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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 55/15. It contains information on relevant developments of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms, and on the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that contribute to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024.

In the report, the High Commissioner concludes that in order to enhance the implementation of the Declaration and to ensure the full enjoyment of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, States should advance the adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, as well as develop and put into practice effective anti-discrimination measures and policies aimed at effectively eliminating all forms of discrimination against persons belonging to such minorities and strengthening advocacy against discrimination. The High Commissioner also reiterates that political and religious leaders should speak out firmly and promptly against all incitement to violence and hatred.



I. Introduction

1. In April 2024, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 55/15 on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. In that resolution, the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to present an annual report containing information on relevant developments of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms, and on the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at headquarters and in the field that contribute to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

2. In its resolution 55/15, the Human Rights Council urged States, with a view to enhancing the implementation of the Declaration and to ensuring the full enjoyment of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, to take appropriate measures by, inter alia, advancing the adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and developing and implementing effective anti-discrimination measures and policies in order to effectively eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons belonging to such minorities and strengthen advocacy against discrimination. The adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation is also a long-standing recommendation of the other United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the universal periodic review and human rights treaty bodies, which warrants making this thematic issue the focus of this year's report.

3. The adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, which have the purpose and effect of prohibiting all forms of discrimination, is an essential step in the effort to realize the right to non-discrimination. To that effect, States should pass laws banning all forms of discrimination recognized by international law, ensure that this right to non-discrimination is enforced and implement measures to address historical or structural discrimination, which has a disproportionate impact on those in situations of vulnerability, such as persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.¹

4. Many of the activities and developments highlighted in the present report were carried out throughout the year to support States in accelerating the adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. Those efforts also focused on creating and implementing effective measures and policies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and to enhance advocacy against discrimination.

II. Comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and minorities

A. Work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the advancement of anti-discrimination laws

5. In 2024, OHCHR expanded its support for efforts to enact comprehensive anti-discrimination laws worldwide, engaging at the country level with Governments, legislators and civil society in Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. OHCHR also launched Russian and Spanish translations of the publication *Protecting Minority Rights: A Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation* at events in Bishkek and at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San Jose, respectively. Both events were streamed online to expand the outreach to Russian- and Spanish-speaking legal practitioners and civil society organizations. Arabic and Chinese translations were also published during 2024.

¹ See OHCHR and Equal Rights Trust, *Protecting Minority Rights: A Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation* (United Nations publication, 2023).

6. The impact of the *Practical Guide* has already been significant. Since the beginning of the year, public authorities and national human rights institutions in Australia, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico have initiated anti-discrimination law reform projects, citing the *Practical Guide* as both the reason for doing so and the basis for recommendations to begin revisions of national law. In addition, in Armenia, Costa Rica and Japan the *Practical Guide* is being used by civil society organizations advocating for new laws. In the period 2025–2027, OHCHR plans to support efforts at the national level in 34 countries that work on equality law reform.

7. In March, OHCHR, Equal Rights Trust and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) organized a panel discussion on the theme of “Protecting minority rights: towards comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation” for parliamentarians taking part in the IPU Assembly. The aims of the panel discussion were to raise parliamentary awareness of the need for, and necessary contents of, comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, in line with the *Practical Guide*, share good practices on the parliamentary process for the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, discuss common challenges and problems in legislating in this area and identify potential solutions, including the role of IPU.

8. In November, during the seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, OHCHR held a side event on the theme of “Protecting minority rights: towards comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation”. The aim of the side event was to raise awareness of the need for, and necessary contents of, comprehensive anti-discrimination law, in line with the *Practical Guide*. The side event provided an opportunity to share good practices on adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and on their positive impacts, as well as to discuss common challenges and problems in legislating in this area and identify potential solutions.

9. In November, the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia and Equal Rights Trust joined forces in a workshop to support civil society organizations in Indonesia working toward the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. At the request of the Indonesian organizations, the workshop focused on how to address questions of enforcement in the draft bill. The workshop was the first of three online workshops planned to support the process of legislative drafting in Indonesia.

B. Promotion of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation by the human rights treaty bodies

10. In July, in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of India, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern at the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that provided full and effective protection as required under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as at the lack of effective judicial and administrative remedies against discrimination. The Committee recommended, inter alia, that India adopt comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination, including intersectional, direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and the private sectors and on all grounds prohibited under the Covenant, and ensure access to effective and appropriate remedies for victims.²

11. In August, in its concluding observations on the combined twentieth to twenty-seventh periodic reports of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the lack of an explicit definition of racial discrimination on all the grounds enumerated in article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and of an express prohibition of intersecting forms of discrimination or structural, direct and indirect racial discrimination in the national legislative framework. The Committee also expressed concern that some articles of the Islamic Penal Code seriously endangered and disproportionately restricted the legitimate exercise by members of ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups of the rights to freedom of expression and of association and allowed for arbitrary arrest and detention and for harsh punishment and the use of the death

² [CCPR/C/IND/CO/4](#), paras. 13 and 14 (a).

penalty. The Committee also expressed concern at restrictions of the right of members of ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the criminalization of blasphemy and apostasy. The Committee reiterated its recommendations that the Islamic Republic of Iran review its legislative framework and adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation aligned with the provisions of the Convention and that it ensure that its legislation was not used to intimidate, harass, arbitrarily detain or prosecute members of ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups for exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.³

12. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh periodic reports of Iraq, reiterated its recommendations that Iraq should adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that contained a clear definition of racial discrimination and encompassed structural, direct, indirect and intersecting forms of discrimination in the public and the private spheres.⁴

13. In November, in its concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern that the domestic legal framework did not provide protection against discrimination on all the grounds covered by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It was also concerned about reports of discrimination against persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, including Christian, Ahmadi, Baloch, Hindu, Pashtun and Sikh minorities. The Committee recommended that Pakistan adopt comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination, including intersectional, direct and indirect discrimination in all spheres on all grounds prohibited under the Covenant, and ensure access to effective and appropriate remedies for victims.⁵

III. Other activities and developments contributing to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

A. Selected global, regional and country engagement activities

14. In February, the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia provided technical support for the preparation of the report entitled “Strengthening the United Nations programming to combat racial discrimination and advance the rights of minorities in Lao People’s Democratic Republic”.⁶ The report examined the human rights challenges faced by ethnic minorities in the country, focusing on their social inclusion, political participation, access to services and obstacles related to land loss, resettlement and violations of human rights such as freedom of expression and association. The report contained recommendations for the United Nations country team for developing strategies to address the obstacles and unique needs of ethnic minorities in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic that impact their enjoyment of human rights and full inclusion in the society. The recommendations were echoed by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, who visited the Lao People’s Democratic Republic in November.⁷

³ CERD/C/IRN/CO/20-27, paras. 8, 9, 20 (b), 24, 25 (a) and 26.

⁴ CERD/C/IRQ/CO/26-27, para. 9.

⁵ CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 10 and 11.

⁶ Available at www.researchgate.net/publication/378592642_Strengthening_United_Nations_Programming_to_Combat_Racial_Discrimination_and_Advance_the_Rights_of_Minorities_in_the_Lao_People’s_Democratic_Republic.

⁷ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/culturalrights/statements/SR-Cultural-Rights-EOM-Statement-Laos-20241129.pdf.

15. In Kyrgyzstan, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia supported the Ministry of Interior Academy in developing and adopting a curriculum for police officers on inter-ethnic relations and social cohesion.

16. OHCHR has become one of the key stakeholders in the implementation and in monitoring the impact of the European Union Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025⁸ and in the design of the post-2025 European Union anti-racism strategy. In August, in the context of the International Day for People of African Descent, the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe, in collaboration with the European Public Health Alliance, held an event which led to a set of recommendations for the forthcoming post-2025 European Union anti-racism strategy to the European Commission Coordinator on combating racism.⁹

17. OHCHR advocacy at the European Union level for the meaningful participation of people of African descent and Roma has led to European Union partner institutions referring to and increasingly putting into practice a human rights-based approach to policy implementation and offering more opportunities for the participation of minorities during European Union-led policy events. The OHCHR Regional Office for Europe has also successfully advocated for the use at the European Union level of the OHCHR indicators framework¹⁰ as a basis for monitoring and measuring the level of implementation of human rights in Europe. The framework was adopted by the Human Rights Cities Network in September and by Dutch municipalities in November. It is also being increasingly referenced by the European Commission Coordinator on combating racism, as well as in the context of implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework. OHCHR has consistently advocated for the effective adoption and use of human right indicators to monitor the impact of the European Commission strategies and actions on combating racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism.

18. In Thailand, discussions are ongoing regarding legislative recognition and the protection of ethnic minority rights in the context of the draft Act on Protection and Promotion of the Way of Life of Ethnic Groups being developed by the Special Committee of the House of Representatives. The OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia submitted a written contribution, upon the Committee's request, advocating for the Act's alignment with international norms and standards.

19. Since 2022, OHCHR has organized on an annual basis the International Contest for Minority Artists,¹¹ in partnership with Freemuse, Minority Rights Group International and the city of Geneva. The aim of the contest is to support minority artists committed to defending human rights around the world. In 2024, the third edition of the contest focused on the theme "Memory in the present", giving visibility to the narratives, histories and memories expressed through the arts by minority individuals and communities. In November, the laureates of this year's contest came to Geneva for a week of activities on arts and human rights, including the awards ceremony and the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues.

20. OHCHR also expanded efforts to increase the visibility of work of minority artist human rights defenders by organizing a six-week public exhibition featuring a selection of artworks of the 22 laureates of the 2022–2024 editions of the contest, in partnership with the Centre des arts of the International School of Geneva.

21. OHCHR is currently scaling up its support for minority artist human rights defenders worldwide through the Minority Artists for Human Rights Initiative,¹² a global action initiative and platform involving education, integration with civil society, partnerships and awareness-raising in different regions of the world, and bringing together local authorities

⁸ See https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en.

⁹ See https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/commissions-coordinator-combating-racism_en.

¹⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms/human-rights-indicators.

¹¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/minority-artists-voice-and-dissidence.

¹² See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/minorities/Brochure-Development-Plan-2024-2025-ENG.pdf.

supportive of minority artists. In this context, OHCHR organized a series of workshops and exhibition tours on arts and minority rights with a dozen public schools, in partnership with the Department of Public Instruction of Geneva. A global communication campaign featuring minority artists was also launched to raise awareness of the crucial role played by minority artists as human rights defenders.

22. In September, OHCHR Moldova strengthened the capacity of the new members of the Specialized Commission of the National Human Rights Council under the Ministry of Education and Research to promote and protect the rights of minorities. This training was a continuation of the expert and technical support provided by OHCHR to the Specialized Commission to monitor the implementation of the new recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

B. Efforts of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms aimed at preventing and addressing acts of discrimination

23. In April, in its decision on the Sudan adopted under the early warning and urgent action procedure, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed alarm at the increase of ethnically motivated violence since the outbreak of hostilities in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces, targeting, respectively, members of Arab tribes from Darfur and Kordofan and members of the Masalit, Fur and Zaghawa communities, and urged Sudan to address and prevent further escalation of ethnic violence, incitement to racial hatred and racist hate speech. The Committee urged Sudan to, inter alia, ensure the equal protection of all its population from ethnic violence and hatred, guarantee the safety, security and enjoyment of equal rights to members of all ethnic groups, and ensure meaningful participation by different components of society, including ethnic groups, in the efforts to achieve peace. It called upon the international community to continue monitoring the situation in Sudan and to strengthen efforts to prevent further violence and violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law, including violent acts targeting people on the basis of their ethnic origin.¹³

24. In April, a group of independent United Nations human rights experts sent an allegation letter to the Government of Israel concerning information received, inter alia, about a number of alleged human rights violations in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory since 7 October 2023, including increased online harassment and targeting of Palestinians for their social media activity, particularly Palestinian citizens of Israel and residents of East Jerusalem.¹⁴ Without prejudging the accuracy of those allegations, the experts expressed deep concern about the criminalization and repression of Palestinian citizens in Israel, the discriminatory, disproportionate and unjustified censorship of Palestinian voices and the dissemination of hate speech, incitement to violence and dehumanization of Palestinians. The experts called on the Government of Israel to implement the threshold test of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination hostility or violence,¹⁵ which set the right balance between protecting freedom of expression and prohibiting incitement to hatred, based on a case-by-case assessment of the context, speaker, intent, content, extent of dissemination and likelihood of harm.

25. In July, a group of United Nations experts issued a joint statement expressing grave concern over a reported upsurge in discrimination and violence against the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan, reflecting an atmosphere of widespread hostility towards Ahmadis. The experts welcomed the adoption by the Pakistan National Assembly, in June, of a resolution that strongly urged federal and provincial governments to ensure the safety and security of all citizens of Pakistan, including religious minorities. They stressed, however, that such good-faith efforts to counter discriminatory discourse would be ineffective unless

¹³ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/sudan-un-committee-urges-end-ethnic-violence-and-hate-speech-calls-immediate.

¹⁴ See communication ISR 6/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28834>.

¹⁵ A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, annex, appendix.

they addressed its structural drivers, including blasphemy laws and discriminatory legal provisions which situated Ahmadis, their legal representatives and allies, and other religion or belief minorities, in grave danger of human rights violations.¹⁶

26. These concerns were echoed in November by the Human Rights Committee in its concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan. It recommended that Pakistan, *inter alia*, repeal all blasphemy laws or amend them in compliance with the strict requirements of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, take all the measures necessary to prevent violent attacks against persons accused of blasphemy and ensure that all those who incited or engaged in violence based on allegations of blasphemy, as well as those who falsely accused others of blasphemy, were brought to justice and duly punished.¹⁷

27. In July, in a statement issued under its early warning and urgent action procedure, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed alarm at reports of widespread racist hate speech and harmful stereotypes against Rohingya who had fled Myanmar to India, including by politicians and public figures. It urged India to firmly condemn such acts and ensure they were investigated and adequately punished, in compliance with its international obligations arising from the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.¹⁸

28. In July, in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of India, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about reports of discrimination against minority groups and violence and derogatory rhetoric against religious minorities, including Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. The Committee requested India, *inter alia*, to adopt robust measures to effectively prevent acts of discrimination, including by providing training and awareness-raising programmes to civil servants, law enforcement bodies, the judiciary, public prosecutors and religious and community leaders, and to promote respect for diversity among the general public.¹⁹

29. In August, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh periodic reports of Iraq, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern over reports of discrimination against ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups, including Roma and non-Muslims, and people of African descent, as well as widespread hate speech and negative stereotypes. The Committee recommended that Iraq take necessary and special measures to combat poverty, marginalization and structural discrimination faced by Roma and people of African descent and ensure their access to education, employment, healthcare and unified national identity documents.²⁰

30. In August, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth periodic reports of Belarus, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern over administrative and other restrictions imposed on national and other minorities that prohibited them from fully enjoying freedom of association and the right to education, religion, language and culture. The Committee noted that those restrictions had led to, *inter alia*, the dissolution of minority associations, the closure of minority schools or the cancellation of cultural events. The Committee called upon Belarus to effectively implement the National Minorities Act and ensure that members of national and other minorities could enjoy fully their freedom of association, education in their languages, including Polish and Lithuanian, their culture, including organizing and participating in cultural activities, and freedom of religion.²¹

¹⁶ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/pakistan-experts-urge-immediate-end-discrimination-and-violence-against.

¹⁷ CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 46 and 47.

¹⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/india-must-end-racial-discrimination-against-rohingya-cease-forced.

¹⁹ CCPR/C/IND/CO/4, paras. 13 and 14.

²⁰ CERD/C/IRQ/CO/26-27, paras. 28–31.

²¹ CERD/C/BLR/CO/24-25, paras. 29 and 30.

31. In August, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran released a paper documenting gross human rights violations committed by security forces in Iran against members of minorities during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. The Fact-Finding Mission noted that there had been no meaningful criminal investigations of high-ranking officials for violations committed against members of minorities in connection with the protests and called for reparations and accountability to secure the rights of victims, in particular, those of women and children belonging to minorities, including ethnic Azerbaijani Turks, Ahwazi Arabs, Baluch and Kurds.²²

32. In September, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues participated in a side-event on the theme of “Let’s talk about caste” organized by the International Dalit Solidarity Network during the fifty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council. The aim of the side event, which brought together Dalit women human rights defenders from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, was to highlight the need to explicitly address caste discrimination as a root cause of widespread human rights violations. The Special Rapporteur called on United Nations human rights mechanisms to recognize caste as a key factor in addressing human rights abuses. He further emphasized that, in addition to having anti-discrimination legislation, it was important to work directly with Dalits and to ensure that their human rights could be exercised in practice.

C. Minorities from descent-based communities

33. In August, OHCHR collaborated with the International Dalit Solidarity Network and the Asia Dalit Rights Forum to examine access to justice by persons from descent-based communities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka. The workshop produced an outcome document offering good practices to strengthen and/or establish structures, policies and practices that provide access to effective justice mechanisms to persons from descent-based communities.²³

34. In October, OHCHR presented avenues to challenge descent- and work-based discrimination under the United Nations human rights mechanisms at a meeting on the theme of “Addressing work and descent-based discrimination against women: a prerequisite to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration” convened in the margins of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Beijing+30 Regional Review Meeting. The event spotlighted the challenges faced by women from communities discriminated against on the basis of work and descent, such as the Haratin, Roma and Dalit women across the ECE region. Participants discussed actionable strategies to ensure that women from communities discriminated against on the basis of work and descent were included in global frameworks and policies.

D. Human rights of people of African descent

35. In July, in its resolution 56/13, the Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement. In August, the Mechanism issued its annual report.²⁴ It also prepared reports of two country visits undertaken in 2023 and 2024, to Brazil and Italy.²⁵ In its annual report, the Mechanism identified three minimum steps that States need to take to ensure justice, accountability and redress: the establishment of effective reporting, review and investigation procedures, independent civilian oversight bodies for law enforcement and independent mechanisms to support victims and communities.²⁶

²² See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/ffmi-iran/they-have-dehumanized-us-minority-rights-violations-during-woman-life-freedom-movement-in-islamic-republic-iran.docx.

²³ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/access-justice-persons-descent-based-communities.

²⁴ A/HRC/57/71.

²⁵ To be issued as A/HRC/57/71/Add.1 and A/HRC/57/71/Add.2. See www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session57/list-reports.

²⁶ A/HRC/57/71, paras. 26–73.

36. In Brazil, the Mechanism noted some positive practices to guarantee the human rights of people of African descent, but reported testimonies of extrajudicial killings by police, a pattern of false evidence to incriminate victims and justify the killings, and threats, intimidation, reprisals and stigmatization faced by them. In Italy, the Mechanism found that racism led to a prevalent presumption of criminality towards foreigners and persons perceived as such based on their ethnic, religious or linguistic background, particularly towards Africans and persons of African descent. Those biases contributed to racial profiling by law enforcement officials and to the disproportionate representation of people of foreign origin, especially Africans, within the Italian criminal justice system.

37. In October, the High Commissioner presented to the Human Rights Council a report on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers through transformative change for racial justice and equality.²⁷ In the report, the High Commissioner presented key elements of intersectionality as an essential framework to combat systemic racism and confront the legacies of enslavement and colonialism. The High Commissioner concluded that a holistic application of the intersectionality framework could be a game changer and called upon States to adopt multi-pronged approaches towards its implementation.

E. Human rights of Roma communities

38. OHCHR continued efforts to advance the rights of Roma communities worldwide, with a particular focus on addressing the phenomenon of “anti-Gypsyism”. On International Roma Day, on 8 April, OHCHR, together with a coalition of partners, launched the Romani Memory Map for the Americas,²⁸ a crowd-sourced initiative mapping places of memory relevant to Romani history or culture. The Romani Memory Map for the Americas builds on the work of OHCHR on memorialization, as a strategy to tackle anti-Gypsyism in the Americas.

39. In July and August, OHCHR, together with the Government of Brazil, supported a mission by Romani human rights defenders from the Americas to attend commemorative events at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp on the eightieth anniversary of the Roma Holocaust and to undertake a study visit to sites of Romani memory and State institutions in Czechia. Seven Romani human rights defenders from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia and the United States of America took part.

40. In April, in its concluding observations on the combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports on the Republic of Moldova, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern at the low attendance and high dropout rates at all levels of education among Roma children, the high rates of unemployment among Roma, the low rates of coverage of Roma by the compulsory health insurance scheme, the inadequate resources allocated for the implementation of the Programme to Support the Ethnic Roma Population (2022–2025), the prevalence of hate speech and hate crimes and the dissemination of negative stereotypes against the Roma. The Committee recommended that the Republic of Moldova implement the Programme effectively in due course and strengthen its efforts to ensure Roma children’s access to quality and inclusive education, as well as non-discriminatory opportunities for healthcare services and employment for Roma, and combat racial discrimination, racist hate speech and hate crimes.²⁹

41. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR continued to support the Roma community mediators system launched in the Transnistrian region in 2020. In 2024, over a thousand marginalized Roma living in six localities across the region were supported in accessing education, social protection, healthcare, employment, housing, identity documents and other human rights. With the support of OHCHR, Roma community activists, jointly with the mediators, advocated with the de facto authorities of the Transnistrian region to adopt

²⁷ [A/HRC/57/67](#).

²⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/advancing-roma-inclusion.

²⁹ [CERD/C/MDA/CO/12-14](#), paras. 17 (b), 23 and 24.

measures to ensure the sustainability of the Roma community mediators system, including through the allocation of funds.³⁰

42. In August, in its concluding observations on the combined fourteenth and fifteenth periodic reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reiterated its concerns about the persistent discrimination and marginalization of Roma. The Committee urged Bosnia and Herzegovina to intensify its efforts to guarantee Roma adequate access to public services and include a gender perspective in all policies and strategies for combating racial discrimination. The Committee further noted the increasing and widespread use of hate speech based on ethnic grounds, particularly on social media and in public discourse, that could lead to the proliferation of ethnic violence, racial hatred and racially motivated incidents. The Committee requested Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement measures to combat hate speech by ensuring the effective application of domestic legislation, investigating ethnicity-motivated crimes and prosecuting and punishing perpetrators, and continuing data collection related to hate speech and training for law enforcement officials.³¹

F. Hate speech against minorities

43. In January, in his report, the High Commissioner noted that intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of persons based on religion or belief were used for political gain and that they hindered peaceful dialogue and coexistence. He noted that social media platforms continued to be vehicles for the spread of hateful speech and incitement to violence against religious or belief minorities. He called upon States and other stakeholders to redouble their efforts to implement the action plan referred to in Human Rights Council resolution 52/38, including by enacting and enforcing comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and through the Istanbul Process for Combating Intolerance, Discrimination and Incitement to Hatred and/or Violence on the Basis of Religion or Belief and strategic engagement with faith-based actors. The High Commissioner also encouraged the adoption of training initiatives for law enforcement officers and the judiciary, faith-based actors, teachers and media professionals on combating religious hatred, as part of a comprehensive approach that integrates faith literacy, better understanding and sensitivity.³²

44. In May, OHCHR published an information note on hate speech in the electoral context, to provide guidance on differentiating between lawful speech, unlawful hate speech and incitement to hatred, as well as appropriate responses thereto.³³

45. On 18 June, on the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, OHCHR organized, together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the University for Peace, a side event during the fifty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council on the theme of “The role of youth faith actors in combating hate speech and creating more inclusive societies”. The event highlighted successful initiatives to promote digital citizenship, media and information literacy, and freedom of religion or belief and to foster intercultural and interfaith engagement, using the peer-to-peer learning methodology of the Faith for Rights toolkit.³⁴

46. In June, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 54/25 and linked to the 2024 Union of European Football Associations European Championship, OHCHR co-organized in Berlin, together with the World Jewish Congress and the German non-governmental organization What Matters, a panel discussion on combating antisemitism in the context of football. The panel discussion highlighted structural conditions and practical approaches by individual clubs and athletes, and the summary document outlined recommendations for

³⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/09/roma-mediators-moldova-enable-roma-families-enjoy-their-human-rights.

³¹ CERD/C/BIH/CO/14-15, paras. 15, 16 and 23–30.

³² A/HRC/55/74, paras. 58–60.

³³ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/information-note-hate-speech-incident-hatred-in-electoral-context.pdf.

³⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/faith4rights-toolkit.

actions to combat antisemitism and all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and religious intolerance through sport.³⁵

47. In September, at a workshop on the theme of “Working together to counter antisemitism – a global human rights challenge”, the High Commissioner deplored the sharp rise in cases of antisemitism, Islamophobia and vicious hate speech since 7 October 2023, and reiterated the need for a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism, calling it “a scourge on our collective humanity”. He encouraged States to develop comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation based on the *Practical Guide* produced by OHCHR.³⁶

48. In October, the High Commissioner delivered a statement at the Vienna School of International Studies, drawing attention to the mounting hateful, divisive and dehumanizing speech that increasingly flared into violence, turbo-charged by deliberate incitement and by flawed social media tools. He cautioned that even the tremendous progress made on equality for people of all races was being forced back by waves of hatred and lies, and emphasized the importance of collaborative governance and strong multilateralism guided by human rights principles.³⁷

49. In September and October, OHCHR co-led and facilitated 10 online peer-to-peer learning sessions focusing on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred. This virtual module was part of the post-graduate diploma programme on peaceful coexistence, which is accredited by the University for Peace and the Gyoia Higher Education Institution and supported by the King Hamad Global Center for Peaceful Coexistence. The diploma programme was established as a follow-up to the pledge made by Bahrain in December 2023 in the context of the Human Rights 75 initiative to support the efforts of the international community in spreading a culture of peace, tolerance and coexistence.³⁸

50. In 2024, OHCHR provided support to law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Moldova in the development and endorsement of a guide on prosecuting and investigating hate crimes, including hate speech. In a process initiated in cooperation with the General Prosecutor’s Office, OHCHR supported a working group of experts of the police, judiciary, prosecution and civil society to develop the guide, which was aimed at enhancing inter-institutional cooperation in seeking accountability for bias-motivated crimes and acts of hate speech falling under the Criminal Code.

G. Economic, social and cultural rights of minorities

51. In May, OHCHR participated in an expert round table on the theme “Building peace: minority youth in conflict prevention efforts and inclusive socioeconomic policies”, organized by the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations Office in Geneva with the participation of the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. OHCHR shared information about its work on addressing economic and social inequalities and increasing the meaningful participation of marginalized groups, including minority youth, in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes, and encouraged Member States and other stakeholders to adopt effective national, regional and international strategies and policies that facilitated that participation.

52. In August, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights reminded States that the right to participate in sports was a cultural right, urging them to take immediate action to remove stereotypes and ensure non-discrimination in sports participation. She called upon States to take positive actions to eradicate discrimination based on gender, ethnic identity,

³⁵ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/religion/faithforrights/faith4rights-berlin-panel-2024.pdf.

³⁶ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/09/antisemitism-scourge-our-collective-humanity-high-commissioner.

³⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/10/austria-turk-calls-humanitys-capacity-connect-and-cooperate-face.

³⁸ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/udhr/publishingimages/75udhr/Bahrain_EN.pdf.

legal status, religion, age or any other factor, including indirect, intersectional and structural factors. The Special Rapporteur also reminded States of their obligation to act to prevent and redress violations committed on their territory and by entities based within their borders to ensure free and safe participation in sports by all. She encouraged States and sporting associations to prioritize the equal participation in sports of minority and marginalized persons.³⁹

H. Empowerment and participation

53. As an integral part of the work of OHCHR on mainstreaming minority issues and on capacity-building for minority rights advocates, the annual Minorities Fellowship Programme (30 October–30 November 2024) – held in Arabic, English and Russian – provided 16 women and 13 men from 26 countries with knowledge of the United Nations human rights machinery and reinforced their advocacy skills to better use international human rights standards and mechanisms. Among the key highlights of the 2024 Programme was a one-week preparatory training course in Strasbourg, France, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and the Faculty of Law of the University of Strasbourg. The fellows also participated in the seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues. In addition, a total of eight minority fellows from previous years, including five persons of African descent, have been employed for six months as senior fellows with OHCHR country and regional offices in Fiji and Peru, with the United Nations country teams in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Nigeria and the Philippines and with OHCHR in Geneva, supporting the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

54. The theme of the seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, held in Geneva in November, was “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”.⁴⁰ The Forum aimed at exploring solutions to promote better representation of minorities as a factor of inclusion and at contributing to the integration of minority issues into the institutions, mechanisms and initiatives of the United Nations system at all levels. The Forum identified and analysed opportunities, best practices and initiatives that focused on the misrepresentation and lack of representation of minorities in public spaces and discourses, to strengthen the recognition of minorities as valuable and constitutive parts of more open, cohesive and diverse societies and to promote positive change in that regard.

I. Linguistic minorities

55. In June, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia collaborated with the National Museum of Somalia to host an exhibition in Mogadishu highlighting the linguistic diversity of Somalia using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the minority languages. During the event, officials from the Museum emphasized the importance of preserving the linguistic minorities of Somalia for the benefit of future generations. Representatives from the local communities, who participated in the event, presented highlights of their cultures and underlined that understanding the Declaration in local languages would help them advocate locally for human rights.

56. Trust-building efforts of the human rights component of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo focused, inter alia, on promoting language rights and multilingualism in Kosovo.⁴¹ It supported the strengthening of the implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages at both the central and the municipal levels. In May, the commentary to the Law was finalized, providing policymakers and practitioners with clear guidance for prompt and accurate implementation of the Law. The human rights component enhanced joint advocacy and collaboration between the Office of the Ombudsperson and the Office of the Language Commissioner.

³⁹ A/79/299, paras. 4, 21, 91, 93 and 94.

⁴⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2024/seventeenth-session-forum-minorities-issues.

⁴¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

57. In July, the High Commissioner noted, in his report, that linguistic and cultural barriers could limit access to and engagement with digital education by Indigenous young people and minorities. He called for linguistically accessible, culturally responsive and relevant digital education content and platforms to be developed in partnership with Indigenous and minority representatives to preserve and promote their cultural and linguistic identities.⁴²

58. In September, in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights raised concern over the decrease in the number of public schools teaching a minority language other than Russian, in particular the significant underrepresentation of Uzbek in education. The Committee urged Kyrgyzstan to take all measures necessary to enable all minorities to preserve, develop, express themselves in and disseminate their languages, ensure the availability of education in all national minority languages by allocating sufficient human, technical and financial resources thereto and guarantee minorities their right to enjoy fully their own cultural identity and practice their religion and culture without undue restrictions.⁴³

J. Religious or belief minorities and faith actors

59. In March, OHCHR supported the Human Rights Council in convening a panel of experts, pursuant to Council resolution 53/1, to explore the drivers, root causes and human rights impacts of the desecration of sacred books, places of worship and religious symbols.⁴⁴ The High Commissioner stated that expressions of religious hatred against people wearing religious symbols often disproportionately targeted women and girls. He strongly encouraged all Member States to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, based on the *Practical Guide*.⁴⁵

60. On 15 March, on the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, United Nations independent experts warned that acts of harassment, intimidation, violence and incitement based on religion or belief had risen to alarming levels across the world, including against Muslims.⁴⁶ The experts denounced the fact that in many countries in the lead-up to elections, State and non-State actors fed religious tensions and promoted discriminatory laws and policies against Muslim minorities to gain political advantage. The experts urged States to ground their responses to all forms of religious hatred, including Islamophobia, in the universal values, principles and legal framework of international human rights. They also recalled that States and faith-based actors had human rights responsibilities and had to step in to counter such violations, in line with the Rabat Plan of Action and the implementation guidance provided by the Faith for Rights framework and toolkit.⁴⁷

61. In March, the High Commissioner expressed his profound concern that the shocking surge in Islamophobia was occurring as part of a broader trend of the continuing rise of antisemitism, Christianophobia and prejudices against people of other religions or beliefs; of hatred that is directed at migrants, refugees and minorities, including Roma; of deep-seated racism against people of African descent and Indigenous Peoples; and of many other forms of discrimination and xenophobia. He urged States to urgently step up efforts to combat intolerance against people based on religion or belief, within the parameters of international human rights law, using the many tools they had at their disposal, including Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, the Rabat Plan of Action and the Beirut Declaration on Faith for

⁴² A/HRC/57/28, paras. 43 and 68.

⁴³ E/C.12/KGZ/CO/4, paras. 62–65.

⁴⁴ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session55/cn-panel-53-1-hrc55.docx.

⁴⁵ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/turk-calls-measures-address-religious-hatred.

⁴⁶ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/03/un-experts-warn-islamophobia-rising-alarming-levels.

⁴⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/faith-for-rights.

Rights. The High Commissioner referred to the *Practical Guide*, as a crucial tool to support States in protecting minority rights and addressing the root causes of religious hatred.⁴⁸

62. In March, in its concluding observations on the initial report of Somalia, the Human Rights Committee noted with concern that the Provisional Constitution prohibited the propagation of any religion other than Islam. It also expressed concern about reports of judicial harassment of religious minorities, impunity for perpetrators of violence and killing committed as a punishment for religious conversion, and cases of discrimination against non-Muslims, including in school settings and as regards manifestation of their religion. The Committee urged Somalia to ensure legal protection and effective exercise of freedom of religion and belief, to take specific measures to guarantee that manifestation of one's religion or belief does not incur penalization, to decriminalize blasphemy and the propagation of religions other than Islam by repealing or amending the Provisional Constitution and the Penal Code, and to release and compensate those imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief.⁴⁹

63. As a result of meetings in 2024 in Paris and Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, co-organized by OHCHR, several academics and civil society actors from Australia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, France, Lebanon, Maldives, Nigeria, Norway, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and the United States created an inter-university Faith for Rights platform.⁵⁰ This new partnership provides academic support for OHCHR work on religion and human rights, discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and incitement to hatred, as well as gender equality as it intersects with freedom of religion or belief. The Faith for Rights commUNity of practices elaborated the rules of procedure for the platform and appointed a tetrarchy, chaired by a civil society coordinator and composed of the focal points on programmes, faith leaders and education.⁵¹

64. In October, the International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty and OHCHR co-organized the Faith for Rights Peer-Learning Experience in Portugal.⁵² Interactive workshops in Coimbra and Lisbon created a space for encountering, sharing, learning and training for faith-based actors, based on the Faith for Rights framework.⁵³ Participants concluded that interfaith engagement should not remain mere dialogues but should include development of actions on the ground, which in turn would require well-prepared facilitators who could ensure that peer-to-peer learning sessions would be spaces for constructive dialogue leading to sustainable impact.

65. In November, OHCHR organized the fifth annual meeting of the Faith for Rights commUNity of practices.⁵⁴ This hybrid meeting with more than 200 participants facilitated ongoing dialogue and exchange of information with faith-based organizations, parliamentarians and academic communities, in line with action 55 of the Pact for the Future. The participants discussed the peer-to-peer learning methodology used by various academic institutions to enhance skills and optimize the outcomes of relevant treaty bodies and special rapporteurs. One thematic focus of the meeting was on promoting gender equality and freedom of religion or belief, including through the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Knowledge Hub and activities with the Gandhi-King Global Academy and the ACT Alliance – Action by Churches Together.⁵⁵ A round table was held focusing on countering the instrumentalization of religions, beliefs or their followers to incite hatred and violence, in line with commitments on Faith for Rights⁵⁶ and Human Rights

⁴⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/international-day-combat-islamophobia-high-commissioner-urges.

⁴⁹ CCPR/C/SOM/CO/1, paras. 41 and 42.

⁵⁰ See www.aup.edu/news-events/event/2024-05-02/faith-human-rights-co-existence.

⁵¹ See <https://indico.un.org/event/1014629/attachments/19120/57491/faith4rights-annual-meeting-2024.pdf>.

⁵² See www.aidlr.org/news103.php.

⁵³ See www.ohchr.org/en/faith-for-rights/framework-action.

⁵⁴ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/religion/faithforrights/faith4rights-cop-2024.pdf.

⁵⁵ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/10/high-commissioner-statement-act-alliance-general-assembly.

⁵⁶ A/HRC/40/58, annex II, commitment X.

Council resolutions 16/18, 53/1 and 55/16. In addition, the “Geneva100” meeting brought together religious leaders and faith-based actors from the Geneva Spiritual Appeal on its twenty-fifth anniversary, the International Committee of the Red Cross on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the Inter-religious Platform of Geneva, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Faith for Rights network.

66. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights included in its 2024 publication *Belief, Dialogue and Security: Fostering Dialogue and Joint Action Across Religious and Belief Boundaries* the Faith for Rights framework and methodology as a good practice for joint action across religions and beliefs. Furthermore, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in paragraph 31 of its general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems recommended that States parties engage religious leaders and faith-based actors in the process of addressing areas of possible tensions between some interpretations of religious traditions and human rights, such as through the Faith for Rights framework of OHCHR.

67. Through the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, OHCHR has continued to document measures taken by the occupying power that impact members and clergy of different religious communities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.⁵⁷ In June, the authorities of the occupying power demolished the last remaining place of worship of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Crimea.⁵⁸ In October, the Russian-appointed Supreme Court of Crimea deregistered the Muslim organization “Alushta” after an application by the Russian-appointed Ministry of Justice in Crimea, which claimed that the community disseminated “extremist materials”.⁵⁹ In the temporarily occupied territories, Jehovah’s Witnesses continued to be prosecuted for activities related to their religion based on the designation of their religious community as an “extremist organization” in the Russian Federation in 2017. At least four members of Jehovah’s Witnesses were indicted on criminal charges related to the practice of their religion in Crimea in 2024. In October, the Russian-appointed Supreme Court of Crimea increased the sentences of two members of Jehovah’s Witnesses from six-year suspended sentences to six years in a penal colony. They were initially convicted for discussing the Bible and religious doctrine in July.⁶⁰

68. OHCHR has expressed concerns regarding the law on the protection of constitutional order in the sphere of activities of religious organizations (Law No. 3894-IX), adopted by the Parliament of Ukraine on 20 August 2024. The law introduced legislative amendments which, inter alia, prohibited the activities in Ukraine of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as Ukrainian religious organizations found by a court to be affiliated with a prohibited foreign religious organization.⁶¹

IV. United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities

69. The United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities⁶² continued to provide a platform to address, through awareness-raising, advocacy and capacity-building, issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including in relation to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The network brings together a range of United Nations departments,

⁵⁷ General Assembly resolution 78/221.

⁵⁸ See the conference room paper of OHCHR on the treatment of prisoners of war, containing an update on the situation of human rights in Ukraine from 1 June to 31 August 2024, paras. 106 and 107, available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-7.docx.

⁵⁹ OHCHR, “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine: 1 September to 30 November 2024”, 31 December 2024, para. 72, available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024-12-31-pr41-ukraine-en.pdf.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 71.

⁶¹ See the conference room paper of OHCHR on the treatment of prisoners of war, containing an update on the situation of human rights in Ukraine from 1 June to 31 August 2024, paras. 114 and 115.

⁶² See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/un-network-racial-discrimination-and-protection-minorities.

agencies, programmes and funds, which have identified focal points for this purpose. OHCHR acts as permanent Co-Chair for the network. The other Co-Chair for 2024 was the Department of Global Communication.

70. In April, the network drafted an internal paper on civil society engagement with the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, aimed at the strengthening of civil society/rights-holder consultation in its work.

71. During the reporting period, the network carried out a United Nations-wide survey on the impact and use of the 2013 Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.⁶³ The survey results are intended to inform the discussion by the network's principals on its priorities in the short, medium and long term, which will likely take place in first quarter of 2025.

72. The network continued to cooperate with the experts of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent to identify potential entry points to support the Forum's mandate. It also participated in the promotion of the high-level meeting to mark the closure of the International Decade for People of African Descent.⁶⁴

73. In December, under the auspices of the network, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Population Fund organized a community of practice on general recommendation No. 37 (2024) on racial discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to health⁶⁵ that was recently adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

74. In its resolution 55/15, the Human Rights Council encouraged States, the network, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to promote and support the participation of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in relevant meetings and processes of United Nations human rights mechanisms, to advance work to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to strengthen the protection of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in programming across the United Nations system.

V. Conclusions

75. In order to enhance the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and to ensure the full enjoyment by persons belonging to minorities of their rights, States should advance the adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, develop and put into practice effective anti-discrimination measures and policies aimed at effectively eliminating all forms of discrimination against persons belonging to such minorities and strengthen advocacy against discrimination.

76. States should enact laws which prohibit all forms of discrimination on the basis of all grounds recognized in international law in all areas of life regulated by law, provide for the effective enforcement of the right to non-discrimination and mandate positive action measures to address historic or structural discrimination.

77. States must protect all people and places of worship and invest in education initiatives that foster inclusion and equal rights.

78. Political and religious leaders must unequivocally condemn hate speech, advance dialogue and make clear that violence is unacceptable. Digital platforms should implement content-moderation policies that align with international human rights

⁶³ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/Issues/Minorities/GuidanceNoteRacialDiscriminationMinorities.pdf.

⁶⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/11/turk-calls-proclamation-second-international-decade-people-african.

⁶⁵ See www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-recommendation-no-37-2024-racial.

standards. All stakeholders must work together to stem the tide of hatred and promote tolerance, mutual understanding and respect.⁶⁶

79. To inform legislative and policy efforts, reliable and disaggregated data on incidents of hate speech and hate crime provide an essential baseline. More must be done to ensure that incidents are reflected in official statistics and that all countries have the systems and methodology needed to record disaggregated data.⁶⁷

80. Combating discrimination and inequality through the promotion of human rights should be central to all policy decisions. This involves prioritizing the protection and enhancement of meaningful participation for marginalized groups, including minorities, ensuring the comprehensive fulfilment of human rights and fostering environments where inequalities can be diminished.

81. OHCHR, as permanent Co-Chair of the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, continues to address issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including issues of multiple, aggravated and intersecting forms of discrimination, by promoting the mainstreaming and integration of minority rights across all pillars and activities of the United Nations.

82. Furthermore, OHCHR continues to support the participation of minorities, including less visible ones, in its flagship Minorities Fellowship Programme and its senior fellowship programme. In order to maintain these programmes and expand work on minority rights, additional financial support would be needed.

⁶⁶ See <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22332.doc.htm>.

⁶⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/international-day-combat-islamophobia-high-commissioner-urges.