Statement by the United States on the annual report of the Human Rights Council to the U.N. General Assembly

Ambassador Elisabeth Millard
Senior Area Advisor for Europe and Eurasia
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[https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-third-committee-interactive-dialogue-with-the-president-of-the-human-rights-council/](https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-third-committee-interactive-dialogue-with-the-president-of-the-human-rights-council/#:~:text=While%20the%20HRC%20has%20taken,on%20Israel%20in%20May%202021)

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The United States is proud to have been elected to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for the 2022-2024 term after reengaging as an observer state in February 2021. We approach membership in the HRC with humility and introspection, knowing that we must constantly strive to be as inclusive and rights respecting. Although the Council continues to have flaws, which we have noted since its creation, we believe our engagement with the Council results in better outcomes in promoting and protecting human rights around the world.

And while on the Council, we will continue to be a vocal advocate for the inclusion of civil society. Our NGO partners add an important voice, bringing unique perspectives to the Council chamber and translating our words into action on the ground.

During this last year as an Observer, the United States was proud to co-sponsor 41 resolutions and be a part of 40 joint statements during the three 2021 HRC sessions on crucial human rights situations and important thematic issues.

During the March HRC session, we galvanized 157 members of the international community to join us in acknowledging the corrosive legacy of racism – a scourge we contend with domestically and globally. Advancing racial justice and equity is a top priority of the Biden-Harris Administration, and we will seek to partner with all those who share that goal. Toward this end, the United States looks forward to engaging the new mechanism focused on systemic racism in the context of law enforcement established during the June HRC session. In that same session, the United States led the first-ever side event on the human rights of transgender women, highlighting the violence and structural, legal, and intersectional barriers faced by transgender women.

The HRC took another important step during the June session when it passed a resolution on human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, which called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the swift, verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean troops, and holding accountable those responsible for human rights abuses and violations. The resolution welcomed the joint Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)-Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRC) investigation and requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights present an oral update at the HRC’s September 2021 and March 2022 sessions. Our joint statement, cosigned by 47 other countries, during the September session further underscored these concerns. We commend OHCHR and EHRC for their joint efforts thus far and welcome the release of a joint report reflecting the findings and recommendations of both entities on November 1. We encourage

Government of Ethiopia and all parties to the conflict to accept and implement the recommendations from the joint OHCHR-EHRC report to pursue accountability.

We also remain deeply concerned by reports of violence and human rights abuses, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, which is particularly dire for women, children, journalists, human rights defenders, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community, and members of minority groups. The Council’s September decision to establish a Special Rapporteur to monitor the human rights situation there created an important mechanism for documenting abuses and laying the groundwork for future accountability.

We are deeply disappointed that the HRC failed to renew the Group of Eminent Experts (GEE) for Yemen mandate in the September session which provided critical, independent reporting on human rights abuses and violations in Yemen. We strongly support the UN-led Yemen peace process, including ensuring women, civil society, and minority leaders have substantive input. Accountability for human rights abuses is vital to sustaining an enduring peace, and we will work in partnership with allies and civil society to seek accountability for violations and abuses in Yemen.

The HRC resolutions on Syria, co-sponsored by the U.S., continue to accurately describe the egregious violations and abuses Syrians have suffered over the last decade. We appreciate the OHCHR and the Commission of Inquiry’s efforts to document abuses by the Assad regime and engage with courageous Syrian human rights defenders. We were pleased to see the resumption of a UN count of civilians killed in the conflict. We urge OHCHR, in coordination with relevant UN agencies and parties, to continue to engage on the issue of missing and arbitrarily detained persons.

While the HRC has taken important steps to advance respect for human rights around the world, we continue to oppose its biased approach towards Israel through a stand-alone Israel-specific Agenda Item. We also reject the creation of the open-ended Commission of Inquiry on Israel in May 2021. While no country is above scrutiny, we continue to advocate for the HRC to treat any potential concerns related to Israel in a proportionate way.

We also believe more can and should be done to ensure elected members of the Council embody HRC ideals. We remain concerned by the continued membership of states with egregious human rights records on the HRC, exemplified most recently by the reelection of Eritrea this year. While no country holds a perfect human rights record, and we all must work to improve the situation of human rights domestically and internationally, those governments which actively undermine human rights in their own countries and abroad should not hold a seat on the Council.

As a new HRC member, we look forward to working with international partners to protect, defend, and advance respect for human rights globally.