



# PACT FOR THE FUTURE INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

## BULLETIN NO. 66:

### Consultative Meeting for Civil Society Organizations on the Human Rights Cluster of the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative

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## Consultative Meeting for Civil Society Organizations on the Human Rights Cluster of the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative

**ABOUT:** The UN80 initiative launched by the Secretary-General (SG) in March 2025 seeks to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of the UN. Organized into seven clusters, the human rights cluster focuses on the work of the UN human rights system. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized a consultative meeting for civil society on 3 July 2025 - a first within the UN80 process. This bulletin summarizes the consultations alongside providing some background and update presented by the OHCHR to Member States (MS) on 24 June 2025.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The OHCHR provided an update on the human rights cluster to MS on 24 June 2025, outlining early ideas and proposals to strengthen the human rights work of the UN. Key ideas include - standardizing mandate timelines, including the use of sunset clauses; regional- and country-level engagement; a new high-level group to better coordinate human rights work across the UN system; improving human rights integration across the humanitarian, development and peace & security work of the UN.

Following the MS briefing, the HC held online consultations with civil society on 3 July 2025. In his opening remarks he noted that human rights remain the least funded area of the UN at less than \$400 million per year, including voluntary contributions. Responsible for implementing over 877 official mandates, which translate into 2,600 specific deliverables, the HC cautioned against the unchecked expansion of responsibilities, straining limited resources and leading to gaps between mandate creation and implementation. To address these issues, the OHCHR will undertake a comprehensive mandate mapping exercise as part of UN80 to identify and reduce redundancies, clarify roles and better allocate resources. Noting that the idea of "doing more with less" is no longer viable, he urged to embrace the UN80 as an opportunity to reform and strengthen the human rights pillar of the UN.

On their part, over 15 civil society organizations provided inputs and raised questions to the HC on a broad range of thematic areas from impunity and state responsibilities to funding and structural changes under consideration as part of UN80. Cooperation with judicial mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), was discussed where a CSO member stressed the importance of the OHCHR archives as a source of information for any potential judicial proceedings in the future. Regarding the use of sunset clauses, concerns were raised on attempts to predict the future, when indeed the mandate may sometimes be the only mechanism to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate. CSOs broadly welcomed the Friends of Multilateralism Initiative by MS supporting adequate funding of the human rights pillar. On funding, while there is recognition of the non-adequacy of resources, caution is needed to ensure that the current liquidity crises do not overtake the conversation on the core work and needs of the UN human rights system. The human rights pillar of the UN was seen as one of the most efficient within the UN system as it balances one of the highest level of mandates with the lowest budget, thanks to its cooperation with civil society. Enabling this partnership and collaboration is the access and participation of civil society, which must be strengthened, more so in the current context of limited resources.

In his closing remarks, the HC responded to most points and questions raised in the meeting. He noted the effectiveness of the treaty body system and the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) in bringing legislative changes. Noting that rule of law must be based on human rights, the HC informed that his Office has done a mapping of work on rule of law within the UN. The need for a strategic approach to requests and mandates from

the Council is important, particularly when pet projects of some countries are vigorously pursued at the expense of others. The HC (and civil society) stressed the importance of solidarity between civil society and the OHCHR as they complement and strengthen each other. The HC urged all parts of the UN human rights ecosystem to move in the same direction and amplify each other's messages to donors and other stakeholders.

## HEADLINES

- ✚ The OHCHR will submit proposals for the human rights cluster to the SG by 30 July 2025, which will then be sent to MS for their consideration. Among the proposals under consideration are, to make more strategic use of the Human Rights Council (HRC) mechanisms; regional and country engagement; launching a new, time-bound, expert-led process to reform the treaty body system; and calls for more funding to work on accountability, rule of law and access to justice.
- ✚ We need to make a stronger case for the HRC to play its role in interaction with the Security Council, the GA and the Peacebuilding Commission. Ahead of the HRC review in 2026, the UN80 is an opportunity to identify and present issues such as impunity, accountability and referral mechanisms of the HRC.
- ✚ The HC brought attention to the existing mechanisms to fight impunity, including the inquiries branch and his independent function on fact-finding, while noting the risk to these mechanisms from micro-management of OHCHR finances by MS.
- ✚ In addition to cooperation with the ICC and other criminal tribunals, the OHCHR is working on promoting universal jurisdiction as it has contributed to accountability in many instances.
- ✚ The HC reiterated the role of OHCHR in coordinating the work on human rights within the UN system and stressed that agencies receiving money for human rights must ensure a clear link to OHCHR and the normative framework.

## RESOURCES

1. [Press Conference on UN80 by Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy](#) – 1 July 2025
2. [Update on the UN80 Initiative](#) - Part 1, 24 June 2025
3. [Update on the UN80 Initiative](#) - Part 2, 24 June 2025
4. [Informal meeting of the plenary to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General on the UN80 Initiative](#) - 12 May 2025

## BACKGROUND ON UN80

The UN Secretary-General launched the [UN80 Initiative](#) on 11 March 2025 to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of the United Nations in serving people around the world. As part of this effort, many closed-door consultations have been held among the senior leadership of the UN system entities alongside briefings to engage Member States. On 1 July 2025, Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy, held a detailed [press briefing](#) where he outlined the three main workstreams of the initiative: a) internal reforms to improve efficiency resulting in a reduction of posts by 20% and overall budget by about 15-20%; b) review of mandates to streamline operations; and c) structural review to address fragmentation across the UN system. Organized into the seven clusters listed below and coordinated by a UN80 Task Force, each cluster has brought together organizations that contribute to specific global objectives and areas of work.

1. Peace and Security, coordinated by DPPA, DPO, OCT, and ODA;
2. Development (Secretariat), coordinated by DESA, UNCTAD, ECA, and UNEP;
3. Development (UN System), coordinated by UNDP, UNOPS, UNICEF and DCO;
4. Humanitarian, coordinated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and IOM;
5. Human Rights, coordinated by OHCHR;
6. Training and Research, coordinated by UNU and UNITAR; and
7. Specialized Agencies, coordinated by ITU and ILO

Specifically, on the human rights cluster, the Cluster Coordinator provided an update to MS, including early proposals to improve the human rights delivery of the UN system on 24 June 2025 in a [informal plenary](#) convened by the President of the General Assembly. Following the MS briefing, the High Commissioner for Human Rights organized an online consultative meeting with civil society on 3 July 2025. He emphasized the urgent need to revitalize the UN's human rights pillar and welcomed continued input from civil society organizations as the reform process moves forward.

### Update from the Cluster Coordinator to MS, 24 June 2025:

The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in New York, Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, presented an update on efforts to strengthen the UN's human rights work. Speaking on behalf of the High Commissioner, she outlined early ideas and proposals aimed at improving how the UN delivers on its human rights commitments, with input from governments, civil society, and human rights experts.

Key points included:

- ❖ **Strengthening UN Human Rights system:** The UN is considering ways to improve the functioning of its human rights system, including the Human Rights Council (HRC) and treaty bodies. Ahead of the 2026 review of the HRC, key suggestions include reducing overlapping mandates, standardizing mandate timelines (including by using sunset clauses), and making treaty body processes more efficient through simplified reporting and regional-level engagement.
- ❖ **Enhancing the High Commissioner's Role:** The High Commissioner's office aims to fully implement its mandate under General Assembly Resolution 48/41 to promote and protect human rights for all. This includes leading the human rights efforts of the UN and improving coordination across the UN system to reduce duplication and fragmentation. The goal is a more coherent and effective approach to advancing human rights, as recognized in the Pact for the Future. To achieve this, the office needs resources and authority that match its responsibilities.

- ❖ Better Coordination across the UN: A proposal for a new high-level coordination group that could help align human rights work across different parts of the UN system.
- ❖ Streamlining Investigative Efforts: There's a push to improve how the UN investigates human rights violations by consolidating various overlapping efforts.
- ❖ Protecting the Most Vulnerable: Suggestions focus on better coordination of protection efforts, especially related to sexual violence in conflict, child soldiers, genocide, and retaliation against activists.
- ❖ Rule of Law and Human Rights: The UN is working to make legal and judicial efforts more unified and impactful.
- ❖ Development and Human Rights: Efforts are underway to better integrate human rights into development work, especially at the country level.
- ❖ Peace and Security: There is a strong push to ensure that all peace and security actions of the UN include a human rights perspective.
- ❖ Humanitarian Action: The UN is working on improving how human rights are included in emergency and humanitarian responses.

Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris ended her remarks with a call for more consultations with member states and civil society to shape the next steps. The goal is to make the UN's human rights work more unified, effective, and impactful in people's lives.

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS – 3 July 2025

### Opening Remarks from the High Commissioner:

The High Commissioner delivered an in-depth presentation on the Human Rights cluster emphasizing the critical need to revitalize and strengthen the human rights pillar of the United Nations system. He opened the session by drawing attention to a persistent and troubling reality: human rights remain the least funded area of the UN, receiving less than \$400 million per year. This limited funding is primarily dependent on voluntary contributions, making the system financially unpredictable and under-resourced, especially in light of its expanding mandates. The High Commissioner welcomed the recognition of this imbalance in the recently adopted "Pact for the Future" by Member States, which calls for increased, predictable, and sustainable funding to ensure the effective implementation of the human rights mandate.

- ❖ The Office of the High Commissioner is currently responsible for implementing over 877 official mandates, which translates into more than 2,600 specific deliverable activities. Many of these mandates are overlapping, duplicative, and have no defined endpoint, as only a few are governed by sunset clauses.
- ❖ The HC cautioned that the unchecked expansion of responsibilities has placed enormous strain on limited resources, creating a gap between mandate creation and mandate implementation. Without reforms, the sustainability and effectiveness of the system is at serious risk. To address these structural inefficiencies, the Office is undertaking a comprehensive mandate mapping exercise, aiming to identify and reduce redundancies, clarify roles, and better allocate resources.
- ❖ The UN80 reform initiative has been shaped by a wide-ranging consultation process. So far, 133 inputs have been collected from a diverse array of stakeholders, including Member States, UN agencies, civil society organizations, independent experts, and internal staff. These inputs will inform a reform proposal to be submitted to the UN Secretary-General by 30 July 2025.
- ❖ The HC also reflected on the performance of the Human Rights Council. He acknowledged its achievements, such as advancing Indigenous rights and gender equality, but also addressed the operational challenges, including overlapping mandates, resource constraints, and the need for clearer and more strategic use of Council mechanisms.



- ❖ The UN treaty body system was highlighted as another area in need of reform. The HC noted that while the last review (a decade ago) produced some progress, many stakeholders now support launching a new, time-bound, expert-led process to make the treaty body work more efficient, coherent, and impactful.
- ❖ Accountability, rule of law, and access to justice were emphasized as foundational to the protection of human rights. However, these areas remain severely underfunded, even though they are crucial for judicial reform, constitutional processes, and investigative and accountability mechanisms.
- ❖ As the OHCHR holds a system-wide coordination mandate, he stressed the need for better integration of human rights across all UN workstreams, including peacekeeping operations, development programming, humanitarian response, and political missions.
- ❖ A particular concern was the disconnect between humanitarian aid and human rights protection. The High Commissioner called for stronger integration between these sectors, especially in contexts involving conflict-related sexual violence, civilian protection, and peacebuilding.
- ❖ He underscored that human rights must be embedded throughout peace processes, including in ceasefire agreements and political negotiations. He referred to a joint guidance note released last year with the head of the political department, which outlines how to better integrate human rights into peace and conflict resolution efforts.
- ❖ In terms of operational structure, he highlighted the importance of strengthening the regional and country-level presence of the OHCHR. Decentralization will allow for more tailored, timely, and responsive engagement with governments and civil society actors at the local level.
- ❖ Securing greater access to pooled funding mechanisms would allow the Office to mobilize resources quickly and strategically in response to emerging challenges and opportunities.

In closing, the High Commissioner made a clear and urgent appeal: the idea of "doing more with less" is no longer viable. The growing gap between responsibilities and resources demands bold, collective action. He urged the international community to embrace the UN80 process as a real opportunity to reform and strengthen the human rights pillar, ensuring it remains fit-for-purpose in a rapidly changing world. He invited continued collaboration, engagement, and feedback from all stakeholders, civil society, governments, UN entities, and experts, emphasizing that only through shared responsibility and commitment can global human rights be effectively promoted, protected, and fulfilled.

## Stakeholder Remarks:

**Note:** As the consultations with civil society involved many questions to the High Commissioner (HC) and since the HC responded to many inputs made, this section has been organized to reflect the same (i.e.,) *remarks made by the HC have been inserted throughout and have been italicized in red*. Inputs from civil society have been summarized by thematic areas below and the names of all organizations who intervened have been listed here.

**Organizations:** International Service for Human Rights, International Federation of Human Rights, the Botswana Centre of Human Rights, International Commission of Jurists, Global Citizen, Amnesty International, Stop AIDS, Rights Tech Women, Geneva HR Platform, UPR Info, Global Centre on Cooperative Society, Article 19, Human Rights Watch, Taro Institute, Centre for Reproductive Rights.

## A. Structural Changes:

- On sunset clauses, we would not want to see any mandates terminated until the need that has given rise to it has itself come to a conclusion. We would be concerned about the use of sunset clauses to attempt to predict into the future when a mandate is no longer needed. Indeed, the crisis may still be continuing, and the mandate may sometimes be the only mechanism to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate.

**Question:** As part of the UN80 process and in your suggestions back to New York, instead of thinking about relocating or cutting sessions due to funding shortfalls and emergencies, whether it is a possibility to consider implementing the strategic institutional changes in the treaty body system like combined reports, consolidated reviews, etc ...? Whether you would use this moment to shift the institutional way OHCHR is servicing the treaty bodies?

*HC: We need to give new momentum to the treaty body system. The proposals you've outlined, which took years to come up with, are along the same lines as our thinking. We must address this issue with more urgency, and I hope it will be taken more seriously by member states and by the experts themselves who are part of the treaty body system.*

**Question:** We have heard the UN speak about the concept of regional robustness. How is that going to be concretely linked with what you have been saying and planning?

*HC: I see incredible value in country and regional engagement. We've been looking to strengthen engagement at country and the regional levels through our own reform process in the last couple of years. It allows us to be closer to some of NGO partners at the regional and country levels. And when we see civic space being weakened, the UN can still help in a number of country situations to be a protection safeguard, which is incredibly important.*

**Question:** In the context of the UN80 reform and within the framework of the upcoming global counterterrorism strategy review, is there any room for OHCHR to improve and reinforce its engagement both normatively and operationally?

*HC: Yes, it is an opportunity to make the human rights component much stronger in the counterterrorism architecture, which currently doesn't seem to be strong enough.*

## B. Funding:

- Welcome the approach that the UN80 is not just a cost-cutting exercise but also an opportunity, in the context of liquidity and budget crises, to make the system more effective, responsive, and efficient.
- Recognize that there is a lot to deliver and not enough resources for the office to deliver on those. We obviously want to see the levels of assessed contributions increase in addition to increases of extra budgetary allocations. Non-governmental sources of funding like foundations, philanthropy and private sector may not yet be tapped extensively by OHCHR.
- The funding and liquidity crisis shouldn't overtake the conversation about the core needs and values of the UN system and how to ensure that those are advanced.
- Given that the human rights pillar is already chronically underfunded, expecting it to do budget cuts at the same level or in the same percentage as other agencies may result in an office that's unable to deliver on its core mandate which of course should be avoided.
- We are concerned that a number of states have instrumentalized the budget process in order to attack country mandates and accountability mechanisms that are critical to deliver on the core needs of victims and the work of the human rights pillar.
- Noting with concern that human rights work are being defunded very quickly. Sometimes entire countries are losing funding very quickly. In this scenario, the conversation shouldn't be about how to protect the budget of OHCHR but rather how can we protect the human rights as a community from defunding and from de-prioritization and underfunding. This is particularly important as the UN human rights mechanisms are extremely reliant on civil society inputs, civil society cooperation and even civil society organization at times.

**Question:** In a context of resource constraints, it is important to maintain solidarity. Any reflections on how we can best maintain a sense of solidarity both between the civil society, the OHCHR and the rest of the UN system?

*HC: The solidarity factor is very important. And there is absolutely no doubt in our minds that we are one system (i.e.,) if human rights defenders and human rights NGOs are not getting funding, there will be less eyes and ears on the ground. The system in a way benefits from the wholeness of it. For example, people who are directly involved in human rights activities benefit from the regional coverage, but they also benefit from the international framework, including the scrutiny that the UN system provides at the global level. Hence, we need to play the different parts of it in a way that we bring out the advantages.*

*Regarding the funding, we are having our own conversations with non-member state funders and philanthropists. While there is recognition that this is a huge issue, filling the gap is not unachievable when compared to the much larger gaps in funding for humanitarian and development needs. That said, there will be a lot of divide and rule by those who want to exercise power and control. Hence, we should all be moving in the same direction and acting in solidarity. I will amplify your messages, and I would be grateful if you could amplify our messages both on the OHCHR and the human rights system as a whole.*

### C. Cost-saving and Efficiencies:

- The human rights pillar of the UN is one of the most efficient in the UN system. It balances one of the highest levels of mandates with the lowest budget, thanks to its cooperation with civil society.
- We should try to avoid the misconception that all duplication is harmful or inefficient. In customary international law and state practice, some duplication is useful. Hence it might be worth looking for useful redundancies when we're trying to evolve international law and standards. Looking at the system as a whole, the progressive development of international human rights law happens by repetition and mainstreaming human rights in more than one mechanism. Hence it is important to not over-DOGE ourselves into getting rid of customary international law.

*HC: While some duplication might be worthy, it is still important to address them. For example, some MS have their own pet projects they pursue vigorously at the expense of others. We need to address that type of dynamic as it weakens the overarching system. There needs to be a more strategic approach to requests and mandates that we get from the Council so that from an international lawmaking perspective it actually leads to something that is more impactful.*

- Cost-saving should not come at the expense of effectiveness. The increased reprisals against CSOs and the increase of non-independent non-governmental organizations can also impact the effectiveness of the mechanism.
- Civil society has been complicit in proposing new mechanisms when a particular issue wants to be highlighted. For example, the Special Representative on the Safety of Journalists was recommended and put in place a number of years ago. While it seems like a good idea, if you're looking at effectiveness, there are existing mechanisms for evaluating the safety of journalists within the UN system. We welcome not proliferating new mechanisms but trying to strengthen existing mechanisms.
- Re-emphasizing that prevention, non-recurrence and accountability are much cost-efficient rather than expecting the UN system and the human rights agencies to always be the ambulance.

*HC: Fully agree on the cost-efficiency of prevention. As countries are increasing their defense spending, we must emphasize that part of your defense spending should be invested in human rights because it prevents the things from happening in the first place. It is important to find creative ways to communicate this message.*

## D. Inter-agency Cooperation:

- Emphasize the distinct and critical role that UNAIDS plays in the UN system particularly in protecting and promoting the rights of criminalized and marginalized populations. Amid global backlash against rights-based approaches, UNAIDS's normative leadership and community engagement is more important than ever.

*HC: UNAIDS, which is a rights-based initiative, is a model for how to mainstream human rights in a very specific area. It could serve as an inspiration for collaboration in another technical area in the development or health sector.*

- Now is not the right time for any kind of merger between UNAIDS and WHO, particularly as WHO has its own funding and staffing challenges and that UNAIDS just underwent a restructuring. Noting that WHO's governance structures lack any meaningful representation of civil society and communities, any structural shift must be approached with a multi-year plan starting in 2030, when we hope to have made significant progress.

**Question:** How can you cooperate with other UN agencies, like for example with UNDP which has a strong role and work in terms of rule of law to avoid duplication?

*HC: It is important for parts of the system who receive money on human rights to ensure a clear link to us and the normative system. Sometimes that's not always so clear. We need to ensure that the role of the OHCHR in coordinating human rights within the UN system is upheld and that projects are linked to my office and to the human rights system. Ideally, money should come to us and then we find ways and means to make it available rather than the current fragmentation within the UN system.*

## E. State Responsibilities:

- While states are focused on how to cut back on the work of OHCHR and the work of the human rights pillar, not enough discussion is taking place on state responsibilities. For example, if more can be done to incentivize states to pay in full and on time.
- We welcome the Friends of Multilateralism Initiative formed by states from 5 different regions in support of adequate funding for the human rights pillar and addressing sanctions and reprisals against human rights mechanisms.

*HC: Very pleased with the cross-regional support for human rights. It is important to mobilize more of the smaller states, who have a majority in the general assembly. And it's not just smaller states; it's also mid-level states who are regional players and those that believe in multilateralism.*

## F. Impunity and Accountability:

- Impunity and the lack of accountability is eroding trust and undermining the integrity of the international human rights system, particularly in the face of double standards and the perceived impotence of the UN in ensuring that resolutions and decisions are effectively implemented. Any effective reform needs to address this issue.
- On accountability, it is important for states to present the concrete change made on the ground in their reporting of the implementation of recommendations.

*HC: We need to make more people aware of the effectiveness of the treaty body system and the UPR on the ground. There is an invisible human rights work that is very transformational, and we need to show that if you invest in the treaty body system and the UPR, you see a change in legislative practices. There are a lot of examples like women benefitting from certain rights and labor standards getting better. There is an aspect of communication to it. We need to show them that it's in their national interest to support the human rights system because it means a better world for everyone including for themselves.*

- Impunity should be one of the main priorities in the criteria to decide what to do in this reform process. This will include keeping the files and the archives of the OHCHR and of the different special procedures and treaty bodies as these files could be used one day in the fight against impunity in criminal law.

*HC: The archives policy is extremely important precisely for this purpose and it's part of our key core work including of the human rights inquiries branch so that we safeguard the information for any future potential judicial proceedings.*

**Question:** Welcoming the newly launched mechanisms of inquiry into human rights violations. How can cooperation with the International Criminal Court be strengthened in addition to the investigation procedures?

*HC: I do think there is a chance not just through the UN80 process but also for HRC reform to make a stronger case for the Council to play its role in interaction with the Security Council, the GA and the Peacebuilding Commission. That said, we can put the responsibility in front of these organs while keeping the machinery of documenting, monitoring and reporting fairly independent from it because if you don't have that you will end up again in the whirlwind of member states politics.*

*In terms of fighting impunity and promoting accountability, some of it can be done within existing mechanisms, in particular, the human rights inquiries branch, so that we are not reinventing the wheel for each of the Commissions of Inquiry or fact-finding missions. I have an independent function as High Commissioner for fact-finding and that independence is an important one. In the budget discussions for the UN but also for the Council, there is a tendency to micromanage our financing. We really need to prevent this from happening because if we start even more micromanaging this budget, it will have a negative impact on not only what we're able to do but also on my prerogative as High Commissioner to act on the general mandate I have.*

*Our cooperation is not just with the international criminal tribunals and the ICC, it is also about promoting universal jurisdiction and there is a lot more potential there. I've asked my office to prepare something on that because we have seen how it has led to indictments, prosecutions and sentencing.*

## **G. Civil Society Participation:**

- There is a need to safeguard and strengthen civil society access and participation, not just in the Human Rights Council but across the range of UN human rights mechanisms, particularly in the face of intimidation and reprisals against civil society.
- The UN Human Rights system should be more accessible to civil society. Social participation in decision-making shouldn't be a luxury, but a legal obligation grounded in the UN Charter.
- We see the current challenge as an opportunity to strengthen the system. Opening up to new groups of stakeholders such as women in STEM can help spread the information about human rights and the UN system much faster and with greater impact.

*HC: We see the current crisis as an opportunity indeed to increase the tent of stakeholders. It helps us to better communicate the essence of human rights and how fundamental it is for the social contract and cohesion of today's societies.*

- The cost-cutting measures are increasingly limiting civil society participation in Geneva and New York and has the potential to be used as a way to limit legitimate civil society participation. Some organizations are having a difficult time even to get accreditation to participate in the United Nations.
- Over the last 45 years, several NGOs in Geneva have promoted a system of giving more access to victims and human rights defenders. The system may be improving but we should not forget that in any reform that the victims must be priority as they are the source of the information.

**Question:** How can we make the system more victim-focused? To make the processes more comfortable for victims and so that the whole process to engage isn't retraumatizing or unnecessarily stressful than it should need to be.

*HC: The OHCHR is the strongest proponent to being responsive to the survivors and victims. On re-traumatization, some of us interview the same person many times and end up retraumatizing the person as a result. The do no harm principle is important in our community as well.*

**Question:** There is inconsistency of civil society access in Geneva versus New York, with New York being much less accessible. While we are concerned about the roll back in Geneva as well, what could be done to ensure that there's a consistency of access in New York?

*HC: Within the system, the OHCHR is probably the strongest supporter of civil society engagement because we not only see the value of it but you gave birth to us and it is clear that this relationship is a very strong one. To ensure meaningful participation, it is important to strengthen existing mechanisms of the OHCHR rather than creating new ones. We've received a lot of ideas about accreditation and simplification which we will propose in the UN context more broadly.*

## H. Rule of Law:

- Welcome the strong statements made recently on rule of law, including on attacks against the international criminal court.

**Question:** Are there any first ideas on how to strengthen the work in the area of rule of law? In a context where we are seeing massive setbacks and challenges in this area, especially rule of law and independence of judiciaries.

*HC: A mapping on rule of law was done internally within the UN. We want the rule of law to be stronger in terms of its foundational edifice based on human rights. The human rights system offers a lot and we need to bring it to bear wherever we are present and even if we're not present we're able to do some commenting on the laws. A lot depends on the input that we get from you, your own ideas, what you pick up. We are able to react and prevent the worst from happening.*

*Authoritarians now use a rule of law toolbox to push back and undermine even the activities of civil society and human rights defenders. It is for this reason that rule of law based on human rights is very important for the UN.*

## I. Communications:

- Conversations on human rights risks becoming complicated all of a sudden. But human rights should be easy to understand if we tie the narrative to other narratives. For example, human rights is about elimination of extreme poverty in a very concrete way.
- We should not try to hide human rights language. Maybe it's time to embrace it and include human rights priorities in the next big development goals.
- There must be more visibility to the work of the special procedures and the work of mandate holders particularly their country visits.

### Closing Remarks by the HC:

Quoting, when there is a crisis, there is an opportunity, the HC hopes that the existential moment we face generates a lot of energy to strengthen the human rights pillar of the UN, both the Council and the OHCHR. Ahead of the HRC review next year, this is an opportunity to identify and present some of the issues that we have all been grappling with such as impunity, accountability and even issues on the mandates of the council itself when it comes to referrals to other bodies. In addition, it is important to bear in mind to elect council members who have a commitment to human rights as we've seen some members recently elected are not necessarily promoting a vision of human rights that is foreseen in the charter and in the normative framework.

He urged all actors involved in the human rights ecosystem to be a couple of steps ahead and be prepared strategically as MS will instrumentalize, weaponize and/or politicize the UN80 process. UN80 is an opportunity to make it clear to MS and internally within the UN that the human rights component is one that needs more strengthening and more support. He closed his remarks urging civil society to continue to share their ideas with his office, which could potentially be summarized in the Annex of his report to the SG.