

**High-level panel discussion on thirty years of implementation of the
Convention on the Rights of the Child: challenges and opportunities
24 February
Statement by Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Madam President,

Distinguished panelists,

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

We would like to thank the panelists for sharing their views on the current challenges to implementation of the CRC and ways to address them.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child we stand in a much better place now than we did 30 years ago – we are on the right track to better educating, protecting and making our children be heard and listened to. Children and young people have better access to expressing their opinions and contributing to development of policies on matters concerning them.

We must also admit that there is plenty of room for improvement. We welcome the pledges made by States, however, our countries believe that stronger political commitment is necessary to make sure that no child is left behind. The role of the United Nations bodies – the CRC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Special Rapporteur – and agencies is therefore crucial in helping States to meet their obligations, hold them accountable and ensure the coherence of our joint actions.

Too many children are deprived of their liberty needlessly, kept out of school, forced into child early marriage, are victims of violence, abuse and sexual harassment. Empowering children by ensuring access to quality education is one of the key elements for a good future for the child especially the girl child and for our societies. When a girl goes to school for seven years, she will on average marry and get her first child four years later, giving her a better chance in life. Ensuring access to secondary education also has the potential of eliminating child early and forced marriages entirely.

Education also provides children with knowledge and tools to exercise and claim their rights. Engaging children in policy- and decision-making processes that concern them, is the key to ensuring the standards put forward by the CRC.

Bullying is an unfortunate common part of childhood, including cyberbullying among other online threats. Children and their rights are also detrimentally affected by climate change and armed conflicts. This calls for urgent action by all stakeholders, including children and civil society, both at national and international levels.

In closing, we would like to stress that the CRC constitutes the primary international standards in ensuring the rights-based approach for children. The Nordic-Baltic countries are proud to have made the CRC part of our legislation. We will continue to support and encourage others to do the same and have an impact on the rights of Every Child.

**High-level panel discussion commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary
of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth
World Conference on Women**

25 February

Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries

Mr/Madame Chair,

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

The Nordic-Baltic countries welcome this opportunity to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to reaffirm our commitment to its full implementation. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is still the most comprehensive commitment to gender equality, women's and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights and their empowerment.

Many important strides have been taken to achieve its envisioned goals. Yet, 25 years after its adoption, the promises of Beijing are far from realized. Some even try to roll back on the declaration and platform for action and other agreements and land-winnings related to gender equality. This concerns in particular sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Nordic-Baltic countries remain fully committed to the promises we have made regarding gender equality and SRHR because it is a matter of human rights and key to the economic empowerment of women and girls, and to their health and bodily autonomy. In order to achieve gender equality, we will also need the full engagement of all men and boys.

Distinguished panelists,

Social and economic inequality is among the many challenges to achieving gender equality. In recent years, we have witnessed demonstrations against this in all parts of the world. What are in your view the necessary steps that States need to take at national level to address the gendered dimensions of inequality?

I thank you.

**High-level panel discussion commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary
of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth
World Conference on Women**

25 February

Statement by Australia on behalf of the Mountain group

I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and my own country, Australia.

We thank the speakers and panelists for their insights.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of its review conferences affirm states' commitment to gender equality, women and girl's empowerment, the human rights of all women and girls, and provide an important blueprint for their realisation. We are pleased to see the progress made in this regard over the last 25 years globally, and reflected in the normative work of this Council and in the Sustainable Development Goals.

We celebrate progress, while acknowledging that challenges remain and more needs to be done. It is our collective responsibility to protect the agreed normative framework and to ensure that achievements are used to strengthen and extend the foundations of the agenda set by the Beijing Declaration and its review conferences, as we continue to amplify our work towards gender equality.

At the critical juncture of the 25th anniversary, we take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights, as inseparable from the realisation of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality.

We know that failure to fully respect a woman or girl's right to bodily autonomy, and essential comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, remains among the leading causes of death and injury for women and girls worldwide. Beyond health, we know that realisation of these rights are essential to gender equality – to women's education, capacity to work, and to participate equally in political and public life. Full respect for these rights is essential for progress on sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs.

We ask the panelists for their views on progress made on sexual and reproductive health and rights since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which built on the International Conference on Population and Development Program for Action, and the key challenges to be overcome in the full realisation of these rights.

General debate-Item 2
27 February 2020
Statement by Australia on behalf of the Mountain group

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland.

We reaffirm our commitment to stand up for the human rights principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Vienna Declaration and Program of Action.

We fully agree with High Commissioner Bachelet that human rights are the interlocking elements that build resilient and confident societies – societies able to withstand and surmount threats, peacefully resolve disputes, and facilitate sustained progress in prosperity and well-being for all their members. Every step towards greater respect for and implementation of human rights is an act of prevention – strengthening bonds between communities and trust in Government, and reinforcing inclusive development and peace. To achieve this outcome we all need to promote and respect all human rights equally.

We fully support the Office of the High Commissioner's prevention shift outlined in the Roadmap to 2021, and affirm the important role this Council and its mandates can play in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses around the world.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is a key element of the international human rights system. The High Commissioner's independence and objectivity warrant respect for the role and its functions. The High Commissioner's statements require our careful consideration.

We should all support the protection and promotion of all human rights, politically and financially. We support the High Commissioner – and the Office – speaking out on difficult situations around the world. And we condemn any attempts to intimidate or conduct reprisals against the High Commissioner, the Office, or any of the independent mandate holder of this Council, as a result of speaking out.

**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on
Freedom of religion and belief
2 March 2020
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his latest report on the intersections between freedom of religion or belief and gender equality.

His report is alarming in its many examples of gender-based violence and discrimination in the name of religion, sometimes carried out with the explicit or tacit encouragement from State officials. It makes the realization of the rights of both freedom of religion or belief as well as gender equality more difficult to achieve.

Tradition, culture or religion or belief can never be used as an excuse to deny or scale back human rights, and we must take steps to strengthen implementation of our international obligations. We therefore welcome the recommendations contained in the report. The report stresses the importance of reliable State institutions, and notes the interrelatedness of rights such as freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and gender equality.

We need further knowledge, engagement and ideas. In this regard we welcome the many valuable initiatives that are being taken to this effect by various actors.

We are ready to continue to work with others to pursue freedom of religion or belief and gender equality as mutually reinforcing and interdependent rights, maintaining core principles of equality and non-discrimination, in order to realize our common objective of “leaving no one behind”.

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material

3 March 2020

Statement by Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries

Madame President,

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

We would like to express our appreciation to the Special Rapporteur for her valuable work during the past six years and thank her for the latest report providing the overview of the work done and the challenges ahead.

We, the Nordic and Baltic countries are committed to the fight against the sale and sexual exploitation of children. Through the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention), we have taken steps towards preventing this often hidden, yet one of the worst forms of violence against children. Committed also to gender equality we stand for eradication of patriarchal structures that is a fundamental factor driving for the demand for the sexual exploitation of girls. States are ultimately responsible to ensure the rights of the child and to protect children from all forms of violence. We firmly believe that comprehensive sexuality education is indispensable to ensure that victims of sexual exploitation and violence are equipped with the means to claim their rights.

The challenges and opportunities facing the world of today are inevitably also affecting the lives of our children. As your report points out, it is unacceptable that the information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become an alarming facilitator to the sexual exploitation of children. It is our strong conviction that all human rights, including the rights of the child and their right to a life free from violence, must be equally protected offline as well as online.

Madame Special Rapporteur, with that in mind, what would be your recommendation to the next mandate-holder to hold States more accountable for enacting safeguards for the rights of the child in the digital context?

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on
human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism
4 March 2020
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Mdm. President,

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

The threat from terrorism and violent extremism affects us all and must be vigorously countered. However, we are deeply concerned about the widespread misuse of counter-terrorism measures in many countries to **limit freedom of expression online and offline**, to silence human rights defenders, **journalists**, political opponents and even religious or ethnic minorities.

We highly appreciate the clear message in your report, Madam Special Rapporteur that “all aspects of States national security practice, including those aimed at preventing or countering violent extremism, must comply with international human rights law”.¹ Only rights-based policies fully founded in our respect for the rule of law and human rights will have long-term success in preventing radicalization and terrorism.

Madam Special Rapporteur, what can states and the UN-system do to further ensure that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing?

Thank you.

¹ A/HRC/43/46, Para. 52 (a)

**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
on the right to privacy
4 March 2020
Statement by Latvia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you Madam President.

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

Our countries attach great importance to the promotion of all human rights, including to the right of each person, regardless of gender, to fully enjoy the right to privacy.

Prof. Cannataci,

We thank you for your continued work on gender and privacy. It contributes to a better understanding of the role of gender equality in ensuring the full enjoyment of the right to privacy.

Despite the obligations set out in international human rights law, it is too common that states and non-state actors violate the right to privacy related to, or arising from individuals' gender. This, in turn, can have a detrimental effect on the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights.

We appreciate your work on detailed recommendations to states and non-state parties in protecting individuals against gender based privacy infringements. We hope the provided recommendations will guide states in developing their policies, legislative and administrative frameworks, so that everyone, irrespective of their biological sex, sexual orientation or gender identity could enjoy the right to privacy without arbitrary interference and discrimination.

Prof. Cannataci,

What role do you see for the Human Rights Council in addressing the recommendations of your report?

I thank you!

Panel discussion on the rights of persons with disabilities
6 March 2020
Statement by Finland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries

Madame Chair,

Distinguished panelists,

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

I would like to thank all panelists for their insightful interventions.

Persons with disabilities often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, usually on the grounds of, *inter alia*, age, disability, ethnic, indigenous, national or social origin, sexual orientation or gender identity or any other status.

We all should do our utmost to eradicate discrimination for current and future generations of persons with disabilities. Additional efforts are required from all of us.

The Nordic-Baltic countries fully agree that all awareness-raising strategies should include the perspective of persons with disabilities and the different forms of discrimination they face. Persons with disabilities are diverse and come - as everyone else – from different backgrounds and life circumstances. We should always pay particular attention to the situation and needs of women and girls with disabilities.

In order to reach tangible results, governments must work closely with all relevant stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, and their representative organizations, other civil society organizations businesses and media platforms. Only by working together can we ensure that all actions are in line with the CRPD and other human rights instruments. Providing human rights information and education - to all age groups - remains an important goal to achieve this.

A question: What good examples could the panelists provide as regards positive and creative use of on-line platforms in relation to awareness raising of the rights and situation of persons with disabilities in various parts of the world?

**Discussion on the Secretary General's update on the involvement of the
United Nations in Myanmar
9 March 2020
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Madam President,

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

We welcome the update on the UN involvement in Myanmar and the leadership of the Secretary-General in accepting the recommendations of the Rosenthal report.

We welcome efforts by the Secretary-General to further integrate human rights and the sustaining peace agenda in the UN reform process, which have our strong support. Resident Coordinators and the UN Country Teams have to ensure concerted UN action.

The Common Country Analysis is expected to look into the root causes of poverty, inequalities, vulnerabilities and conflict and to address Human Rights in all its aspects. This is a crucial instrument to establish a common understanding within the UN on its role within a particular country setting.

We welcome the Call to Action for Human Rights. Enhancing human rights analysis and expanding the field presence of OHCHR through Country Offices and Human Rights Advisors is important, not least in Myanmar.

The Rosenthal report, as previous reports commissioned by the Secretary-General, is central to independently reviewing UN system response. The Secretary-General's concrete actions must be taken forward by the UN system. The UN Security Council has a responsibility in this regard.

We would welcome your elaboration on how the UN will implement the recommendations of the Rosenthal report to ensure that human rights are fully integrated in UN's crisis prevention efforts.

**Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry
on South Sudan
9 March 2020
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Madame President,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries.

We welcome the decision by the Parties to the Revitalized Agreement to form the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and encourage the swift appointment of the remaining cabinet posts. Now South Sudan has a new chance to leave behind war and conflict and move towards inclusive development.

However, the Nordic countries remain deeply concerned by reports of human rights violations and abuses in South Sudan including recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as abduction and killing of civilians. Continued curtailment of freedom of expression and of opinion are also of deep concern.

The Government of South Sudan has the primary responsibility to protect its population from violations of human rights. Yet, all armed groups are responsible for grave violations or abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. We urge all parties to use the new political momentum to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Nordic countries encourages the government of South Sudan to assist the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the special procedures and the Commission on Human Rights in the fulfilment of their mandates.

We strongly urge the Government of South Sudan to support the extension of the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. Constructive collaboration in this important area will be a positive step in the implementation of the peace agreement.

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry
on the Syrian Arab Republic
11 March 2020
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Mr. President,

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway Sweden, and my own country Denmark.

Recent developments in Syria yet again remind us of the regime's brutality. A serious humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding as civilians desperately flee the regime's offensive in the northwest.

We condemn the unacceptable attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. As the Commission of Inquiry has warned, the deliberate and systematic targeting of hospitals may amount to war crimes.

Violations of international law are rampant. All parties to the conflict must live up to their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, and respect human rights.

We must insist on accountability for crimes committed. We reaffirm our strong support for the Commission of Inquiry and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism.

Without a negotiated end to the conflict, the suffering we have witnessed since 2011 will continue. We reiterate our full support for Special Envoy Pedersen and a political settlement in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254.

Conditions in areas retaken by the regime illustrate that violations of international law will continue absent a negotiated end to the conflict and genuine reforms. Could the Commission share further updates on violations in regime-controlled areas?

General debate-Item 9
16 June 2020
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries

Madame President,

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

Let me begin by reaffirming our determination to combat all forms of racism.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating racism and xenophobia. We, as States, need to ensure that our response to COVID-19 does not entail stigmatization, exclusion or discrimination.

Racism, xenophobia and prejudice restrict people's lives. We see an increasing number of people witnessing a more hate-filled social climate in which racism and incitement to hatred are clear components. Such manifestations create a breeding ground for violence and hate crime. This is unacceptable.

Ultimately, these acts constitute threats not only to individuals but also to our societies and to democracy.

The fight against racism cannot be fought solely by those who are exposed to racism – just as the efforts to promote gender equality cannot be carried out only by women. The fight against racism must be fought by all of us who firmly believe in the equal value of all persons.

The recent weeks' extensive protests have shown a strong public engagement against racism, which should remind us all - including governments across the globe – of the need to enhance our efforts to combat racism and discrimination.

I thank you.

**High Level Interactive dialogue on the human rights situation
in the Democratic Republic of Congo
18 June 2020
Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Nordic statement March

Thank you, Mdm. President,

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

Madam High Commissioner, we echo your statement from January that “wounds won’t heal unless they are cleaned” and that “truth is an essential part of that cleansing, and so is justice.”

Three years have passed since the brutal murders of UN Experts Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp in the Kasai region. It is paramount that the Congolese authorities cooperate fully and effectively with the UN Follow-on Mechanism under Mr. Petit. The trial for these killings must be allocated sufficient resources by the Congolese authorities and allow all possible leads to be exhausted, so that we can establish what happened and ensure that those responsible are being brought to justice.

We note with great concern that no human rights violations or abuses committed in the Kasai-region have gone to trial. Ensuring accountability and addressing the continued impunity must be given priority in order to break the cycles of inter-communal conflicts and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. The rule of law must be strengthened, human rights violators must be brought to justice and reparations paid to victims, while ensuring the protection of human rights defenders. In so doing, the lives of Zaida, Michael and all other victims of human rights violations and abuses in the DRC would be honoured.

Madam High Commissioner, how can the OHCHR support the new government in promoting truth and justice for a lasting peace?

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with the
Independent Expert on Mali
16 June 2020
Statement by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Thank you, Mdm. President.

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

We thank the Independent Expert, Mr. Tine, for the comprehensive and insightful report.

Mali is facing multifaceted challenges in terms of security, development and humanitarian needs. We are deeply concerned with the situation's rapid deterioration in the centre where the state is largely absent and criminality, intercommunal conflicts and self-defence militias are on the rise, targeting civilians. In addition, the recent MINUSMA *quarterly note* on human rights demonstrates an alarming rise in human rights violations in the first quarter of 2020.

Combating the widespread culture of impunity is key to resolving the crisis. Therefore, we urge the government of Mali to do more to bring justice to the victims, thoroughly investigate and prosecute allegations of human rights violations and abuses committed on all sides, and to do its part to put an end to the cycle of violence.

We note the work of the "International Commission of Inquiry for Mali", and look forward to its findings.

Finally, let me assure you of our commitment to promoting human rights in Mali and allow me to ask the following question;

- *How do you view the role of the international community in supporting Mali's fight against impunity?*

Thank you.

**Interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner
Report on human rights situation in Libya
18 June 2020
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Mr./Madame President,

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and my own country Iceland.

We thank the High Commissioner for her report and remain thankful for OHCHR continued support of the human rights mandate of UNSMIL.

We take note of incidents documented by UNSMIL/OHCHR and condemn in the strongest terms attacks against civilians, including journalists and human rights defenders, as well as attacks on civilian objects, such as schools and health-care facilities. The killing of persons taking no active part in the hostilities is a direct violation of the Geneva Conventions and may amount to a war crime.

We are also gravely alarmed by cases documented by UNSMIL/OHCHR that women were subjected to enforced disappearance, sexual violence, prolonged arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment.

Mr./Madame President,

We agree with the High Commissioner that the Council has a unique opportunity to now take concrete steps to counter impunity and promote accountability in Libya by establishing an international mechanism and we thank the Libyans for their leadership in this regard.

High Commissioner, what immediate measures can the Government of National Accord take to protect women and girls from violence in law, policy and practice?

I thank you.

**High-level ID on human rights situation
in the Central African Republic
18 June 2020
Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic countries**

Madame President,

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and my own country Iceland.

We continue to follow with concern the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and its impact on the region. Reports of violence and instability risk jeopardizing the gains of recent years. We call on all stakeholders to take all necessary measures to implement effectively the peace agreement signed in Bangui in 2019.

All parties to the peace agreement have an obligation to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and ensure meaningful and active involvement of women and youth in the reconciliation dialogues.

We thank the Independent Expert for his continued efforts to highlight human rights concerns in CAR. We remain thankful for OHCHR's continued support of the human rights mandate of MINUSCA and we welcome the Governments cooperation with these mandates. We also appreciate its support in arresting and bringing ICC indicted Ali Kushayb to the Court in the Hague last week.

We also appreciate the measures the Government has taken in the fight against COVID-19. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, however, we would like to ask the panel about the potential impact on the scheduled presidential elections?

I thank you.