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Human Rights Council Background Guide 2026

Written by Shi Haoyu, Saki Takeshita, Tamara C. Titz, and Tomas Paramo



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13570 Grove Dr., Suite 294 • Maple Grove, MN 55311
www.nmun.org • info@nmun.org • 612.353.5649

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Human Rights Council (HRC). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Tamara C. Titz and Assistant Director Shi Haoyu (Conference A), and Director Jagdeep Bajaj and Assistant Director Saki Takeshita (Conference B). Tamara is pursuing a Master's degree in Political Science at Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg and holds a Master's in International Relations with a specialization in Global Political Economy from Leiden University. She has extensive experience through multiple organizations in Model United Nations leadership and research on human rights, sustainability, and global governance. Shi is currently pursuing a Master's degree at Dalian University of Technology and has a background in translation and interpretation. Jagdeep recently graduated with a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, and is currently working as a Junior Business Analyst Intern. Saki earned her medical degree in Japan. She is currently working as a doctor and conducting research in Public Health. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Alexandra Bogdasarow (Conference A) and Aemin Becker (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Protecting and Advancing the Rights of Migrant Workers
2. Enhancing Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building for Human Rights

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 PM ET on 1 March 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Tamara C. Titz, Director
Shi Haoyu, Assistant Director
Conference A

Jagdeep Bajaj, Director
Saki Takeshita, Assistant Director
Conference B



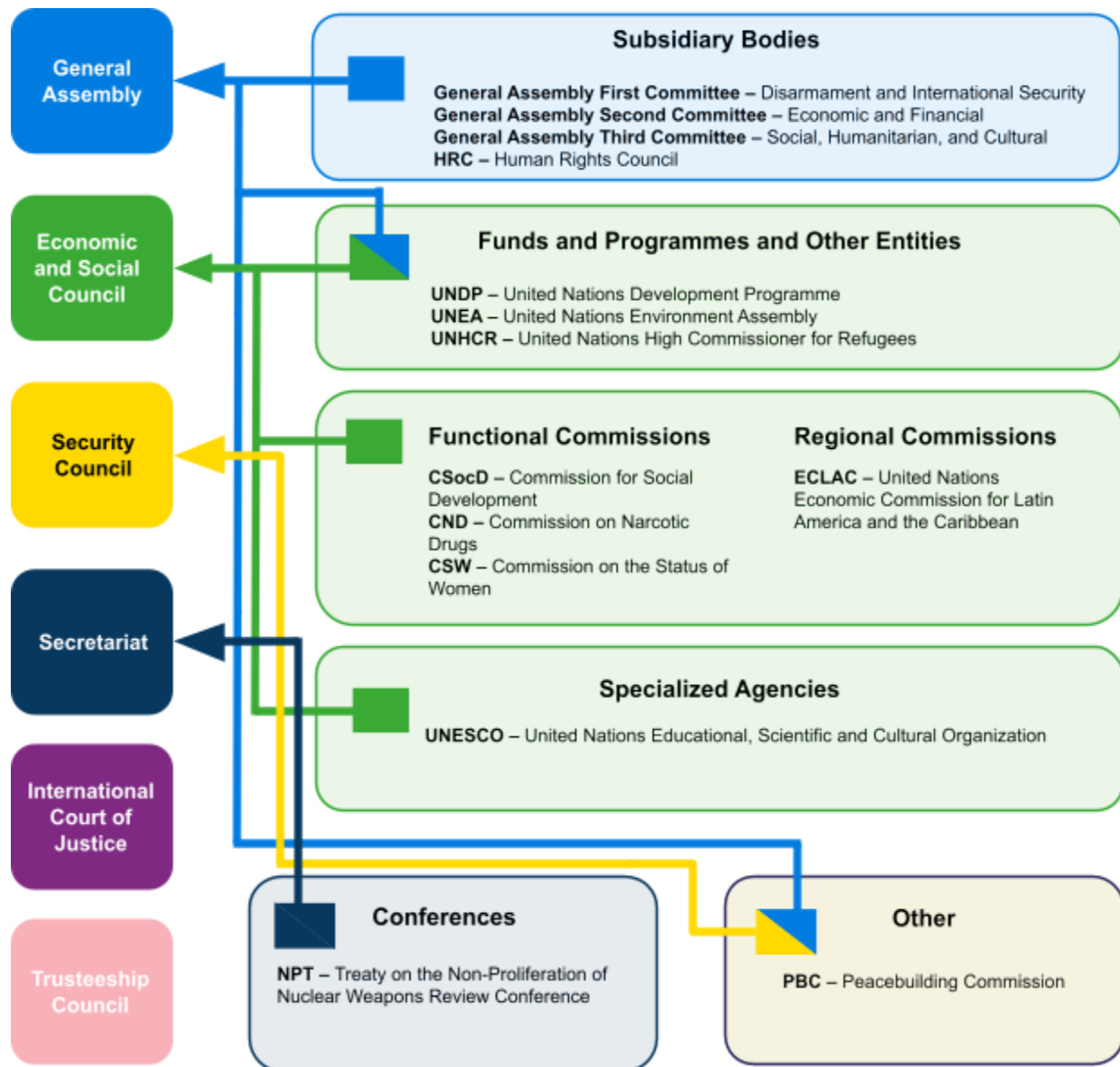
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is the primary body responsible for addressing human rights issues in the United Nations system.¹ HRC seeks to promote universal respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, effective governance on human rights issues, and, as the need arises, also provides recommendations after human rights violations have occurred.²

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

Replacing the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, HRC was established in 2006 with General Assembly resolution 60/251, "Human Rights Council."³ HRC's operational structures were given further detail in 2007 by HRC resolution 5/1 on "Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council," which established the HRC Complaint Procedure for cases of consistent patterns of human rights violations.⁴ It is mandated to monitor, discuss, and make recommendations on human rights violations, establish international human rights standards, and promote human rights.⁵ The United Nations has two forms of human rights monitoring mechanisms: treaty-based bodies and charter-based bodies.⁶ While the ten treaty-based bodies assess the implementation of specific human rights treaties, HRC is the primary charter-based body and, although its resolutions are not legally binding, it can monitor human rights across all Member States rather than solely those which are party to specific treaties.⁷

HRC may mandate international commissions of inquiry or investigations into serious violations of human rights law.⁸ These non-judicial commissions allow violations to be recorded and reported, and can help to ensure accountability in potential future judicial proceedings, including those held by the International Criminal Court.⁹ The commissions also review legislative and institutional mechanisms to protect human rights and propose recommendations on how they may be strengthened.¹⁰ Separate from these commissions, HRC and its subsidiaries can establish Special Procedures, which are mechanisms that enable independent parties to report, monitor, and advise on country-specific or thematic issues under HRC consideration.¹¹ Each investigation has a mandate and a mandate holder, typically a Special

¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*. 2006.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (5/1)*. 2007.

⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*. 2006.; Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The Human Rights Council: A practical guide*. 2015.

⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Instruments & Mechanisms*. 2024.

⁷ Ibid; Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The Human Rights Council: A practical guide*. 2015.

⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *International Commissions of Inquiry, Commissions on Human Rights, Fact-Finding missions and other Investigations*. 2024.

⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions on international human rights and humanitarian law: Guidance and practice*. 2015.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 7.

¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Procedures*. 2024.



Rapporteur, an independent expert, or a working group.¹² Special Procedures generally involve field visits, thematic studies, expert consultations, and regular reports to HRC and the General Assembly.¹³

The HRC also oversees the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a process under which each Member State submits an assessment of the fulfillment of its human rights obligations.¹⁴ The complete cycle of the UPR process takes around four years to complete and includes several steps.¹⁵ At the preparation stage, information is gathered that will form the basis of the review, including national reports, stakeholder submissions, and information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).¹⁶ At the review stage, documents are presented at the regular sessions of the working group on the UPR.¹⁷ At the adoption and consideration stage, each Member State provides comments and can offer reservations on specific issues.¹⁸ Finally, during the follow-up stage, each Member State under review presents how effectively it has acted upon the recommendations.¹⁹

While the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of HRC can be summarized as:

- **HRC will generally:** serve as a forum for dialogue on human rights; advance human rights policies and norms; mandate investigative commissions on severe violations of human rights law; initiate Special Procedures, which may encompass field visits, studies, and reports; manage the UPR processes; receive reports via the Complaint Procedure; coordinate with non-governmental and civil society actors; and make suggestions to Member States and United Nations bodies.²⁰
- **HRC will not generally:** adopt legally binding resolutions or decisions; intervene operationally in situations of human rights violations; or create new bodies or programs.²¹

Governance, Funding, and Structure

HRC is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and makes regular recommendations and reports, most often to the General Assembly's Third Committee.²² It works closely with OHCHR and receives an annual report from the commissioner on ongoing situations and topics.²³ It is served by several sub-committees, including the Advisory Committee and various intergovernmental working groups on specific thematic areas.²⁴

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Universal Periodic Review*. 2024.

¹⁵ Ibid; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society*. 2008. pp. 80-81.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 80-81.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 80-81.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 80-81.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 80-81.

²⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Procedures*. 2024; International Justice Resource Center. *UN Human Rights Council*. N.d.

²¹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The Human Rights Council: A practical guide*. 2015. pp. 7, 18.

²² United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*. 2006; Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The Human Rights Council: A practical guide*. 2015. p. 18.

²³ Ibid. p. 7.

²⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Advisory Committee*. 2024.



The council consists of 47 Member States who are elected via a majority vote of the General Assembly through a direct and secret ballot.²⁵ Membership is based on equitable geographical distribution, and a specific number of seats is designated to each geographic region.²⁶ During the first regular session of each year, HRC elects a President and four Vice-Presidents to serve on its Bureau, responsible for the organization and procedural functions of the committee.²⁷

²⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Membership of the Human Rights Council*. 2024.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The Human Rights Council: A practical guide*. 2015. p. 6.



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United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*. 2006. Retrieved 24 October 2025 from: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/60/251>

United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (5/1)*. 2007. Retrieved 24 October 2025 from: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/C.3/62/L.32>



1. Protecting and Advancing the Rights of Migrant Workers

Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that 167.7 million international migrant workers and their families lack consistent access to basic human rights in 2022, while representing 4.7% of the global labor force.²⁸ This total includes approximately 102.7 million men and 64.9 million women.²⁹ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides the primary data sources for international migrants, who are classified as migrant workers, missing migrants, internally displaced individuals, refugees, and asylum seekers.³⁰ International migrants frequently work as domestic workers and seasonal agricultural laborers in a wide variety of sectors, ranging from unskilled laborers to professionals employed on temporary visas.³¹ Despite their contributions to both host and origin countries, migrant workers and their families often face hazardous working conditions, restricted healthcare, substandard housing, and limited educational opportunities for their children.³² Their work sustains agriculture, construction, and domestic services, but institutional barriers and restrictive immigration regulations exclude them.³³ National and international migration policies directly affect spouses, children, and other dependents.³⁴

Migrant workers face unsafe working and living conditions, wage theft, and gender-based violence due to exploitation, discrimination, and denial of basic rights and safeguards worldwide.³⁵ Weak safety standards and enforcement at national and local levels expose many workers to additional hazards.³⁶ Employers frequently exploit undocumented workers by stealing wages and wrongfully terminating them without recourse.³⁷ Institutional and systemic discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, and legal status further

²⁸ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers*. 2024. p. 1; United Nations, International Organization of Migration. *World Migration Report 2024*. 2024. p.122.

²⁹ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers*. 2024. p. 8.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 3; United Nations, International Organization of Migration. *World Migration Report 2024*. 2024. p. 138.

³¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. *Behind Closed Doors: Protecting and Promoting the Human Rights of Migrant Domestic Workers in an Irregular Situation (HR/PUB/15/4)*. 2015. p. 15.

³² United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers*. 2024. p. 1; United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Gehad Madi (A/79/213)*. 2024. p. 21.

³³ United Nations, Network on Migration. *Promising Practices in the Provision of Essential Services to Migrants*. 2022. p. 59.

³⁴ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees and Their Families: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners*. 2021. p. 58.

³⁵ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs*. 2021. p. 13; United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *The Other Migrant Crisis – Protecting Migrant Workers against Exploitation in the Middle East and North Africa*. 2015. p. 12; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Migration Group. *The GMG Thematic Paper on the Exploitation and Abuse of International Migrants, Particularly Those in an Irregular Situation: A Human Rights Approach*. 2013. pp. 35-38.

³⁶ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs*. 2021. p. 13-18.

³⁷ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *The Other Migrant Crisis – Protecting Migrant Workers against Exploitation in the Middle East and North Africa*. 2015. p. 40.



marginalizes migrant workers by limiting their access to healthcare, education, legal aid, and social protection.³⁸ Women face increased risks of gender-based violence and harassment in isolated or unregulated workplaces, especially in domestic and caregiving roles.³⁹ ILO highlights that migrant women had an employment-to-population ratio of 48.1%, compared with 72.8% for migrant men.⁴⁰ According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2024, roughly 138 million children were engaged in child labor, as many migrant families experienced economic distress that forced them to rely on their children's earnings for survival.⁴¹ Approximately 54 million migrant child workers work in hazardous environments that endanger their health, safety, and morals, which are at risk through child trafficking, forced labor, armed group recruitment, drug trafficking, and sexual exploitation.⁴²

Protecting migrant workers' rights aligns with the fundamental human rights values of dignity, equality, non-discrimination, and freedom from forced labor.⁴³ International and national human rights frameworks protect migrant workers from exploitation and abuse regardless of nationality, ethnicity, legal status, or other discriminating factors.⁴⁴ They include central principles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) such as the right to life, liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, thought, speech, work, and education.⁴⁵ These protect migrant workers from forced labor, ensure fair working conditions, and provide healthcare and legal aid.⁴⁶ Social security provides lifelong healthcare and financial stability, reducing vulnerability and increasing well-being.⁴⁷ These rights demonstrate a global commitment to justice and dignity while promoting inclusive societies by acknowledging migrant workers' humanity and contributions.⁴⁸

³⁸ United Nations, Network on Migration. *Promising Practices in the Provision of Essential Services to Migrants*. 2022. p. 60.

³⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Migration Group. *The GMG Thematic Paper on the Exploitation and Abuse of International Migrants, Particularly Those in an Irregular Situation: A Human Rights Approach*. 2013. p. 28.

⁴⁰ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers*. 2024. p. 13.

⁴¹ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. *What is child labour?*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. *Child Labour. Global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward*. 2025. p. 11.

⁴² United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. *What is child labour?*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. *Child Labour. Global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward*. 2025. p. 12-13.

⁴³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *International Standards Governing Migration Policy*. 2025; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (A/RES/45/158)*. 1990. p. 1.

⁴⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (A/RES/45/158)*. 1990. p. 2.

⁴⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁴⁶ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *International Labour Standards and Labour Migration*. 2025. p. 21-23.

⁴⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and International Labour Organizations. *OHCHR-ILO Fact Sheet: Right to Social Security*. 2025. p. 9.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*. 2018.



International and Regional Framework

International legal instruments create a global framework affirming migrant workers' rights to dignity, equality, decent work, and protection from exploitation.⁴⁹ The UDHR was the first legal document to establish fundamental human rights that must be universally protected.⁵⁰ UDHR guarantees that everyone has the right to social security (article 22), to work and rest (article 23), to access fair employment, remuneration, and to social protection (article 24).⁵¹ Building on this, the United Nations General Assembly adopted two binding treaties, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1966), which together form the International Bill of Human Rights.⁵² The ICESCR safeguards the basic economic, social, and cultural rights, including adequate living and work standards, social protection, rights to form trade unions, and access to cultural and scientific progress.⁵³ The ICCPR ensures equality before the law and prohibits arbitrary expulsion, including for non-citizens.⁵⁴ The *International Convention to Protect the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (1990) protects the rights of both documented and undocumented migrant workers and their families.⁵⁵ It prohibits collective expulsion and arbitrary deportation, ensures access to justice, and guarantees equal treatment with national citizens in terms of labor rights and social security.⁵⁶ The convention has seen relatively low rates of ratification, and in some countries that have ratified, gaps remain between international commitments and domestic implementation.⁵⁷

The international community established a series of treaties and agreements to protect migrant workers' rights by combating discrimination, promoting equality, and guiding states to rights-based governance.⁵⁸ The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979) obligates Member States to ensure women migrant workers equal access to employment, healthcare, legal protection, and freedom from gender-based violence and exploitation.⁵⁹ In addition, the *Convention on the*

⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)). 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (A/RES/2200 (XXI)). 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (A/RES/45/158). 1990.

⁵⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A(III)). 1948.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (A/RES/2200 (XXI)). 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (A/RES/2200 A(XXI)). 1966.

⁵³ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (A/RES/2200 (XXI)). 1966.

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (A/RES/2200 A(XXI)). 1966.

⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (A/RES/45/158). 1990.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (A/RES/45/158). 1990; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees and Their Families: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners*. 2021. pp. 30-32.

⁵⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *The Core International Human Rights Treaties* (ST/HR/3/Rev.1.). 2014.

⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (A/RES/34/180). 1979.



Rights of the Child (1989) emphasizes the best interests of children and safeguards their rights to education, healthcare, and protection from all forms of labor exploitation.⁶⁰ As the first intergovernmental agreement on all dimensions of international migration, the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (2018) offers flexible and context-specific policy options to help Member States leverage migration for sustainable development.⁶¹ Furthermore, the Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 35/17 (2017) on “Protection of the human rights of migrants: the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration” builds upon the Global Compact and addresses the risks faced by migrants, especially women and children, during large-scale movements.⁶²

Regional efforts aim to protect migrant workers by promoting rights-based policies, ensuring equal treatment, regulating labor mobility, and coordinating cross-border management to maintain dignity, social security, and access to justice.⁶³ The African Union (AU) supports migrant workers through instruments such as the *Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action* (2018-2030) and the *Joint Labour Migration Programme* (2015), promoting legal harmonization, access to social security, and the protection of vulnerable migrant populations.⁶⁴ Additionally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) fosters regional collaboration through key instruments such as the *ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of Migrant Workers’ Rights* and the *ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations and Its Guidelines*.⁶⁵ The European Union (EU) and ASEAN, in partnership with international organizations and civil society, advance migrant workers’ rights in socio-cultural aspects through initiatives such as the *ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Safe and Fair Labour Migration*.⁶⁶

Role of the International System

HRC promotes and addresses migrant workers’ rights worldwide through targeted resolutions, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, Special Procedures, and Complaint Procedures.⁶⁷ HRC adopted a series of resolutions and published thematic and country-specific reports that reaffirm the universal human rights of migrants, regardless of their status, and emphasize the need for safe, orderly,

⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989.

⁶¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*. 2018.

⁶² United Nations, Human Right Council. *Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants: the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/HRC/RES/35/17)*. 2017.

⁶³ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers*. 2012. pp. 11-14; European Commission, Official Journal of the European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (C 303/1)*. 2007; United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. *Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development*. 2013; African Union Commission, AU Department for Social Affairs. *Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030)*. 2018. pp. 30-32, 35-37.

⁶⁴ African Union Commission, AU Department for Social Affairs. *Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030)*. 2018. pp. 30-32, 35-37; African Union Commission, Assembly of Heads of States and Governments. *Joint Labour Migration Programme*. 2015.

⁶⁵ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers*. 2012. pp. 6-8; The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations and Its Guidelines*. 2023.

⁶⁶ Delegation of the European Union to ASEAN. *EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership Blue Book 2024-2025*. 2024. p. 113.

⁶⁷ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *UPR Cycles: Third Cycle (2017–2022)*. 2025; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Human Rights Council Complaint Procedure*. 2025; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Special Procedures*. 2025.



and rights-based migration governance.⁶⁸ The UPR Working Group conducts the review to protect migrant workers' rights through evaluating human rights and recommending actions such as legislative reforms, ratification, and enforcement of relevant conventions.⁶⁹ Member States bear the primary responsibility to implement recommendations in the UPR Working Group outcome reports, and persistent non-cooperation may be taken into account by HRC.⁷⁰ Created in 1999, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants aims to overcome obstacles to the full protection of migrants at all stages of migration and provides recommendations on strengthening their rights.⁷¹ Recent thematic reports on migrants focused on the protection of children in migrant contexts and the contributions of migrant workers worldwide.⁷² Complementing the abovementioned efforts, the Complaint Procedures empower individuals and organizations to report consistent patterns of human rights violations to the attention of HRC.⁷³

Other United Nations entities and agencies play complementary roles in developing labor standards, providing operational support, advocating for migrant rights, and aiding countries in incorporating human rights into migration policies and practices.⁷⁴ HRC benefits from substantive, technical, and secretariat support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).⁷⁵ OHCHR also assists National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) through frameworks such as the Global Alliance of NHRIs, which promotes accountability, conforms to international norms, and strengthens national human rights oversight.⁷⁶ ILO leverages interdisciplinary expertise and unites governments, employers, and workers on fair migration across Member States.⁷⁷ It also establishes conventions and protocols addressing migrant workers' rights, including freedom of association, elimination of labor exploitation and child labor, non-discrimination in employment, and the right to a safe and healthy working environment.⁷⁸ Moreover, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) provides direct operational support to migrants, particularly for those in emergent situations, through technical assistance and policy advice.⁷⁹ In

⁶⁸ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Documents and Resolutions*. 2025.

⁶⁹ Universal Periodic Review Info. *49th UPR Working Group: Key Highlights: Kuwait*. 2025; Universal Periodic Review Info. *58th UPR Working Group: Key Highlights: Qatar*. 2025.

⁷⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Basic Facts about the UPR*. 2025.

⁷¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants*. 2025.

⁷² United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Revisiting Migrants' Contributions with a Human Rights-based Approach: a Discussion on Facilitating and Hindering Factors (A/HRC/56/54)*. 2024; United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Gehad Madi (A/79/213)*. 2024.

⁷³ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Human Rights Council Complaint Procedure*. 2025.

⁷⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *What We Do*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *About the ILO*. 2025; United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *About Us: Mission*. 2025.

⁷⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *About HRC*. 2025.

⁷⁶ Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. *What We Do*. 2025; Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. *Annual Report 2024*. 2025. pp. 8, 12, 16, 20; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Human Rights and NHRIs*. 2025.

⁷⁷ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *ILO Agenda and Action on Fair Migration (GB.353/POL/1)*. 2025. p. 3.

⁷⁸ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*. 1998. p. 7; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Resolution on the Inclusion of a Safe and Healthy Working Environment in the ILO's Framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILC.110/RES I)*. 2022.

⁷⁹ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *About Us: Mission*. 2025.



2024, IOM supported over 26.4 million people affected by crisis situations, with 89% of surveyed beneficiaries rating its assistance as safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory.⁸⁰

Regional cooperation helps establish harmonized legal standards, programs, and context-specific human rights solutions.⁸¹ ASEAN advances national policies, regulations, and legal protections for migrant workers.⁸² It aims to promote safe and resilient labor mobility, support sustainable livelihoods, and apply international labor standards for all phases of migration.⁸³ The Regional Planning Meeting for Promoting ASEAN Women Migrant Workers' Rights through Organizing facilitates union cooperation on return and reintegration, targeted discrimination faced by the most at-risk and invisible groups, particularly those in transient and private workplaces.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the EU proposed a series of measures to promote migrant integration through inclusive education and training, employment opportunities, access to social security, and affordable housing through the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027).⁸⁵

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), labor unions, and migrant-led groups contribute to advancing the rights of migrant workers, providing consulting services, supporting ethical labor practices, and holding stakeholders accountable.⁸⁶ OHCHR prioritizes cooperation with CSOs such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) regarding migrant workers, as they advance the human rights mission by providing essential services such as legal aid, shelter, healthcare, and advocacy.⁸⁷ The Institute for Human Rights and Business and the Fair Labour Association guide companies and industry sectors through roadmaps on protecting migrant workers' rights throughout the migration cycle.⁸⁸ To support children's education in migrant contexts, the Migration Policy Group launched the Sirius Migrant Education Policy Index, offering operational recommendations for policymakers to build inclusive education systems.⁸⁹ As the largest trade union worldwide, the International Trade Union Confederation works closely with the ILO to protect the rights of migrant workers and promote international labor standards through methods such as providing statistical analysis and migrant workers' status maps.⁹⁰ Migrant-led organizations are vital because of their first-hand

⁸⁰ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Annual Report for 2024 (C/116/4)*. 2025. p. 1.

⁸¹ African Union Commission, AU Department for Social Affairs. *Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030)*. 2018. pp. 24-25; The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers*. 2018. pp. 6-8.

⁸² The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *ASEAN Migration Outlook Second Edition*. 2024. pp. 140-145.

⁸³ Ibid. pp. 140-145.

⁸⁴ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Regional Planning Meeting for Promoting ASEAN Women Migrant Workers' Rights through Organizing*. 2018. p. 59.

⁸⁵ European Commission, Official Journal of the European Union. *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027) (C 286/134)*. 2021.

⁸⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Civil Society*. 2025; Institute for Human Rights and Business. *Migration with Dignity: A Guide to Implementing the Dhaka Principles*. 2023. p. 8; International Trade Union Confederation. *Who we are*. 2025.; Domestic Workers United. *About: History*. 2025.

⁸⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Civil Society*. 2025.; Global Labour Justice. *Our Work*. 2025; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *Rights of Migrants in Action: Child Protection Projects*. 2018. pp 3-4.

⁸⁸ Institute for Human Rights and Business. *Migration with Dignity: A Guide to Implementing the Dhaka Principles*. 2023; Free Labour Association. *2023 Annual Public Report*. 2024. p. 20.

⁸⁹ Migration Policy Group. *SIRIUS Migrant Education Policy Index*. 2025.

⁹⁰ International Trade Union Confederation. *Who we are*. 2025; International Trade Union Confederation. *2025 ITUC Global Rights Index: The World's Worst Countries for Workers*. 2025.



knowledge.⁹¹ For example, Domestic Workers United helped pass the first domestic worker-related legislation, the 2010 Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in the state of New York.⁹²

Combating Labor Exploitation and Unfair Treatment

Migrant workers often face various forms of systematic unfair treatment and labor exploitation.⁹³ They are subjected to discrimination and threats throughout all stages of employment, from recruitment and working conditions to job security and potential deportation.⁹⁴ During the recruitment phase, employers or agencies may impose excessive costs, such as deductions from future earnings and confiscation of passports, effectively trapping migrant workers in exploitative employment.⁹⁵ According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, private employment agencies collect up to 10 billion USD in illegal recruitment fees from migrant workers annually.⁹⁶ In the employment phase, deceitful promises, excessive charges for basic living expenses, and discriminatory payments often result in cycles of debt and dependency.⁹⁷ Such systematic abuses are particularly common in informal and private sectors, where the hidden nature of the work often results in the absence of legal protections.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, sectors such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing heavily rely on migrant labor but frequently lack sufficient legal protections, leaving workers in these industries highly vulnerable.⁹⁹ As a result, many of these abuses may qualify as forced labor, human trafficking, or other forms of modern slavery.¹⁰⁰ According to ILO, adult migrant workers face three times more risks of forced labor than other workers in 2022.¹⁰¹ Regional investigations in the Middle East have also confirmed widespread abuses under the Kafala system, a sponsorship framework that ties a migrant worker's legal status to their employer, severely restricting their freedom of mobility and rights to terminate employment.¹⁰²

Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation due to multiple interrelated risk factors, including inadequate legal protection, irregular legal status, socio-economic marginalization, and

⁹¹ Domestic Workers United. *About: History*. 2025.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour*. 2019.

⁹⁴ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *ILO Helpdesk: Business and Labour Migration*. 2024.

⁹⁵ Ibid; United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Labour Exploitation, Trafficking and Migrant Health: Multi-country Findings on the Health Risks and Consequences of Migrant and Trafficked Workers*. 2015. pp. 103-107.

⁹⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Background Note Thematic Round Table 1: Ensuring that Migration is Voluntary, Orderly and Regular*. 2024. p. 6.

⁹⁷ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *ILO Helpdesk: Business and Labour Migration*. 2024; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Fair Recruitment and Access to Justice for Migrant Workers*. 2022. pp. 10-12.

⁹⁸ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour*. 2019. p. 10.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*. 2022. p. 19, 22.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁰² United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Sponsorship Reform and Internal Labour Market Mobility for Migrant Workers in the Arab States*. 2023; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Migrant Workers in the Middle East often Exploited, UN reports at Human Trafficking Conference*. 2013; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Experts Call for Protection of Trafficked Workers from Viet Nam in Saudi Arabia*. 2021.



identity-based discrimination.¹⁰³ One of the major factors contributing to the vulnerability of migrant workers is the inadequate protection and enforcement of their rights under local laws and policies.¹⁰⁴ Some actors may exploit legal gaps to extract personal profits from migrant workers, while legal enforcement systems often prioritize migration control over protecting human rights.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, the global number of irregular migrants continues to grow as the clashes between persistent labor demand and restrictive entry rules and bureaucratic barriers often fail to provide safe and orderly migration pathways.¹⁰⁶ Irregular migrants continue to face disproportionately high risks due to the lack of legal recognition, limited data availability, and heightened vulnerability during global emergencies.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, racism, xenophobia, and anti-migration attitudes severely exacerbate migrant workers' vulnerability by curtailing their job prospects, hampering their social integration, and increasing the risk of poverty.¹⁰⁸ Other factors, such as language barriers, lack of access to reliable information, limited awareness of their rights, and insufficient understanding of the local legal system, further compound the vulnerability of migrant workers.¹⁰⁹

United Nations entities and experts underscore that combating labor exploitation and unfair treatment depend on stronger legal protections, including national alignment with international frameworks and improved access to justice.¹¹⁰ The international community should strengthen existing legal frameworks through the ratification and implementation of core international treaties and conventions, such as the *International Convention to Protect the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.¹¹¹ NHRIs serve as an effective link between national and international migrant rights protection, for example, NHRIs in Peru and Costa Rica successfully advocated for legislative reform by identifying gaps in national migration law, leading to significant changes to their monitoring apparatuses.¹¹² Existing bilateral labor migration agreements under the AU address gender-based issues, integrating mutual recognition of skills, and strengthening fair and ethical recruitment.¹¹³ Moreover, international labor standards have addressed

¹⁰³ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Contemporary Forms of Slavery as Affecting Currently and Formerly Incarcerated People (A/HRC/57/46)*. 2024. p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour*. 2019. p. 10.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 10-11.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *World Migration Report 2024*. 2024. pp. 56-104; Castles et al. *Irregular Migration: Causes, Patterns, and Strategies*. 2012. p. 137.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Protecting the Rights of Migrant Workers in Irregular Situations and Addressing Irregular Labour Migration: A Compendium*. 2022. pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia*. 2001. p. 2; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Revisiting Migrants' Contributions with a Human Rights-based Approach: a Discussion on Facilitating and Hindering Factors (A/HRC/56/54)*. 2024. p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour*. 2019. p. 50; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Fair Recruitment and Access to Justice for Migrant Workers*. 2022. p. 4.

¹¹⁰ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Fair Recruitment and Access to Justice for Migrant Workers*. 2022.

¹¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard*. 2025.

¹¹² The German Institute for Human Rights. *National Human Rights Institutions and Their Work on Migrants' Human Rights*. 2019. p. 17.

¹¹³ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements in African Union Member States: taking stock and the way forward*. 2019. pp. 4-7.



migrant workers' access to justice, remedies, and dispute resolution.¹¹⁴ Access to remedy complements the legal process by providing grievance mechanisms and affordable, prompt legal assistance.¹¹⁵ It also ensures the right to a fair and public hearing, as well as the right to information and language services.¹¹⁶

Ensuring Access to Social Security and Social Services

Migrant workers and their families frequently confront considerable impediments in accessing social security and social services.¹¹⁷ Contributing to this disparity, xenophobia, racism, and discrimination, often driven by misinformation and disinformation, continue to hinder the social and cultural integration of migrant workers.¹¹⁸ Such challenges are worsened during crises, including economic downturns, climate crises, and public health emergencies.¹¹⁹ However, some laws and policies still explicitly exclude undocumented migrants from accessing social security and social services.¹²⁰ For instance, Kafala sponsorship systems in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries exclude migrant workers, particularly those with irregular status, from the protection of national labor laws.¹²¹ In GCC countries, effective access to social protection heavily depends on employer liability.¹²² This is compounded by visa restrictions, limited access to justice, and weak compliance with agreements from the country of origin.¹²³ To address these issues, Oman introduced a new *Social Protection Law*, which aims to implement an insurance scheme that covers sickness, maternity, and employment injury, including for migrant workers.¹²⁴ The *United Nations Social Protection Floor Initiative* (SPF-I) aims to establish universal social protection systems for both documented and undocumented migrant workers.¹²⁵ Countries are guided by

¹¹⁴ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Fair Recruitment and Access to Justice for Migrant Workers*. 2022. pp. 17-21.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 16.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Behind Closed Doors: Protecting and Promoting the Human Rights of Migrant Domestic Workers in an Irregular Situation* (HR/PUB/15/4). 2015. p. 4; United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Migration Health in the Sustainable Development Goals*. 2018; United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of the labour and human rights of migrant workers* (A/78/180). 2023. p. 6.

¹¹⁸ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Revisiting Migrants' Contributions with a Human Rights-based Approach: a Discussion on Facilitating and Hindering Factors* (A/HRC/56/54). 2024.

¹¹⁹ Migration Data Portal. *Migration data relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *The Global Economic Crisis and Migrant Workers: Impact and Response*. 2009. pp. 3-4; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *World Social Protection Report 2024-26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*. 2024. p. 30.

¹²⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Global education monitoring report, 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, not Walls*. 2018. p. 131.

¹²¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales* (A/78/180). 2023. p. 11; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Social Protection for Migrant Workers in Countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC): A Regional Mapping of Provisions on Paper and in Practice*. 2023. p. 11.

¹²² United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Access to Social Protection for Nepalese Migrant Workers in Countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)*. 2023. p. 9.

¹²³ Ibid. p. 9.

¹²⁴ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *World Social Protection Report 2024-26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*. 2024. p. 125.

¹²⁵ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Social Protection Floor*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I)*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Organization*. 2011. p. 30.



SPF-I in designing, financing, and monitoring a nationally defined social security floor.¹²⁶ IOM contributes to advancing the Universal Health Coverage with Member States and its multilateral partners to strengthen social protection and ensure equitable access to healthcare for all.¹²⁷

Women migrant workers face additional vulnerability in accessing social protection and social services due to gender-based violence and discrimination, and a lack of recognition in sectors such as care and domestic work.¹²⁸ According to the IOM Migration Data Portal, as of 2022, an estimated 64.9 million migrants were women, representing 38.7% of the total migrant workforce worldwide.¹²⁹ However, women migrant workers often have limited information, lower levels of education, and fewer options for migration than men.¹³⁰ The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, has highlighted the persistent gender inequalities, which often leave them without written employment contracts, clearly defined working conditions, or access to complaint mechanisms.¹³¹ To address this, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) recommends that destination countries provide appropriate gender-sensitive services for women migrant workers, including training and recreational programs, emergency shelters, healthcare, and legal representation.¹³² Regionally, under the Governance of Labour Migration in South Africa initiative, IOM, ILO, and UN Women work together on gender-sensitive labor migration governance, such as reintegration models tailored to women migrant workers and conducting regional policy dialogues.¹³³

Many migrant children face multiple barriers in accessing social security and social services, increasing their vulnerability to child labor and human trafficking.¹³⁴ With only 26.4% of children globally receiving social protection benefits, UN agencies have highlighted the importance of expanding coverage to reduce risks of child rights violations such as child labor, disease, missed education, poor nutrition, and poverty.¹³⁵ According to UNICEF, approximately 20 million international migrant children face significant

¹²⁶ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Social Protection Floor*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I)*. 2025; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Organization*. 2011.

¹²⁷ United Nations, International Organization of Migration. *Social Protection and Health Coverage for Migrants*. 2025; Universal Health Coverage 2030. *The International Organization for Migration Joins UHC2030*. 2018.

¹²⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Violence Against Women Migrant Workers: Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/205)*. 2015. p.4; United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees and Their Families: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners*. 2021. p. 34.

¹²⁹ Migration Data Portal. *Labour Migration: By Sex*. 2024.

¹³⁰ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees and Their Families: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners*. 2021. p. 203.

¹³¹ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Migrant Domestic Workers and Trafficking in Persons: Prevention, Rights Protection and Access to Justice*. 2025. p. 8.

¹³² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *General Recommendation No. 26 on Women Migrant Workers*. 2008. pp. 12-13.

¹³³ United Nations, International Organization of Migration et al. *Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia (GOALS) Programme*. 2020.

¹³⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Gehad Madi (A/79/213)*. 2024. p. 16; United Nations, International Labour Organization et al.. *The Role of Social Protection in the Elimination of Child Labour*. 2022.

¹³⁵ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at the Crossroads - in Pursuit of a Better Future*. 2021. p. 83; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *World Social Protection Report 2024-26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*. 2024. p. 83.



barriers in accessing education.¹³⁶ One major obstacle for them in accessing social protection and social services is a lack of birth registration.¹³⁷ Without it, they cannot establish a legal identity and age, both prerequisites for enrolling in education, social security, and other public programs.¹³⁸ To help address these challenges, the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labor Migration provides a set of non-binding principles to assist governments in facilitating fair migration governance, including integrating children into the national education systems.¹³⁹ ILO also collaborates with UNICEF to protect migrant children's rights by recommending actions such as ensuring sustainable and fair funding, integrating children's rights into social protection programs, and building political consensus in line with existing international frameworks.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

Protecting and advancing migrant workers' rights requires comprehensive and inclusive methods that address legal gaps, institutional vulnerabilities, and the increasing intersections of global issues.¹⁴¹ As stated in the UDHR and ICESCR, it is essential to preserve and promote the rights of migrant workers, as this remains a significant global issue caused by shifting migration patterns, legislative gaps, and structural vulnerabilities.¹⁴² The *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* and the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration* established the international framework for a rights-based strategy.¹⁴³ Regional frameworks have complemented these through regional groups.¹⁴⁴ However, implementation varies among regions and legal systems, particularly for undocumented migrants and workers in informal industries.¹⁴⁵ Regional and national initiatives, supported by CVOs, are crucial in advocating for fair labor standards, equitable service access, and the elimination of discrimination and exploitation.¹⁴⁶ The growing interlinkage of global

¹³⁶ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. *Education Solutions for Migrant and Displaced Children and Their Host Communities*. 2019. p. 2.

¹³⁷ United Nations, International Labour Organization et al. *Ending Child Labour, Forced Labour, and Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains*. 2019. p. 36.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 36.

¹³⁹ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration*. 2006. p. 28.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, International Labour Organization et al.. *The Role of Social Protection in the Elimination of Child Labour*. 2022. pp. 49-52.

¹⁴¹ United Nations, International Organization for Migration. *Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour*. 2019.

¹⁴² European Commission, Official Journal of the European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (C 303/1)*. 2007.

¹⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (A/RES/45/158)*. 1990.

¹⁴⁴ African Union Commission, AU Department for Social Affairs. *Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030)*. 2018; African Union Commission, Assembly of Heads of States and Governments. *Joint Labour Migration Programme*. 2015; The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. *Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers*. 2012. p. 6-8; European Commission, Official Journal of the European Union. *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027) (C 286/134)*. 2021.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Resolution on the Inclusion of a Safe and Healthy Working Environment in the ILO's Framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILC.110/RES I)*. 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Institute for Human Rights and Business. *Migration with Dignity: A Guide to Implementing the Dhaka Principles*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.



issues affecting migrants calls for global solutions that address both immediate needs and systemic issues.¹⁴⁷ Member States are invited to recognize the interconnectedness of these issues and to develop comprehensive, inclusive plans that prioritize dignity, justice, and sustainability for all migrant workers.¹⁴⁸

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What strategies can improve the alignment of domestic laws with international human rights and labor standards, especially in countries that have not ratified essential treaties? Which regional or multilateral cooperation frameworks have been effective in safeguarding the rights of migrant workers? In what ways can ethical recruitment and data-driven policymaking be enhanced? Which actions can enhance access to social protection, healthcare, and education, particularly for women and children in informal sectors? Which successful reintegration programs for returnee migrant workers can be adapted to other national or regional contexts?

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, International Labour Organizations. *Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees and Their Families: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners*. 2021. p. 20; United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

¹⁴⁸ Institute for Human Rights and Business. *Migration with Dignity: A Guide to Implementing the Dhaka Principles*. 2023.



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2. Enhancing Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building for Human Rights

Introduction

Technical cooperation and capacity-building assist Member States in upholding their human rights commitments.¹⁴⁹ According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), technical cooperation includes activities such as training, advisory services, financial assistance, and support for national action plans.¹⁵⁰ Capacity-building refers to the development of resources necessary to fulfill international human rights obligations.¹⁵¹ General Assembly resolution 60/251 (2006) entitled “Human Rights Council” defines the Human Rights Council’s (HRC) mandate as promoting the protection of all human rights and freedoms.¹⁵²

The United Nations system defines human rights as universal entitlements inherent to all people without discrimination.¹⁵³ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly resolution 217 A (III), outlines rights including life, liberty, security, education, and participation in cultural life.¹⁵⁴ The *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* (Vienna Declaration), adopted in 1993, affirms that “all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated.”¹⁵⁵ According to the Vienna Declaration, technical cooperation and capacity-building should synergize collaboration between Member States and promote pathways to stronger human rights.¹⁵⁶ According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) should partake in this collaboration as independent state bodies with a mandate to work with governments and civil society to promote and uphold human rights standards.¹⁵⁷

As states acknowledge the need for advisory services and technical cooperation, they require more financial resources.¹⁵⁸ In 2023, OHCHR’s Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights disbursed approximately \$28.3 million in technical cooperation projects across 56 Member States.¹⁵⁹ However, as of June 2025, OHCHR faces major challenges, with only \$179 million of its \$246 million regular annual budget met, on top of a \$60 million shortfall in extra-budgetary funding.¹⁶⁰ According to OHCHR, this represents leaving 11 Member States without a United Nations human rights presence.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the General Assembly suggests that as digitalization shapes the modern human rights and technical cooperation landscape, emerging threats to digital rights call for robust safeguards and

¹⁴⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (E/CN.4/RES/2000/80)*. 2000. p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁵¹ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building in the Field of Human Rights (A/HRC/RES/45/32)*. 2020.significant

¹⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*. 2006. p. 1.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁵⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. 1993.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *Supporting national human rights institutions*. N.d.

¹⁵⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (E/CN.4/RES/2000/80)*. 2000. p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights*. 2025.

¹⁶⁰ Le Poidevin et al. Reuters. *UN rights chief warns of \$60 Million funding shortfall*. 2025.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.



coordinated global action.¹⁶² The General Assembly advocates that while digital tools have the potential to expand access and efficiency, they also pose risks to surveillance, censorship, and data breaches, particularly affecting marginalized communities.¹⁶³ The *United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* highlights the importance of placing human rights at the center of digital policy and development.¹⁶⁴

International and Regional Framework

Many human rights treaties establish the connection between the maintenance of economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) and the importance of technical cooperation and capacity-building for human rights.¹⁶⁵ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) declares that everyone is entitled to equal protection of their fundamental human rights against any discrimination.¹⁶⁶ Article 22 affirms everyone's ESCR, and Article 27 states that everyone has the right to take part in cultural life liberally and to benefit from scientific advancement.¹⁶⁷ The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) emphasizes the importance of international assistance and cooperation, highlighting economic and technical support as particularly crucial.¹⁶⁸ It further states that Member States should devote the maximum resources they can to ensure the full realization of these rights.¹⁶⁹ The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1976) states that all people have the right to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.¹⁷⁰ It also recognizes the significance of ESCR in fulfilling citizens' needs.¹⁷¹ This includes the rights to adequate food and housing, education, work, health, social security, water and sanitation, and participation in cultural life.¹⁷² The Vienna Declaration emphasizes the importance of technical cooperation and capacity-building to effectively strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights.¹⁷³

Technical cooperation and capacity-building are linked to Goal 17 of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015).¹⁷⁴ The 2030 Agenda is an action plan for people, planet, and prosperity, seeking to strengthen universal peace, sustainability, and economic prosperity.¹⁷⁵ The 2030

¹⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *Road map for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (A/74/821)*. 2020. p. 5.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 10.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217/A)*. 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Economic, social and cultural rights*. 2025.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217/A)*. 1948.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. 1976.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Economic, social and cultural rights*. 2025.

¹⁷³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. 1993.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.



Agenda consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global goals built on the Millennium Development Goals.¹⁷⁶ SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) promotes global partnerships for sustainable development in various fields, including technology and capacity-building.¹⁷⁷ SDG 17 consists of 19 targets, or specific objectives to achieve the SDG.¹⁷⁸ SDG target 17.6 addresses regional and international cooperation on science, technology, and innovation, as well as knowledge sharing on mutually agreed conditions.¹⁷⁹ SDG target 17.9 calls for the enhancement of international support for effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans for achieving all the SDGs.¹⁸⁰

Regional organizations have each established their own human rights charters and conventions that highlight the importance of protecting economic, social, and cultural rights for technical cooperation and capacity-building as it relates to human rights.¹⁸¹ The *European Social Charter (Revised)* (1996) promotes fundamental social and economic rights of all people, such as capacity-building through education, vocational training, and technical cooperation with public and private organizations.¹⁸² The Organization of American States signed the *American Convention on Human Rights* (1969), with Article 26 calling on its Member States to undertake measures, especially those economic and technical, for the full realization of ESCR rights.¹⁸³ The African Union (AU) established the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (1981), stating that all people shall pursue their economic and social development.¹⁸⁴ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) endorsed the *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Human Rights* (1993), with Article 18 declaring each Member State's responsibility for appropriate economic, political, technical, and cultural measures.¹⁸⁵

Role of the International System

HRC aims to provide a platform to advance technical cooperation and capacity-building by sharing best practices and experiences, and acts as a foundation for Member States to collaborate on capacity-building efforts and promote human rights globally.¹⁸⁶ HRC resolution 45/32 (2020), "Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights," reiterated that technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights should account for Member

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*. N.d.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Council of Europe. *European Social Charter (revised)* (ETS No. 163). 1996; Organization of American States. *American Convention on Human Rights*. 1969; African Union. *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. 1981; Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center. *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Human Rights*. 1993.

¹⁸² Council of Europe. *European Social Charter (revised)* (ETS No. 163). 1996.

¹⁸³ Organization of American States. *American Convention on Human Rights*. 1969.

¹⁸⁴ African Union. *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. 1981.

¹⁸⁵ Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center. *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Human Rights*. 1993.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights* (A/HRC/RES/51/34). 2022; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights* (A/HRC/RES/45/32). 2020.



States' requests, needs, and priorities.¹⁸⁷ HRC resolution 51/34 (2022), "Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights," encourages regional human rights bodies to exchange best practices in the promotion and protection of human rights.¹⁸⁸ In 2011, HRC organized an intersessional meeting on the theme "Technical cooperation and capacity-building in the Human Rights Council: taking stock of the past for a better discharge of this mission in the future."¹⁸⁹ The meeting aimed at sharing best practices and experiences among Member States, United Nations entities, international organizations, NHRIs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders.¹⁹⁰ OHCHR advocates for including long-term outcomes in technical cooperation for human rights and for cooperation to be guided by informed contextual analyses of key issues, priorities, and relevant collaborators such as international actors and Member States.¹⁹¹ HRC resolution 54/28 (2023), "Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights," encouraged Member States to consider offering technical assistance and share technical assistance best practices with each other.¹⁹² Recently, HRC resolution 56/15 (2024) reiterated the importance of prioritizing technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights in its work and programmes for relevant entities within the United Nations system.¹⁹³

UNDP cooperates with HRC to provide development perspectives to policy debates and strengthen partnerships for sustainable development and human rights.¹⁹⁴ UNDP supports governments and CSOs in implementing effective human rights measures through research, such as Human Development Reports and Millennium Development Goals Reports, and technical assistance.¹⁹⁵ UNDP developed an initial checklist known as the PLANET Framework to include human rights in development policies and programmes.¹⁹⁶ UNDP also supports Member States in the development and implementation of their National Action Plans (NAPs) on Business and Human Rights by recommending Member States follow a five-phase process: initiation, assessment and consultation, drafting of initial NAP, implementation, and update.¹⁹⁷ NAPs are governmental policy documents to set priorities, actions, and commitments.¹⁹⁸ UNDP also launched YouthConnekt/Youth Programme, a capacity-building program aiming to connect youth to role models, peers, resources, technologies, skills, and economic opportunities.¹⁹⁹

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights (A/HRC/RES/45/32)*. 2020.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights (A/HRC/RES/51/34)*. 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights (A/HRC/53/63)*. 2023.

¹⁹² United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights (A/HRC/RES/54/28)*. 2023.

¹⁹³ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Informing the Human Rights Council on the human rights adviser programme (A/HRC/RES/56/15)*. 2024.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP's engagement at the human rights council*. N.d.

¹⁹⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Mainstreaming Human Rights in Development Policies and Programming: UNDP Experiences*. 2012.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid; United Nations Development Programme. *The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Programming: HRBA Toolkit*. 2025.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *YouthConnekt/Youth Programme*. N.d.

¹⁹⁸ Institute for Human Rights and Business. *What are National Action Plans (NAPs)?*. 2022.

¹⁹⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *Technical Cooperation in the field of human rights*. 2025.



OHCHR works with HRC and regional organizations to enhance and provide technical cooperation and capacity-building for the effective protection of human rights by helping implement strategies and programs.²⁰⁰ OHCHR provides technical cooperation and capacity-building assistance to Member States for HRC's universal periodic review and reporting mechanisms.²⁰¹ For example, OHCHR's country office in Burkina Faso provided technical assistance to stakeholders such as the National Human Rights Commission on the development and implementation of strategies and programmes to improve human rights at regional and international levels.²⁰² OHCHR also established a working group on hate speech and organized an awareness-raising session with 33 journalists, leading to the establishment of an information-sharing mechanism for journalists.²⁰³ In 2022, the OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific, in partnership with UN entities, organized capacity-building events for judges in Fiji and Papua New Guinea to increase awareness of legal principles supporting human rights.²⁰⁴ In addition, OHCHR worked with the Inter-American Human Rights System, the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of ASEAN, and other institutions to facilitate information exchange regarding technical cooperation, thereby strengthening their capacities to assist Member States and other stakeholders on diverse human rights issues.²⁰⁵ In 2022, OHCHR, AU, the Court of Justice of the AU, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights reviewed existing memorandums of understanding and set out priorities and joint activities to strengthen synergies and avoid duplication of these activities.²⁰⁶

Regional NHRI Networks serve as platforms that enhance collaboration, capacity-building, and advocacy among their Member States.²⁰⁷ The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF), consisting of 27 NHRIs from the Asia Pacific region, focuses on supporting and strengthening NHRIs to promote and protect human rights in the region.²⁰⁸ APF's *Strategic Plan 2022-27* describes APF's strategies to strengthen Member States' capacity to implement their human rights mandates and outlines APF's commitment to support the establishment of new NHRIs in the region, improving human rights protection.²⁰⁹ The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and the Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the American Continent directly cooperate with OHCHR through the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, further strengthening regional NHRIs.²¹⁰

²⁰⁰ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights (A/HRC/53/63)*. 2023.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Network of African National Human Rights Institutions. *Our Identity*. 2024; Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the American Continent (RINDHCA). *RINDHCA INAUGURATES REGIONAL OFFICE IN PANAMA*. 2021; Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. *Strategic Plan 2023-2027*. N.d.

²⁰⁸ Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. *Strategic Plan 2022-27*. 2022.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Network of African National Human Rights Institutions. *Our Identity*. 2024; Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the American Continent (RINDHCA). *RINDHCA INAUGURATES REGIONAL OFFICE IN PANAMA*. 2021; Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. *Strategic Plan 2023-2027*. N.d.



International financial and technical cooperation for capacity-building in the field of human rights has strengthened in recent years.²¹¹ The AU and European Union (EU) signed a €20 million financial agreement called the EU-AU Partnership Performance Acceleration Programme, aimed at promoting integrated development and capacity-building across Africa.²¹² The OHCHR East Africa Regional Office (EARO) supports the AU in strengthening its institutional capacity to implement its human rights activities in the African region effectively.²¹³ In addition, the EARO monitors human rights developments in several Member States and supports governments, civil society, United Nations Country Teams, and other stakeholders to strengthen capacity-building for human rights protection systems.²¹⁴

Member States' Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building Partnerships for Human Rights

The United Nations works in direct partnership with Member States to strengthen capacity-building and technical cooperation for human rights.²¹⁵ For example, the *2022-2025 Partnership Strategy for the Acceleration of the SDGs and the Implementation of The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Mexico (UNSDCF) 2020-2025* focuses on implementation via partnerships and action plans with relevant stakeholders to strengthen technical cooperation and capacity-building for human rights.²¹⁶ The United Nations Joint Programme on Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Philippines (UNJP) strengthens the capacities of responsible authorities, such as public institutions, to protect human rights by adopting a human rights-based approach (HRBA).²¹⁷ An HRBA strengthens domestic accountability measures and enhances the capacity of rights holders whose human rights are violated.²¹⁸ The UNJP contributed to increased engagement between the United Nations, the Government of the Philippines, and non-governmental stakeholders through technical assistance, capacity-building, policy advice, and institutional engagement.²¹⁹ Furthermore, the UNJP contributed to strengthening the competence of officials to implement an HRBA to drug control through awareness-raising and capacity-building.²²⁰ As a result, 168 prison officials increased their capacity to apply evidence-based and health-centered approaches to drug control.²²¹

²¹¹ African Union. *About the Online Capacity Building Training Program (OCBT)*. 2023; African Union. *AU and EU deepen ties with a €20 million capacity building agreement*. 2025.

²¹² African Union. *AU and EU deepen ties with a €20 million capacity building agreement*. 2025.

²¹³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Human Rights in East Africa*. 2025.

²¹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Human Rights in East Africa*. 2025.

²¹⁵ United Nations System in Mexico. *2022-2025 Partnership Strategy for The Acceleration of the SDG And the Implementation of The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Mexico (UNSDCF) 2020-2025*. 2022; United Nations Development Programme. *United Nations Joint Programme on Technical Cooperation & Capacity Building for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Philippines*. 2025.

²¹⁶ United Nations System in Mexico. *2022-2025 Partnership Strategy for The Acceleration of the SDGs And the Implementation of The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Mexico 2020-2025*. 2022.

²¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *United Nations Joint Programme on Technical Cooperation & Capacity Building for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Philippines*. 2025.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *United Nations Joint Programme on Technical Cooperation & Capacity Building for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Philippines*. 2025.

²²¹ Ibid.



The EU, ASEAN, and other regional entities established international partnerships with United Nations entities that support capacity-building and technical cooperation for human rights.²²² The United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) established the OSAA Strategic Agenda, Partnership, and Technical Cooperation Framework to foster coherence and strengthen alignment with African Member States for the implementation of the SDGs and *Agenda 2063*, Africa's regional strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable development.²²³ The EU established the Sub-Saharan Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 with the core objective to eradicate poverty through deepened multilateral partnerships, including technical assistance and support for capacity-building activities.²²⁴ ASEAN and the EU also adopted the *Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership (2023-2027)* to exchange best practices and implement capacity-building initiatives through ASEAN platforms, such as the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation.²²⁵

The AU, EU, and Inter-American Development Bank established regional partnerships to strengthen capacity-building and technical cooperation for human rights.²²⁶ The AU adopted the *AUDA-NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework* (CDSF) (2010) as a continent-wide strategy on capacity development focusing on evidence-based knowledge, citizen empowerment, and four other objectives.²²⁷ The African Capacity-Building Foundation (ACBF) established the *ACBF Strategic Plan for 2023-2027* (2023) to enhance Africa's regional transformation through capacity development with an emphasis on the promotion of inclusive growth.²²⁸ Asia Pacific Member States adopted the *Tehran Framework on Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights* (1998) for strengthening national capacities for regional promotion and protection of human rights.²²⁹ This framework included objectives to strengthen the capacity-building of human rights institutions with technical assistance from OHCHR to promote ESCR.²³⁰ The EU also established the *Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan* (2020–2027) to promote a safe and enabling environment for civil society, including long-term strategic and flexible support to capacity-building.²³¹ In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the Inter-American Development Bank established the LAC-China Capacity-Building and Policy and Knowledge Partnerships Program in 2017 to provide financial support for capacity-building and knowledge exchange, promoting institutional development.²³²

²²² EU-LAC Foundation. *EU development cooperation with Latin America*. 2017; European Commission. *Sub-Saharan Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027*. 2021; Association of Southeast Asian Nations and European Union. *Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership (2023-2027)*. 2022.

²²³ United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. *Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) Strategic Agenda, Partnership and Technical Cooperation*. N.d.; African Union. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. N.d.

²²⁴ European Commission. *Sub-Saharan Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027*. 2021.

²²⁵ Association of Southeast Asian Nations and European Union. *Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership (2023-2027)*. 2022.

²²⁶ African Union Development Agency. *Africa's Capacity Development Strategic Framework*. 2010; African Capacity-Building Foundation. *The Strategic Plan 2023-2027*. 2023.

²²⁷ African Union Development Agency. *Africa's Capacity Development Strategic Framework*. 2010.

²²⁸ African Capacity-Building Foundation. *The Strategic Plan 2023-2027*. 2023.

²²⁹ Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center. *Framework of Regional Technical Cooperation Programme in Asia and the Pacific Tehran Workshop* (1998). 1998.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Commission of Europe. *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2027*. 2020.

²³² Inter-American Development Bank. *LAC-China Capacity Building and Policy and Knowledge Partnerships*. 2017.



Enhancing Access to Technology and Digital Human Rights

Safeguarding digital human rights is critical for enabling citizens to participate in digital society securely, and the use of digital technologies can positively affect the lives of citizens.²³³ Technology is used to deliver services, urban planning and governance, and communication.²³⁴ The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) states that human rights must be adequately protected both online and offline.²³⁵ The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that a secure digital environment is essential to protecting and enabling the exercise of human rights.²³⁶ According to OECD, 22.5% of internet users across its Member States did not make online purchases in 2021 due to payment security and privacy concerns.²³⁷ Though states have already attempted to address risks to digital security by enhancing governance frameworks, OECD points out that more comprehensive enforcement is needed to protect human rights online.²³⁸ A lack of sufficient data protection could lead to a drastic data breach: according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, more than 7,000 data breaches were recorded in 2019, exposing over 15 billion records.²³⁹ Furthermore, UNDP recognizes that new technologies are frequently used for surveillance, repression, censorship, and online harassment, especially of vulnerable people and human rights defenders.²⁴⁰

Significant disparities in access to digital technologies, such as network coverage and 5G have emerged as the global digital divide, affecting economic activities, education, and public service use.²⁴¹ For example, mobile broadband penetration in low-income countries reached only 48% in 2024, compared to over 95% in high-income countries.²⁴² Additionally, urban citizens experience mobile download speeds that are 37.2% faster than those of rural citizens.²⁴³ 5G, the fifth generation of mobile technologies, offers significantly higher data transfer speeds, lower latency, and greater network capacity, compared to the previous generations.²⁴⁴ While the International Telecommunication Union reported that 5.5 billion people were estimated to be online in 2024, significant disparities in 5G coverage between high and low-income countries remained.²⁴⁵ Although 84% of people in high-income countries were covered, only 4% of those

²³³ United Nations Hub for Human Rights and Digital Technology. *About*. N.d; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Digital Human Rights*. 2025.; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Human rights in the digital era: Learnings on local governance from pilots in Europe*. 2023.

²³⁴ United Nations Hub for Human Rights and Digital Technology. *About*. N.d.

²³⁵ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Digital Human Rights*. 2025.

²³⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Human rights in the digital age*. N.d.

²³⁷ *Ibid*.

²³⁸ *Ibid*.

²³⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *As Internet user numbers swell due to pandemic, UN Forum discusses measures to improve safety of cyberspace*. N.d.

²⁴⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *The impact of digital technology on human rights in Europe and Central Asia*. 2023.

²⁴¹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Addressing the Digital Divide*. 2021; Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. *Impact of the Digital Divide: Economic, Social, and Educational Consequences*. 2025.

²⁴² Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. *Impact of the Digital Divide: Economic, Social, and Educational Consequences*. 2025; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Internet use continues to rise but disparities remain*. 2024.

²⁴³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Closing Broadband Connectivity Divides for All*. 2025.

²⁴⁴ International Telecommunication Union. *5G, human exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF) and health*. 2020; International Telecommunication Union. *Key enablers for 5G adoption by Asia-Pacific countries*. 2024.

²⁴⁵ International Telecommunication Union. *Measuring digital development - Facts and Figures 2024*. 2024.



in low-income countries had access to 5G.²⁴⁶ UN-Habitat recognizes the significance of international technical support and partnerships to address the global digital divide.²⁴⁷ The United Nations Secretary-General's *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* calls for economic support for developing countries to ensure they can use more digital tools, acknowledging the impact of digital tools in human rights advocacy and preventing human rights violations.²⁴⁸

United Nations entities such as HRC, OHCHR, UNDP, and UN-Habitat recently advanced initiatives and policies to address human rights in the digital era.²⁴⁹ HRC resolutions 54/21 and 58/23 expressed significant concern over the digital divide and citizens' right to privacy.²⁵⁰ In response to a request from HRC, OHCHR organized expert consultations and published reports on the challenges regarding human rights in the digital age.²⁵¹ In 2022, UNDP published the *UNDP Digital Strategy 2022-2025*, stating that human rights are the focus of their approach to digital technologies.²⁵² UN-Habitat developed the *Guide to Deliver Capacity-building Using Digital Tools* in 2021, which describes how to use digital tools, including videos and data visualization, in capacity-building.²⁵³ These tools support effective monitoring and long-term evaluation by enabling real-time data collection and the automated tracking of participants' progress.²⁵⁴

UNDP uses technology to help humanitarian and development organizations tackle global issues through effective promotion of capacity-building and technical cooperation for human rights.²⁵⁵ For example, UNDP developed e-Justice to protect human rights while strengthening domestic justice systems and institutions.²⁵⁶ E-Justice includes any effort to administer, deliver, strengthen, or monitor justice services using digital technologies.²⁵⁷ E-Justice contributed to ensuring global access to justice during lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.²⁵⁸ UNDP also developed the web-based Police Records Management Information System, which provides data analysis on national and regional crime trends.²⁵⁹

²⁴⁶ International Telecommunication Union. *Measuring digital development - Facts and Figures 2024*. 2024.

²⁴⁷ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Addressing the Digital Divide*. 2021.

²⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Road map for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (A/74/821)*. 2020.

²⁴⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *Digital Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022.

²⁵⁰ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Human rights defenders and new and emerging technologies: protecting human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in the digital age (A/HRC/RES/58/23)*. 2025; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *The incompatibility between democracy and racism (A/HRC/RES/53/21)*. 2023.

²⁵¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *OHCHR and privacy in the digital age*. 2025.

²⁵² United Nations Development Programme. *Digital Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022.

²⁵³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Guide to Deliver Capacity-building Using Digital Tools*. 2021; United Nations Evaluation Group. *United Nations contributions to national evaluation capacity development and the evolution of national evaluation systems*. 2022.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ World Economic Forum. *Digital tools to build a better world*. 2018.

²⁵⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Improving access to justice with inclusive digital transformation*. 2024; United Nations Development Programme. *e-justice: Digital transformation to close the justice gap*. 2022.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *E-justice: Listen, learn, share*. 2022.

²⁵⁹ Ibid; United Nations Development Programme. *Police Records Management Information System (PRMIS)*. 2022.



The system supports Member States with their criminal justice policies and enables evidence-based decision-making on domestic security issues.²⁶⁰

Conclusion

OHCHR recognizes technical cooperation and capacity-building as essential tools for enabling the implementation of international human rights.²⁶¹ These mechanisms are referenced in General Assembly resolution 60/251, SDG 17, the Vienna Declaration, and across numerous other United Nations resolutions and frameworks.²⁶² International and regional disparities in capacity and resources directly influence the ability of Member States to fulfill their human rights commitments.²⁶³

In light of rising inequality and technological advancement, the need for effective technical cooperation and capacity-building becomes more relevant to the protection of human rights.²⁶⁴ Gaps in infrastructure, access to digital technologies, education, and public services contribute to the uneven implementation of human rights protections globally.²⁶⁵ For this reason, United Nations bodies, along with regional organizations such as the EU and ASEAN, have formed trans-regional partnerships and actively work to strengthen capacity-building and technical cooperation in developing Member States.²⁶⁶ To tackle the digital divide, United Nations bodies promote the use of digital tools like e-Justice to promote and uphold human rights.²⁶⁷ By strengthening partnerships, mobilizing resources, and aligning programs with HRC, the international community can support Member States in developing long-term, inclusive, and sustainable human rights infrastructures.²⁶⁸

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research, they should consider: How can technical cooperation be better aligned with the needs, priorities, and requests of Member States while maintaining consistency with international human rights standards? In what ways can digital tools and technologies be responsibly integrated into technical cooperation efforts to enhance access to justice and human rights protection, particularly in developing countries? How can the United Nations improve the monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building programs to ensure long-term impact and accountability? How can partnerships between United Nations entities, regional organizations, and non-state actors be strengthened to avoid duplication and ensure the efficient use of resources in capacity-building initiatives?

²⁶⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *E-justice: Listen, learn, share*. 2022; Ibid.

²⁶¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (E/CN.4/RES/2000/80)*. 2000. p. 1.

²⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*. 2006. p. 2.

²⁶³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Road Map for Digital Cooperation: Implementation of the Recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (A/74/821)*. p. 14.

²⁶⁴ United Nations Industrial Development Organization. *Technology and Knowledge Transfer*. 2025.

²⁶⁵ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building in the Field of Human Rights (A/HRC/RES/45/32)*. 2020.

²⁶⁶ European Parliament. *EU Development Cooperation with Latin America*. 2017.

²⁶⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *Improving Access to Justice with Inclusive Digital Transformation*. 2024.

²⁶⁸ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Enhancement of Technical Cooperation and Capacity-Building in the Field of Human Rights (A/HRC/RES/45/32)*. 2020.



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