that those human rights are not respected in the realm of professional sports.

In this regard, the Nordic and Baltic countries call for promotion of non-discrimination and respect for all human rights, including the rights of migrant workers, minorities and LGBTI-persons, as well as freedom of expression and assembly, in the planning, preparation and execution of major sporting events.

Thank you.



**Interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteur on  
Human Rights situation in Myanmar  
7 July 2021  
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you, President.

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

We thank the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Tom Andrews, for his important work and firmly support his mandate.

We continue to strongly condemn the military coup and all forms of violence and abuses on Myanmar people. Mass arbitrary detentions, intimidation and systematic repression of civil and political rights must be stopped immediately, and perpetrators brought to justice.

We take positive note of the release of some detainees by the Myanmar military authorities and call for the release of all political leaders, journalists and human rights defenders. Restrictions on access to information and freedom of expression must be lifted.

We call upon the Myanmar military leadership to end the state of emergency; to release all those arbitrarily detained; to end discrimination of ethnic minorities and to fully respect and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

We urge Myanmar to fully cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms.

Only respect for the will and choice of people can bring Myanmar back to the path of democratic development and stability.

Mr. Special Rapporteur,

What additional steps are necessary to address the crisis?

**Annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation and capacity-  
building on the theme “Technical cooperation to advance the right to  
education and ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and  
lifelong learning for all”**

**12 July 2021**

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

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

We reaffirm our strong support to the work of the OHCHR in providing technical assistance and capacity building, including in ensuring the promotion and protection of the right to education.

Education is essential in enabling rights-holders to demand respect for their human rights and for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda with human rights at the core.

We are deeply concerned about the school closures due to Covid-19 pandemic that have disrupted learning worldwide with more than 90 % of all learners impacted at the peak of the crisis. Inequalities are deepening and learners in vulnerable or marginalized situations have been hardest hit. Millions of girls worldwide are at risk of dropping out of school.

The Nordic-Baltic countries promote actively the right to equal and inclusive education for all, with a particular focus on those living in vulnerable situations, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, and children in crises or conflict situations, and those living in poor or rural areas.

Finally, a question:

How can we best leverage the potential of new technologies in ensuring quality education for all, for example by providing distance learning opportunities, and thus help to diminish different forms of divides and inequalities?

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue on High Commissioner's report on systemic racism  
12 July 2021  
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

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

Let me begin by re-affirming our strong commitment to combating all forms of racism.

We strongly condemn systemic racism and racially motivated violence. Such acts violate fundamental human rights. And they are detrimental both to individuals, and to the foundation of our societies.

All states have a responsibility to combat and prevent racial discrimination, inequality and injustice. In this regard, law enforcement officers play an essential role.

Over the last year, we have witnessed a revitalization of public engagement against racism. This is much welcomed. It has reminded us all that we need to use this momentum to enhance efforts to combat racism. As the High Commissioner recommends, this also applies to the Human Rights Council.

In this regard, we would like to ask: How could this Council, including its existing mechanisms and special procedures, contribute to counter racial-bias, ensure human rights and end impunity?

**Interactive Dialogue on the OHCHR Report on Ukraine**  
**13 July 2021**  
**Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

The Nordic-Baltic countries thank the Deputy High Commissioner for the update and the report. We reiterate our strong support for the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission.

We regret this spring's military build-up by Russia along the Ukrainian border and in Crimea, as well as the continued casualties in eastern Ukraine. Our position is clear and well-known: we strongly condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine including the illegal annexation of Crimea, which we will not recognize. We commend Ukraine's efforts to restore its control over Crimea.

Conflict-related detentions remain one of the key human rights and humanitarian challenges in the conflict-affected areas, particularly in the non-government-controlled areas. Degrading conditions of detention and ill-treatment of detainees are systemic. The lack of respect for the rule of law, humanitarian law and human rights, including the right to a fair trial, in the non-government controlled areas in eastern Ukraine is unacceptable. Human rights abuses must end and those responsible must be held accountable.

We call on Russia to uphold its obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We stress the need to implement the Minsk agreements fully in accordance with international law and in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and we call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard.

Thank you.

**Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on  
the Central African Republic  
13 July 2021  
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madame President,

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

We thank the Independent Expert for his ongoing efforts to underline human rights concerns in the Central African Republic (CAR) and we remain supportive of OHCHR's human rights mandate at MINUSCA.

The human rights and humanitarian situation in the CAR remains of great concern. We are alarmed by reports of ongoing violence, forced displacement, restricted humanitarian access, and the unprecedented surge in sexual and gender-based violence.

The dire situation facing women and children must be addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the threat of gender-based violence and underscored the fragility of hard-won gains towards gender equality. The Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security must be implemented.

We welcome the establishment of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission. In the absence of transitional justice and accountability for past and recent human rights violations and abuses, peace and stability in the CAR will not be achieved. All allegations of violations and abuses must be efficiently and independently investigated.

We would like to ask the Independent Expert, how will the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission address allegations of gender-based violations and abuses in CAR, including those attributed to Central African forces and other bilateral forces?

I thank you.