

**GENEVA
HUMAN
RIGHTS
HUB**



**The Human Rights Council's Essential
Contribution to the Development of
International Human Rights Standards:**
Lessons from Two Decades and Future
Priorities

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INTRODUCTION

Background and context: Human Rights Council's standard-setting mandate and achievements

The Human Rights Council (HRC) inherited its core standard-setting mandate from the Commission on Human Rights and has followed similar elaboration processes.¹ Thus, in its first ever resolution on 29 June 2006,² the Council adopted the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Since then, the HRC has continued to play a key role in developing treaty and non-treaty standards. Despite a changing geopolitical context, the HRC has contributed to important normative achievements, such as the Optional Protocols to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights³ and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁴ the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights⁵ or, more recently, the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.⁶

Why standard-setting matters: a timely opportunity for reflection

Standard-setting i.e., the normative development and adoption of international human rights standards, is arguably the most consequential of the Council's functions. The standards it develops are translated into national laws, policies and practices and inform national and international jurisprudence. Some instruments also establish supervisory mechanisms (treaty bodies), or new procedures enabling individuals to seek redress for alleged human rights violations. Thus, these standards determine the human rights protection enjoyed by rights-holders worldwide. Moreover, unlike the mechanisms created by the HRC, such as Special Procedures or investigative bodies, which mandate is time-bound and sometimes geographically limited, standards are long-lasting and of universal application.

While elaboration processes and outcomes vary, they all have in common the key role of the HRC as the main United Nations human rights intergovernmental body initiating and driving these processes.

The HRC's 20th anniversary provided a timely opportunity to take stock of its standard-setting achievements and to reflect on its future contribution to the normative development of international human rights law.

¹ See General Assembly Resolution establishing the Human Rights Council, mentioning "the development of international law in the field of human rights" as part of its mandate, [A/RES/60/251](#), adopted on 15 March 2006, para. 5(c).

² Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/1/1](#) adopted on 29 June 2006.

³ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/8/2](#) adopted on 18 June 2008.

⁴ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/17/18](#) adopted on 17 June 2011.

⁵ The Human Rights Council endorsed the Guiding Principles in its resolution [A/HRC/RES/17/4](#) of 16 June 2011.

⁶ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/48/13](#) adopted on 8 October 2021.

Objectives and scope

This paper aims to inform relevant stakeholders, including government representatives, civil society organisations and affected communities, UN and other human rights experts, OHCHR officials, regarding the Human Rights Council's role in the development of human rights standards.⁷ It presents the key findings and recommendations emerging from a roundtable of experts and a side event organised on 16 June 2026 as part of the [Geneva Human Rights Hub's Annual Conference](#).

This analysis focuses on standard-setting as a process of normative development encompassing:

- Legally binding instruments, such as international treaties.
- Declarative non-treaty instruments, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- HRC resolutions containing innovative normative content, such as those recognising human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- More informal processes, for example instruments that do not create legal obligations but provide practical guidance to States, such as guiding principles and guidelines.

The first part examines the Human Rights Council's contribution to the development of international human rights standards since its inception, assessing its achievements, impact and the challenges it faces. The second part explores future priorities and identifies normative gaps in the UN human rights corpus that call for further attention from the Council. The final part presents the main lessons that emerged from the discussion and sets out key recommendations for safeguarding and strengthening the Council's standard-setting role and enhancing the protection of human rights globally.

I. ASSESSING STANDARD-SETTING ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

The Council's unique role and flexibility

The Human Rights Council plays a key role as a catalyst to bring the attention of the international community to new human rights issues and new instruments, but also to bring relevant actors together and combine technical expertise with political commitment. Its main strength is its flexibility in terms of issues, processes and outcomes to fill human rights protection gaps. The large number of issues addressed and the variety of instruments developed speaks for itself.⁸ Processes and methodologies have largely remained similar to those of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights, ensuring

⁷ For the purpose of this paper, the scope is limited to standard-setting by the Human Rights Council and its bodies. However, it should be noted that the Treaty Bodies also contribute to the development of human rights standards, including through their general comments and recommendations, and the adoption of guiding principles and guidelines.

⁸ See non-exhaustive list of standards in annex.

institutional continuity. Depending on their purpose, these are led by States or by UN human rights independent experts.

Variety of processes and impact

Legally binding instruments have followed the same well-established, State-led process. Thus, the three treaties adopted by the Human Rights Council since 2006 are the results of intergovernmental negotiations within a dedicated drafting working group under the chairmanship of the State leading the negotiations. The three treaties are the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted in 2006 (CED);⁹ the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 2008 (CESCR-OP);¹⁰ and the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure adopted in 2011 (CRC-OP-IC).¹¹

These treaties are extremely consequential in terms of human rights protection. The CED Convention filled a gap in international law by recognising a new right – the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance – and established a new Treaty Body to monitor its implementation by States parties. The optional protocols to CESCR and CRC established communications procedures enabling individuals and States to submit complaints to the relevant committees to seek redress for the alleged violations of their provisions.

Non-treaty instruments have resulted from a variety of processes. UN declarations,¹² sometimes developed as the preliminary to a legally binding treaty,¹³ have been elaborated following the same process within a State-led drafting working group. As such, they have considerable political authority.

On the other hand, guidelines and guiding principles provide recommendations about norms of conduct and policy and have been developed by UN human rights independent experts. For example, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), developed by the relevant mandate holder following extensive research and inclusive consultations, provide guidance to States and business enterprises to prevent and address the risk of human rights violations resulting from business activity.¹⁴

⁹ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/1/1](#) adopted on 19 June 2006 and General Assembly resolution [A/RES/61/177](#) adopted on 20 December 2006 ; Chairperson : France.

¹⁰ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/8/2](#) adopted on 18 June 2008 and General Assembly resolution [A/RES/63/117](#) adopted on 10 December 2008 ; Chairperson : Portugal.

¹¹ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/17/18](#) adopted on 17 June 2011 and General Assembly resolution [A/RES/66/138](#) adopted on 19 December 2011 ; Chairperson : Slovakia.

¹² UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples (UNDRIP); UN Declaration on human rights education and training; UN Declaration on the right to peace; UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people living in rural areas (UNDROP).

¹³ This was the case for example of the [UN Declaration against torture](#), adopted in 1975, or the [UN Declaration against enforced disappearance](#), adopted in 1992. These instruments paved the way for the treaties that were developed and adopted subsequently.

¹⁴ The [UNGPs](#) were developed by the Special Representative of the Secretary General and endorsed by the HRC in its resolution [A/HRC/RES/17/4](#) of 6 June 2011.

Non-treaty standards can also be very influential as they carry much political and legal weight, whether they shape national legislation and policies, influence national and international jurisprudence,¹⁵ practices, or pave the way for subsequent standards. Dedicated Special Procedures mandates can also be created to enhance their impact. Thus, the HRC established the Working Group on business and human rights in 2011 and the Working Group on peasants in 2023 to promote the implementation of the UNGPs and of the UNDROP respectively.

Finally, the Council has **recognised new rights through its resolutions**, most recently the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (R2HE).¹⁶ The recognition of this new right by the HRC, and subsequently by the General Assembly, has triggered a series of positive developments at multiple levels. At the international level, Treaty Bodies have included it in their work, notably the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its [General Comment](#) on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change and the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights in its [General Comment](#) on sustainable development.¹⁷ It has also been recognised by the International Court of Justice in its landmark [Advisory Opinion](#) on the effects of climate change.¹⁸ At the regional level, this new right has been acknowledged in decisions by the Inter-American Court,¹⁹ the European Court of Human Rights²⁰ and in the [ASEAN Declaration](#) on the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.²¹

Multi-actor processes

Whether led by States or experts, one of the defining features of the Council's standard-setting processes is that they are inclusive and open to all relevant actors, ensuring that the relevant technical expertise is taken into account and that the resulting instruments respond to the realities and challenges they seek to address.

¹⁵ See, for example, Debevoise & Plimpton, "[UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights at 10 – The Impact of the UNGPs on Courts and Judicial Mechanisms](#)", 2021; and

¹⁶ Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/48/13](#) adopted on 8 October 2021 and General Assembly resolution [A/RES/76/300](#) adopted on 28 July 2022. In 2010, the right to safe drinking water and sanitation had been recognised through a similar process in Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/15/9](#) of 30 September 2010 and General Assembly resolution [A/RES/64/292](#) of 28 July 2010.

¹⁷ CRC, General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change.

¹⁸ International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion of 23 July 2025, Obligations of States in respect of climate change, para. 393.

¹⁹ See, *inter alia*, IACtHR, Advisory Opinion AO-32/25 of 29 May 2025, Climate emergency and human rights.

²⁰ See, *inter alia*, ECtHR, Judgment of 9 April 2024, *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland*.

²¹ ASEAN Declaration adopted on 26 October 2025. More generally, see the [NYU Law's Right to a Healthy Environment Toolkit](#) mapping the legal recognition of the right worldwide and analysing significant case law.

Thus, “open-ended intergovernmental working groups” mandated with the drafting of treaties or UN declarations benefit from the contribution of State representatives, civil society organisations and affected communities, experts, UN agencies and other relevant intergovernmental organisations, and national human rights institutions.

For example, associations of victims of enforced disappearance played a key role in the elaboration of the CED Convention, with the support of the Chairperson of the working group who would give them the floor before State delegations. Similarly, the UNDROP exemplifies a bottom-up process. In both cases, the contribution of civil society organisations and affected communities, even those without ECOSOC status, undoubtedly had a positive impact on the outcome. While reflecting the result of State-led negotiations, those standards contain strong provisions in response to the protection gaps they aimed to address.

To develop practical guidance, UN independent experts, including for example the Special rapporteurs on housing,²² extreme poverty,²³ business and human rights,²⁴ and freedom of peaceful assembly and association,²⁵ carried out extensive research and inclusive consultations with relevant stakeholders. For its part, the Special rapporteur on torture, while leading the process to develop the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, relied on a group of academics and multidisciplinary experts from around the world.²⁶

Finally, the landmark recognition of the right to environment was achieved thanks to the sustained commitment and mobilisation of a core group of States and of a broad global coalition of civil society organisations, indigenous peoples, children and young people, social movements and local communities, business actors, and supported by UN entities.

By contrast, one of the reasons why the draft treaty on business and human rights has not been finalised since 2014 seems to be the lack of a unified civil society front, such as an NGO coalition who would speak with one voice.

²² See Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement presented in the Special Rapporteur’s report [A/HRC/4/18](#) of 5 February 2007 and the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing presented in the Special Rapporteur’s report [A/HRC/43/43](#) of 26 December 2019.

²³ See Guiding Principles on extreme poverty and human rights, adopted by the HRC in its resolution [A/HRC/RES/21/11](#) of 27 September 2012.

²⁴ See *supra*, footnote 14.

²⁵ See Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests, developed at the request of the HRC and presented by the Special Rapporteur in its report [A/HRC/55/60](#) of 31 January 2024.

²⁶ The “Mendez Principles” were drafted by experts in the fields of interviewing, law enforcement, criminal investigations, national security, military, intelligence, psychology, criminology and human rights from around the world. An international Steering Committee of 15 members guided this process. The final text is the result of four years of their analysis and research in consultation with an Advisory Council of more than 80 experts from over 40 countries: <https://mendezprinciples.com/>.

As a side note, **personalities and interpersonal relations** matter. Various successful processes have been marked by the personality of their leaders, be they ambassadors or independent experts, showing masterful negotiation and consultation skills to bring all actors on board and reach the best possible outcome.

Safeguarding achievements

Safeguarding standards

In a context marked by growing backlash against international human rights law, an additional challenge is the increasing influence of actors seeking to disrupt those processes and weaken human rights protection. As standards are increasingly contested, this raises the question of how human rights advocates should adapt their narrative and strategies to counter these threats.

Safeguarding civil society participation

The HRC provides a unique space for civil society organisations within the UN system. However, this space is already shrinking, with CSOs facing increasing challenges in terms of accreditation and security measures amongst others, which hinder their participation in HRC meetings. Additionally, the growing involvement of “anti-human rights” actors, including GONGOs and NGOs seeking to undermine the human rights machinery, risks weakening the contribution of human rights NGOs and affected communities.

Embracing the digital age to safeguard meeting space

Due to the “liquidity crisis”, the number of meetings, as well as interpretation and translation services, have been cut down. While in-person meetings are preferable, embracing the digital age would offer cost-effective solutions to safeguard this essential meeting space, including by encouraging remote participation and automating interpretation services.

This would also facilitate the participation of civil society actors who cannot be present in Geneva for budgetary or security reasons.

Formal adoption and search for consensus

The search for consensus is considered the gold standard in other parts of the UN, including at the General Assembly where it can function as a veto. However, it is not always the most efficient approach in terms of normative development. For example, regarding the right to peace, the HRC moved forward and adopted a UN declaration without a consensus,²⁷ whereas the issue could not progress at the General Assembly and at the Security Council.

Moreover, the HRC’s experience demonstrates that the absence of consensus does not necessarily undermine the standards’ impact. For example, the UNDROP was adopted

²⁷ HRC resolution [A/HRC/RES/32/28](#) adopted on 1 July 2016 following a vote.

following a vote at the HRC and at the GA. Yet this has not prevented the Declaration from becoming an influential instrument. Similarly, experience regarding standards developed by Special Procedures mandate-holders shows that their positive impact does not depend on their formal endorsement by the Council and subsequently by the GA. Even if guiding principles are not formally endorsed, those instruments can still inform and shape national legislation and policies and be referenced in national and international jurisprudence. For examples, the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Evictions and Displacement have become a global standard and a basis for the development of further standards. They have also been referenced by CESCR and the high court of several countries, including Mexico Supreme Court, and been used in sectors other than human rights by planners, surveyors, sociologists, and political scientists.²⁸

II. ADDRESSING NORMATIVE GAPS AND EXPLORING FUTURE PRIORITIES

Beyond the standard-setting vs. implementation narrative

Normative development is a continuous process that does not end when standards are set. As such, it includes implementation and preserving existing standards.

The common mantra is that there is no need for new standards and that the focus should be on implementation as there are still large gaps between standard-setting and implementation. However, new standards will always be needed to fill protection gaps as the world changes. The law needs to evolve to respond to the needs of people to remain relevant. Rather than being seen as two mutually exclusive processes, standard development and implementation should be seen as being part of the same continuum. Therefore, the objective should be to continue to develop standards as protection gaps appear, while narrowing the implementation gap.

Institutional coordination within the UN human rights system

To address the implementation gap, coordination across UN human rights mechanisms should be encouraged. In addition to monitoring the implementation of the relevant treaties, Treaty Bodies also contribute to the implementation of non-treaty standards developed at the Human Rights Council and vice versa. However, coordination and consultation meetings happen on an *ad hoc* basis. Institutionalising those bridges between all relevant mechanisms engaged in standard-setting – Special Procedures mandate holders, the HRC’s Advisory Committee and Treaty Bodies – would encourage cross-fertilisation through discussing standards and therefore strengthen their implementation. From a practical point of view, focal points could be designated in each part of the system to exchange on standard-setting processes.

²⁸ See Miloon Kothari and Patricia I. Vázquez, “[Policy Debate | The UN Guidelines on Forced Evictions : A Useful Soft-Law Instrument?](#)”, *International Development Policy*, Issue 6.2, 2015.

Beyond the UN human rights system, the expertise that is available in other UN entities should also inform standard-setting processes on a systematic rather than on an *ad hoc* basis.

Areas for normative development

Thematic areas for normative development include the current draft treaty on transnational corporations and human rights which has been negotiated since 2014, and the draft instrument on private military and security companies, which has been discussed since 2019. Additional protection gaps that have been identified as requiring the Council's attention are human rights issues relating to new technologies, including artificial intelligence, and climate change.

Institutional areas include instruments aiming to fill the implementation gap by creating new mechanisms to complete the UN human rights architecture. The first would be a standing investigating mechanism to address accountability instead of the several existing bodies created by the Human Rights Council. The second is a longstanding proposal that has been contemplated on several occasions since it was put forward during the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights : a world court on human rights.²⁹

In the shorter term, concerns regarding the fragmentation and multiplication of implementation mechanisms should be addressed to avoid them being used as an argument against the development of new instruments. Such mechanisms are currently being discussed regarding the draft treaty on the rights of older persons³⁰ and the draft international covenant on the right to development.³¹

Growing role of the private sector

Given that the issues identified as standard-setting priorities, some of which are currently being negotiated, deal with transnational corporations and business enterprises, artificial intelligence or climate change, the private sector is bound to play a growing role. The participation of these powerful actors, who can affect processes positively as well as negatively, needs further consideration and reflection.

III. MAIN LESSONS LEARNED AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure the continuity of the Human Rights Council's unique standard-setting function

The HRC should continue to fulfil its core normative development mandate alongside its other functions. Standard-setting should be considered as a continuous process in which

²⁹ For more detail regarding the proposal and draft statute, see Martin Scheinin, "[Towards a World Court of Human Rights](#)", Research report within the framework of the Swiss Initiative to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2009.

³⁰ [Chair's Food for Thought Paper](#), mentioning a "treaty body".

³¹ UN document [A/HRC/54/50](#), 18 July 2023, Annex.

implementation is an integral part, rather than a separate priority. To remain relevant, the Council and its bodies should continue to identify emerging protection gaps and develop new standards to address them.

2. Safeguard existing human rights standards against backsliding

In a context of increasing backlash against international human rights law, actors engaged in standard-setting processes should prioritise protecting existing standards from the risk of being weakened or diluted. In this regard, consensus should not be sought at the cost of lowering protection. On the other hand, to ensure the legacy and impact of instruments, their development should not be rushed. Building broad and strong coalitions throughout the process is essential to ensure their legitimacy and impact.

3. Build broad united coalitions and strengthen inclusive multi-actor processes

The development of human rights standards is a collective effort that requires committed leadership and broad, inclusive participation. Successful processes share similar features and combine strong leadership from a State, a core group of States or an independent expert championing an issue, with the support of a broad unified coalition of civil society organisations, including affected communities, as well as other relevant actors. These processes are informed by independent technical expertise. Such collective efforts have proved to generate legitimacy and impact.

The HRC should safeguard the meaningful participation of all relevant actors and protect the civic space necessary for such engagement, including by addressing barriers to the participation of civil society, particularly affected communities, such as accreditation and security procedures.

CSOs should build broad coalitions and present a unified front to speak with one voice, thus increasing their influence and avoiding fragmentation.

Standard-setting processes should also take into account the growing influence of “anti-human rights” actors who seek to undermine human rights protection. As normative developments address human rights issues relating to transnational corporations, new technologies and climate change, the role of private actors, including powerful companies, should be considered. Safeguards are needed to ensure that, while benefiting from the relevant expertise, standard-setting processes strengthen, rather than weaken, human rights protection.

4. Strengthen implementation through coordination across the UN human rights system and increased visibility of standards

To address the implementation gap, the Human Rights Council should promote more systematic coordination between Special Procedures, the Advisory Committee, Treaty Bodies, OHCHR and other relevant UN entities. Institutionalising exchanges through regular consultation mechanisms or designated focal points would encourage cross-fertilisation and strengthen implementation of standards.

Instruments providing technical guidance should be operational. Experience shows that this can be achieved by involving all relevant actors and relying on technical expertise in the drafting process.

Once they are set, standards should be widely disseminated and promoted to increase their visibility and impact. Greater efforts are needed to raise awareness of some standards which are underused due to the lack of visibility.

5. Safeguard effective participation despite resource constraints

The current “liquidity crisis” should not undermine the Council’s work, including in the area of standard-setting. New technologies and cost-effective solutions, such as remote participation and digital interpretation tools, should be explored to ensure that these processes can be pursued and remain inclusive.

6. Prioritise normative development in identified areas

Priority thematic areas identified during the discussions include business and human rights, private military and security companies, artificial intelligence and other new technologies, and climate change. At the institutional level, reflection should also continue on strengthening the UN human rights architecture and whether additional implementation mechanisms are needed.

Human Rights Council Standard-Setting
Non-exhaustive compilation up to the 62nd session (15 June-8 July 2026)

Source: OHCHR website

OEIGWG: Open-ended intergovernmental working group (drafting working group)

HRC: Human Rights Council

SR: Special Rapporteur

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

WG: Working Group

Year(s)	Issue	Main Sponsor(s)	Format/Process	Outcome
2006	Enforced disappearances	France (Chair)	OEIGWG	International Convention adopted by HRC at its 1 st session on 29 June 2006 A/HRC/RES/1/1 and by UNGA A/RES/61/177 on 20 December 2006
2006	Indigenous peoples	Peru (Chair)	OEIGWG 11 sessions (1995-2006)	UN Declaration adopted by HRC at its 1 st session on 29 June 2006 A/HRC/RES/1/2 and by UNGA A/61/295 on 13 September 2007
Since 2007	Complementary standards to ICERD	Djibouti (Chair)	Ad Hoc Committee	Ongoing negotiation
2007	Evictions and displacement	SR housing	International workshop	Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement

				presented in SR report A/HRC/4/18
2008	OP-CESCR on communications procedure	Portugal (Chair)	OEWG	Adopted by HRC A/HRC/RES/8/2 And UNGA A/RES/63/117
2010	Right to safe drinking water and sanitation Since 2015, recognised as two distinct rights by the UNGA and HRC	Germany (HRC)	Building broad coalition of sponsors for recognition of the right(s)	UNGA and HRC resolutions A/RES/64/292 on 28 July 2010 and A/HRC/RES/15/9 on 30 September 2010 HRC resolution recognises that it is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living (Art. 11 CESCR) ³²
Since 2010	Private military and security companies	South Africa (Chair)	OEWG “to consider the possibility of” an international regulatory framework replaced in 2017 by an OEWG “to elaborate the content of” such framework “without prejudging” its nature	Ongoing negotiation
2009-2011	OP-CRC on communications procedure	Slovakia (Chair)	OEWG	Adoption of OP by HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/17/18 and by UNGA A/RES/66/138
2011	HR education and training	Switzerland (Chair)	OEWG	Adoption of UN Declaration by HRC A/HRC/RES/16/1 and by UNGA A/RES/66/137
2011	Business and human rights	Argentina, India, Nigeria, Norway, Russia	Developed by an SRSG (John Ruggie 2005-2011) Extensive research and inclusive consultations on	UN Guiding Principles endorsed by HRC in resolution A/HRC/RES/17/4 of 6 June 2011. Creation of WG by same resolution “to promote the effective and

³² Overview of resolutions and declarations : <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/IOR4013802015ENGLISH.pdf>

			all continents (more than 20 countries) ³³	comprehensive dissemination and implementation” of the Guiding Principles
2012	Extreme poverty	SR extreme poverty	Developed by SR on basis of draft by Sub-Commission. Several formal and informal consultations to review the draft	Adoption of Guiding Principles on extreme poverty and human rights A/HRC/RES/21/11 UNGA “takes note with appreciation” A/RES/67/164 (para. 17)
2012	Foreign debt	SR foreign debt	Consultation with experts and stakeholders	Guiding principles on foreign debt and human rights Report A/HRC/20/23 , endorsed by HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/20/10
2013	Housing	SR housing	Responses from States to questionnaires, as well as thematic and regional consultations with various stakeholders, and comments and input from civil society organizations	Guiding principles on security of tenure for the urban poor Report A/HRC/25/54 upon request from HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/15/8
2014	Business and human rights	Ecuador (Chair)	OEIGWG 12 th session: selection of 5 legal experts (1 per regional group)	Ongoing negotiation
2015	Arbitrary detention	WG on arbitrary detention	Developed upon request from, following consultation and consideration of inputs from stakeholders	Basic Principles and Guidelines on Remedies and Procedures on the Right of Anyone Deprived of Their Liberty to Bring Proceedings Before a Court

³³ See SRSG’s last report on his activities: A/HRC/17/31 with Guiding Principles in Annex: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/17/31>.

				Presented in report A/HRC/30/37 upon request from HRC
2015	Treatment of prisoners	SR torture Juan Méndez	Expert Group meetings to review the standards	“Nelson Mandela Rules” (revised United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners) adopted by UNGA A/RES/70/175
2013-2016	Right to peace	Costa Rica (Chair)	OEIGWG	Declaration on the right to peace adopted by HRC A/HRC/RES/32/28 ³⁴ No UNGA resolution
2016	Extrajudicial, arbitrary and summary executions	SR EJE initiated revision process in collaboration with OHCHR	International team of legal and forensic experts & high-level advisory panel	Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death
2017	Minority issues	SR minority issues	Developed by SR	Practical guide for implementation of language rights of linguistic minorities
2017	Toxics	SR toxics and HR	Expert consultations, responses from States and non-State entities, including businesses and CSOs, to a questionnaire	Guidelines for good practices for disposal of toxics Report A/HRC/36/41
2013-2018	Rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas	Bolivia (Chair)	OEIGWG	UN Declaration adopted HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/39/12 UNGA resolution A/RES/73/165
2019	Adequate housing	SR housing	Developed in consultation with States and other	Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right

³⁴ *Against:*

Belgium, France, Germany, Latvia, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Abstaining:

Albania, Georgia, Portugal, Switzerland

			stakeholders throughout the length of the mandate	to Adequate Housing, A/HRC/43/43
2019	Right to education (obligation of States to provide public education)	SR education	engaged with States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders during a three-year consultative process	Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education, presented to the HRC in her report A/HRC/41/37 , referred to in HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/41/16
2019	Foreign debt	SR foreign debt	Expert meetings and consultations, consultation with stakeholders, call for contributions	Guiding Principles on human rights impact assessment of economic reforms Adopted by HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/40/8 of 21 March 2019
2019	Toxics	SR toxics and HR	Rooted in nearly 25 years of work under the mandate, including country visits, thematic research and communications with States and non-State actors, as well as intensive, targeted consultations undertaken	Principles on the protection of workers from exposure to toxic substances Report A/HRC/42/41 of 17 July 2019
2020	People of African Descent	WG of Experts on People of African Descent	Developed by the WG and field-tested in Ecuador and Peru in 2019-2020	Operational Guidelines on inclusion of People of African Descent in the 2030 agenda Adopted by the WGEPAD on 9 December 2020
2021	Right to a clean, sustainable and healthy environment	Core Group: Costa Rica, the Maldives, Morocco,	Building broad coalition of sponsors	HRC Resolution A/HRC/RES/48/13

		Slovenia, Switzerland		UNGA resolution A/RES/76/300
2021	Torture / Effective interviewing	SR Torture Juan Méndez	Expert-driven drafting process ³⁵	“Juan Méndez Principles ” on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering. Welcomed by GA in 2019 and by HRC in 2021, launched in 2021
2021	Freedom of peaceful assembly and association	SR FAA	Draw on collective experience of legal practitioners from various jurisdictions around the world	Guidelines for lawyers in support of peaceful assemblies presented in report A/HRC/47/24/Add.3 of 29 June 2021
2022	Torture	SR Torture – CAT – SPT – UNVFVT + 4 leading NGOs	Project involving more than 180 participants from 51 countries. The project was led by representatives of four civil society organizations (Physicians for Human Rights, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and the Redress Trust) and four core United Nations anti-	Istanbul Protocol : Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Revised edition from the original 2004 version

³⁵ Drafted by experts in the fields of interviewing, law enforcement, criminal investigations, national security, military, intelligence, psychology, criminology and human rights from around the world. An international Steering Committee of 15 members has guided this process and striven to ground the work on a wide empirical research base, documented good practices, established international law and professional ethics. The final text is the result of four years of their analysis and research in consultation with an Advisory Council of more than 80 experts from over 40 countries: <https://mendezprinciples.com/>.

			torture bodies (the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture)	
2023	International solidarity	SR International Solidarity	Consultative process, including global consultation with States and other stakeholders in Geneva	Draft declaration on the right to international solidarity
2024	Freedom of peaceful assembly and association	SR Freedom of Assembly and Association	Collaboration with UNODC, consultations ³⁶	Practical toolkit for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect HR in the Context of Peaceful Protests, developed at the request of the HRC (resolution 50/21) Report of the SR: A/HRC/55/60
Since 2024	OP-CRC on rights to early childhood education, free pre-primary education and free secondary education	Sierra Leone (Chair) & Core Group	OEIGWG “to explore the possibility of” an OP	Ongoing negotiation

³⁶ Based on existing international human rights law, standards and norms and reflect recommendations and good practices collected during five regional consultations held with law enforcement practitioners and civil society representatives, a global expert consultation on digital technologies and a separate global consultation attended by representatives of States, law enforcement officials, civil society representatives, representatives of regional mechanisms and oversight mechanisms and other relevant experts. Written submissions were provided by States, national human rights institutions, members of civil society and experts.

Since 2025	Rights of older persons	Argentina (Chair)	GA OEWG on Ageing (2010-2024) OEIGWG created by HRC to elaborate a treaty “to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons”	Ongoing negotiation
2026	Freedom of opinion and expression	SR Freedom of Opinion and Expression	research, reports and other work of the SR, and her consultations with legal experts, civil society, international organizations, and media organizations, as well as the testimony of journalists and media workers with direct experience	Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts Presented in report A/HRC/62/67/Add.2 of 11 June 2026
2026	Housing	SR housing	Contributions from States and other stakeholders	Guiding principles on resettlement Presented in report A/HRC/61/43 , supported by HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/55/11 of 5 April 2024
2026	Independence of judges and lawyers	SR independence of judges and lawyers	Drawing on international human rights law, regional norms and jurisprudence, and guidance from authoritative expert bodies	Principles for judicial appointments Report to HRC A/HRC/62/43
2026	Torture	SR torture	Collaborative process shaped through regional hearings in Bogota, Nairobi and Kathmandu and 120+ contributions from survivors and survivor-led organisations	Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Report A/HRC/61/42 of 2 January 2026

