

NEWSLETTER

of the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order



Issue No. 3– November 2020

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well in these trying times.

I am pleased to share with you my third newsletter which has information about my interventions as listed above.

I look forward to continuing engaging with as many of you as possible in the course of my mandate as I now enter the second half of my tenure as Independent Expert.

Warm regards,

Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana
Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

*UN INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON THE
PROMOTION OF A DEMOCRATIC AND EQUITABLE
INTERNATIONAL ORDER.*



Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana

RENEWAL OF THE MANDATE OF THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT

At the end of its 45th session, the Human Rights Council renewed the mandate of the Independent Expert for another period of 3 years.

You can access HRC resolution 45/4 here:
<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/45/4>

EVENTS ATTENDED BY THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT SINCE AUGUST 2019

During the reporting period, half of which was marked by travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have had the pleasure to take part in the following events:

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EVENTS ATTENDED BY THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT SINCE AUGUST 2019 *continued from page 1*

26th –28th August 2019:

The 2019 Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development’s regional consultation on ‘shaping a peoples’ trade agenda’, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Some of the delegates to the Asian –Pacific Forum , Kuala Lumpur discuss current democracy and trade related challenges in the region.

12th -15th October 2019:

The Human Rights Defenders Forum, on the theme “Building solidarity toward equality for all”, organized by the Carter Center, held in Atlanta, United States of America.

Dozens of activists, peacemakers, and community leaders from several countries came together on 12th – 15th October 2019 for the Carter Center’s 12th Human Rights Defenders Forum, on the theme: “Building Solidarity toward Equality for All.” Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order was also in attendance.



Centre: Dr Livingstone Sewanyana with Ms. Laura M. Olson, Director and Ms. Faizat Badmus Busari Programme Assistant Human Rights Programme of the Carter Center during the 2019 Human Rights Defender Forum Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

The forum focused on the following topics: global protection for activists; challenges for women defenders and peacemakers; and the importance of mutually supporting civil, economic, political, and social rights.

The forum also showcased the experiences of courageous women and men on the front lines in the struggle for human rights in the year 2019.

EVENTS ATTENDED BY THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT SINCE AUGUST 2019 *continued from page 2*

16th – 17th February 2020:

An international conference on the theme “Social media: challenges and ways to promote freedoms and protect activists” organized by the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar in cooperation with OHCHR, the European Parliament, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the International Federation of Journalists, was held in Doha, Qatar.

The International Conference aimed at discussing the opportunities that social media have created for promoting human rights, and to explore recurrent forms of interference in the use of social media.

A variety of topics were presented namely: *Creating an enabling environment for online civic space: Legal and institutional perspectives; Responses by social media companies to protect civic space; Legislative frameworks regulating freedom of expression and social media; Human rights implications of blocking access to communications and social media; Regulating Big Tech – Transparency and accountability in content moderation; and Can established news platforms survive social media?* The last session, *‘Identification of future activities to broaden civic space in the social media’* was moderated by Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.

The conference brought together more than 300 governmental and non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders, media workers, social media influencers, tech community representatives, relevant special rapporteurs and independent experts, chairpersons of United Nations treaty bodies, judges, lawyers and victim representatives, as well as international and regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, research centres and other relevant bodies and organizations. Several recommendations were made by the conference delegates.



Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order at the opening session of the International Conference on Social Media, Doha, Qatar on 17th February 2020.

28th -29th February 2020:

A workshop on the theme “Representation and Elections in Africa” organized by Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark.

This was a high level meeting on challenges connected to *‘Representation and Elections in Africa’* organised by the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark on 28th and 29th February 2020. Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order was among the Guest Speakers among other influential international scholars invited from Europe, USA and Africa to the meeting.

The meeting was based on a research study on elections that have long been the centre of debate on democratization and democratic deepening in Africa. There has been an increased focus on the factors and mechanisms that make elections more or less well suited for democratically selected leaders.

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY



The Independent Expert presenting his third thematic report to the General Assembly on 19th October 2020

The Independent Expert presented his third thematic report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/45/28) and the General Assembly (A/75/206) on 21 September and 19 October 2020 respectively. Because of the ongoing pandemic, he participated remotely in the two interactive dialogues.

The Independent Expert decided to focus on the **interplay between economic policies and safeguards of international financial policies (IFIs) and good governance at the local level**. The IFIs referred to in this report are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Through the various policies they pursue and the safeguards they have put in place to manage the related impacts and risks associated with investment lending, **IFIs have a direct influence on how good governance is realized at the local level, and ultimately on the enjoyment of a democratic and equitable international order.**

For the purpose of this report, and owing to the word limit, the expert looked at the following key issues, which relate to some of the thematic priorities laid down in his vision report (A/HRC/39/47):

- 1) Stakeholder engagement and issues of public participation, transparency and reprisals;
- 2) State responsiveness to the needs of the population and retrogressive measures; and
- 3) The fight against corruption.

The issue of accountability is mainstreamed throughout the report. He looks mainly through the prism of State responsibility in upholding good governance and human rights. This report is not meant to be an exhaustive study of the present topic, but rather an overview of some of the main issues at stake, which could pave the way for further reflection.

In the report, the Independent Expert stresses that **IFIs must systematically take all the measures necessary to ensure that their activities and the projects that they support do not lead to human rights violations, including those committed by clients, whether in the public or private sector. They must similarly use their substantial leverage to ensure that those clients respect human rights and the principle of good governance.**

While IFIs should always aspire to be actors of positive change on the ground, **it is first and foremost the responsibility of States, in particular in their capacity as clients of IFIs, to ensure good governance and respect for human rights on the ground. This responsibility starts with ensuring a safe environment that is conducive to the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, and pursuing accountability.**

Crucially, **respect for human rights, good governance and the interests of local communities must be at the very heart of what drives sustainable development.** This requirement is all the more important in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated several of the challenges identified in the present report and increased the vulnerability of groups at risk.

The Independent Expert makes a series of recommendations addressed to various stakeholders, i.e. IFIs, member States, and local communities and civil society.

Read the report: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/interplayreports.aspx>

You can watch the webcasts here:

• Human Rights Council: <http://webtv.un.org/search/id-ie-on-international-order-12th-meeting-45th-regular-session-human-rights-council-/6193086897001/?term=2020-09-21&sort=date&page=5>

• General Assembly: <http://webtv.un.org/search/third-committee-virtual-informal-19-october-morning-general-assembly-75th-session-/6202895932001/?term=2020-10-19&sort=date&page=2>

PRESS RELEASES AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Independent Expert issued **20 press releases and 7 communications** jointly with fellow special procedure mandate holders. Several of these press releases related to human rights challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can access the communications and the press releases here:

- Press releases:
https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/NewsSearch.aspx?MID=IE_Int_Order
- Communications (select 'international order' mandate):
<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>

JOINT OPEN LETTER ON THE FINANCE IN COMMON SUMMIT (10TH TO 12TH NOVEMBER 2020, PARIS)

On 25th September 2020, the Independent Expert, together with other special procedures mandate holders, issued a **joint open letter ahead of the upcoming Finance in Common Summit** to be convened by the French Development Agency and set to bring together over 450 public development banks in Paris from 10th—12th November 2020.

In this letter, the experts raised two matters deemed of great relevance to the success of the Summit:

- 1) **the place of human rights within the Summit's agenda**, and
- 2) **the space provided for civil society, human rights defenders and communities affected by development finance itself to participate in the Summit.**

They stressed that there can be no sustainable development without respect for human rights, and that civil society, human rights defenders, communities, and indigenous peoples directly affected by development projects financed by public development banks have essential contributions to make to the process of shaping the ways in which this finance will be used now and in the future.

The full letter can be accessed here: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/joint_open_letter_finance_common_summit.pdf

NEW WEBSITE

The OHCHR has mainstreamed and refined the websites of special procedures mandate holders. You can access the **new version of the mandate's website** here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/IEInternationalorderIndex.aspx>

SUBMITTING COMPLAINTS TO THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT

The Independent Expert continues to welcome information from any individual, group of people, civil society organization, national human rights body or intergovernmental entity on threats to, and advances to a democratic and equitable international order. Further information and guidelines for submissions can be found here:

<https://spsubmission.ohchr.org/en>

HOW TO CONTACT THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT

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