**Human Rights Day, 10 December 2023**

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 75.**

**UN Experts call on world leaders to recommit to human rights**

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948, we are reminded that this foundational instrument has inspired and helped to protect the rights and dignity of people around the world. It has empowered victims to make their voices heard. This should be celebrated and serve as a guide for the future.

On this occasion, we are also reminded of the pressing challenges facing the world today – armed conflicts that continue to rage, democratic backsliding, gender backlash, shrinking civic space, the devastating effects of the triple planetary crisis of environmental pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, multiple forms of discrimination, ever-growing inequalities, and the mounting disinformation and misinformation that seek to undermine freedoms and democracy even as technology advances. Individuals and groups in marginalized and vulnerable situations continue to face additional barriers to realizing their human rights.

In such a challenging time, it is important that human rights remain at the center of all decision-making at the local, national and international levels. More than ever before, States, civil society, the private sector, and all concerned must continue to strive for a global order that upholds the principles of equality, dignity, and justice for all.

Conflicts continue to inflict immense suffering on people and the environment with limited effective international response. We recall that the UN system was brought to life after the devastation of the Second World War. Sadly, that system, which brought us to the modern era of international legal protection of human rights and a web of international treaties and mechanisms to realize human rights of all peoples, is facing its greatest test yet. One main reason is that States and other actors are failing to uphold and implement the values and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Without a determined effort through international cooperation and collective action to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law, to protect civic space and to hold violators and abusers to account, and to provide redress and rehabilitation for victims and survivors, there is a risk of this painstakingly constructed system collapsing, with devastating consequences.

Climate change poses a substantial threat to the realization of all human rights, in addition to exacerbating inequalities, poverty, displacement, conflicts, food insecurity and forced migration to name a few. These intersecting challenges are shaking the very foundations of the grand human rights design of 1948. Governments, businesses and others have failed to take decisive actions to limit the rise of the global temperature to 1.5°C, phase out fossil fuels, take effective mitigation and adaptation measures and enhance climate financing to support a just transition to a green economy. While we welcome the setting up of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28 in Dubai, it is regretful that human rights are mostly missing from climate change discussions and decisions. We call on developed countries and companies to contribute to the Fund in proportion to their contribution to climate change. States should fully recognize Indigenous Peoples’ role in biodiversity conservation and respect and protect their collective rights. States should also protect climate activists and environmental human rights defenders from reprisals and take measures to regulate corporate influence over climate action.

At the beginning of this century, technology – the internet, social media, artificial intelligence, as well as developments in medicine and biotechnology – was hailed by many as the new frontier, ushering in the means for accelerating global development, eliminating poverty and improving public health and wellbeing. The role of technology in meeting this hope cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, new technologies present great potential for promoting all human rights. At the same time, technological advancements pose serious challenges to the enjoyment of all human rights. Social media platforms have become the new source for discrimination, bullying, data mining, hate speech, misinformation and disinformation. States and businesses must ensure that technologies are developed and offered in line with international human rights standards. Safeguarding privacy, promoting digital inclusion, and addressing adverse human rights impacts of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, must be prioritized by governments and the private sector.

We must also not fail to recall that during this century, through the leadership of the United Nations system, States, the private sector, civil society, human rights defenders and other stakeholders, the millennium and sustainable development goals have been crafted.

Although much progress has been made over the years, we are far from fulfilling the collective aspiration of leaving no one behind and creating conditions necessary to realize one’s capabilities. States and all other actors must take decisive actions to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

In the face of international crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, devastating wars, violent extremism, restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms, gender inequality, and the escalation of discrimination, the special procedures have spoken up uncompromisingly in defense of all human rights for all and have engaged with all concerned in doing so. The establishment of the special procedures is one of the significant achievements of the human rights system as it is geared towards keeping human rights in the spotlight based on independent and impartial expert advice. On this milestone anniversary, we call on all States to reaffirm their commitment to human rights and the mechanisms that protect them, in words and deeds.

We must have high aspirations and deep determination as we focus on building and realizing a transformative human rights system that will underpin the next 75 years of global history. We invite all UN Member States and citizens of the world to reaffirm their individual and collective commitment to a multilateralism built on the principles of non-discrimination, equality, participation, empowerment and accountability. As the UN embarks on the Summit of the Future, States must ensure that this Summit is built on the bedrock of human rights. Human rights must underpin development as well as peace and security. International human rights law should also permeate all components of our economic system – including trade, finance and taxation – to promote all human rights for everyone. The success of the Summit would require solidarity and international cooperation among all concerned.

We remain deeply committed to contribute to the forging of a common vision to human rights as the anchor upon which fair, peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies can be built.