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# **The Universal Periodic Review at the Nexus of Human Rights and Peace:**

A Critical Analysis of UPR's Representation of Human Rights and its  
Potential in Identifying and Preventing Conflicts

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This thesis is worth 45 study points.

## Abstract

Amid growing global instability, escalating conflicts, and rampant human rights violations, the legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateral institutions in managing these crises are increasingly called into question. In this climate of skepticism, the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, a human rights monitoring mechanism, has been posited as a key instrument for identifying and preventing internal conflicts through its oversight functions. However, this potential remains unexamined. Drawing on Poststructuralism and Robert Cox's critical international relations theory, this thesis interrogates the institution's potential to live up to this expectation. Through these frameworks, this investigation explores how global power dynamics and hegemonic influences shape the human rights discourse within the UPR while also questioning the very construction of what constitutes a "problem", revealing what is emphasized and what is omitted, and the implications of these choices for conflict identification and prevention. The findings from the application of Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?" framework to the UPR recommendations of Sudan and Colombia reveal that these recommendations often obscure deeper structural problems focusing instead on superficial or symptomatic issues. This misalignment also demonstrates a troubling congruence with the geopolitical interests of powerful nations, thereby overlooking the root causes of human rights violations, creating conditions ripe for conflicts. These findings challenge the perception of the UPR as a neutral arbiter of human rights, unveiling a complex site of struggle, where global hegemonies assert and reassert their dominance through the language of rights and reform. Premised on the findings, I argue for a reconfiguration of the UPR process, advocating for a pluriversal approach that authentically integrates the plethora of local knowledge and perspectives and the dynamism of grassroots movements. This reimagination could substantially enhance the mechanism's capacity to monitor human rights violations and address root causes of conflicts.

*Key Words:* Universal Periodic Review, Human rights monitoring, Conflict prevention, Critical international relations theory, "What's the Problem Represented to be?"

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>AGE</b>	Advisory Group of Experts
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>IAC</b>	International Armed Conflict
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law
<b>IHRL</b>	International Human Rights Law
<b>IL</b>	International Law
<b>IR</b>	International Relations
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NIAC</b>	Non-International Armed Conflict
<b>NHRIs</b>	National Human Rights Institutions
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PBA</b>	Peacebuilding Architecture
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>VF</b>	Voluntary Funds
<b>WG</b>	Working Group
<b>WPR</b>	What's the Problem Represented to be?

# 1 Introduction

In the corridors of the United Nations (UN), where passed resolutions resonate with the urgent whispers of current internal conflicts, the need for a cohesive and integrated approach to global governance has never been more apparent. As the world grapples with increasingly complex issues that cut across the UN's foundational pillars—development, peace and security, and human rights— the organization stands at a crossroads. Fragmentation and competition among these pillars have hindered cohesive action (Hillert, 2023; Kantowitz, 2020; Lutz et al., 2003; Mégret & Alston, 2020; Parlevliet, 2002, 2017). Can the UN evolve beyond the bureaucratic silos that have long defined its operations and embrace a unified strategy?

The introduction of the "sustaining peace" framework following the 2015 review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) marks a significant shift towards a more holistic approach (Müller, 2016; Upadhyaya, 2021). This framework, as assessed by the Advisory Group of Experts (2015), underscores the need for the UN to address peace sustainability as a systemic challenge, advocating for a more integrated operation of the organization's main pillars and a proactive commitment to conflict prevention (pp.8-11). The subsequent adoption of this approach by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and General Assembly (UNGA) through twin resolutions in 2016 (UNGA/RES/70/262 and UNSC/RES/2282) represents a departure from traditional reactive peacebuilding efforts, emphasizing early intervention and comprehensive support throughout conflict cycles (Athie & Mahmoud, 2024; Foster, 2021; Upadhyaya, 2021). The reaffirmation of these resolutions in 2020 (UNGA/RES/75/201 and UNSC/RES/2558), and their further consolidation in the "Pact for the Future" (2024), highlights a continued commitment to an integrated and preventative approach to peacebuilding that deeply incorporates human rights considerations into the core of UN operations (pp.1-3).

All these resolutions and initiatives paved a trajectory towards embedding human rights deeply within the fabric of conflict prevention. Monitoring human rights, therefore, could provide early warnings and prevent the destabilization of societies (Athie & Mahmoud, 2024, p.23). Specifically, the 2016 resolutions (UNGA, 2016; UNSC, 2016) encouraged "all Member States participating in the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council to consider the human rights dimensions of peacebuilding, as appropriate" (p.5).

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process established in 2006 under the auspices of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). It serves as a human rights mechanism to review the human rights records of all UN Member States. Every four to five years, each state is reviewed, receiving recommendations to enhance human rights on the ground (Bernaz, 2009; Charlesworth & Larking, 2015; Gaer, 2007; Landolt, 2013; McMahon, 2012).

Building on the 2016 resolutions, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2020a) published a report titled “The Contribution Of Human Rights To Peacebuilding And Sustaining Peace,” where it presented the UPR, with a particular focus on its recommendations, as a key instrument to uncover root causes of conflict, thus highlighting its utility as a preventative mechanism. It stated that:

“UPR recommendations covering human rights holistically have preventive potential and can be valuable for peacebuilding analysis, strategy and programming at the country level: identifying and assessing root causes and drivers of conflict and violence” (OHCHR, 2020a, pp.8-9).

This perspective on the UPR’s preventative potential, though minimally covered in the existing literature, is echoed by Redondo and McMahon (2014). They present the UPR as a mechanism that prevents human rights abuses and conflicts through its peer review process, where states engage in reciprocal evaluations of each other’s human rights records (pp.156-157). This process is seen as a form of soft diplomacy that encourages adherence to international human rights standards without resorting to coercive measures like sanctions or military interventions (*Ibid.*).

In a broader context, Kantowitz (2020) examines the relationship between human rights and peacebuilding. She argues that human rights violations are often central to the grievances that ignite conflicts and mentions the UPR as a potential tool for incorporating human rights into peacebuilding strategies (pp.2-3). Further, Foster (2021) provides a deeper analysis of how integrating human rights through the UPR can prevent conflicts and sustain peace. She argues that the UPR fosters national ownership and encourages acceptance of recommendations, which in turn promotes collaboration among governments, the UN, and civil society, making it a powerful tool for peacebuilding (p.14).

All these resolutions, literature, and reports have entrenched the UPR, a human rights mechanism, as a potential instrument in peacebuilding, tasked ostensibly with identifying and preempting the root causes of conflict through human rights monitoring. Yet, this portrayal sits uncomfortably alongside an absence of empirical support for its efficacy and feasibility. Moreover, a body of scholarly discourse articulates profound skepticism not only regarding the UPR's capacity to fulfill its human rights monitoring mandate (Alston, 2006; Bae, 2018; Cowan & Billaud, 2015; Etone, 2019; Gaer, 2007; Nowak, 2011) but also questions the fundamental premise of integrating human rights within peacebuilding frameworks (Athie & Mahmoud, 2024; Heinze, 2003).

Rooted in Poststructuralism and informed by Robert Cox's (1981) critical international theory, this thesis positions itself within these critiques and endeavors to interrogate these expectations vested in the UPR, through a dual theoretical lens. By critically mapping how human rights concerns are formulated and represented in the UPR recommendations, this study probes whether these policies adequately capture human rights issues or are, instead, manipulated by ideological and political agendas. Such manipulation not only undermines the integrity of the recommendations but also casts doubt on their purported ability to serve as preemptive measures against conflicts. This nuanced examination aims to contribute to the discourse on international peacebuilding, challenging the prevailing assumptions about the UPR's role and potential in fostering a sustainable peace grounded in human rights.

## **1.1 Research Objectives and Questions**

The primary objective of this thesis is to critically evaluate how human rights problems are represented within the UPR recommendations and to explore the implications of these representations for identifying and addressing conflicts. This research focuses on internal conflicts, as the UPR primarily monitors domestic human rights practices (UNGA, 2006, pp.2-3). Internal conflicts often stem from or are exacerbated by human rights violations within a country (Parlevliet, 2002, 2017; Sriram et al., 2018), which the UPR aims to monitor. International conflicts, which involve cross-border disputes (Wallensteen, 2002), fall outside the UPR's primary remit and thus are not covered in this analysis.

This study initiates with an examination of the language and discourse employed within the UPR to articulate human rights concerns. Rooted in a poststructural lens and informed by Cox's (1981) perspectives on how ideologies and institutions shape global practices, the analysis will further investigate the implications of these representations. It will scrutinize the UPR's preventive potential, investigating whether its recommendations are structured in a manner to identify and address internal conflicts, specifically examining their capacity to highlight and mitigate the triggers of conflict rooted in human rights violations. To achieve these objectives, the research is guided by the following question:

- How are human rights problems represented within the UPR recommendations, and what implications do these representations have for identifying and addressing internal conflicts?

It is crucial to clarify what this study does *not* aim to do. This thesis does *not* engage with International Humanitarian Law (IHL); while IHL plays a critical role in the context of armed conflicts, it operates distinctly from human rights mechanisms, like the UPR discussed here. Furthermore, this study does *not* conduct a comparative analysis with other conflict prevention mechanisms. While such tools are significant for broader conflict prevention contexts, the focus of this thesis remains on the UPR's potential contributions and challenges as a human rights monitoring mechanism. By maintaining this specific scope, the research aims to examine the UPR's potential to prevent internal conflicts, testing the emerging discourses situating the mechanism at the nexus of human rights and peace.

## **1.2 Methodological Approach**

The research question is answered through a poststructural policy analysis lens applying Carol Bacchi's (2009) "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) framework to the UPR recommendations of Sudan and Colombia. The selected countries are examples, not case studies, to illustrate the examination of the recommendations generated by the UPR as a policy-oriented mechanism.

### 1.3 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six main chapters, exploring the integration of human rights into conflict prevention and the role of the UPR in this context. *Chapter One* introduces the UN “sustaining peace” approach and situates the UPR within this framework and the initiatives in the literature and practice to depict this mechanism as a potential instrument in fostering sustainable peace through human rights monitoring. This chapter also articulates the research objectives, questions, and methodological approach. *Chapter Two* engages with scholarly debates to contextualize the UPR within the broader framework of international human rights mechanisms and explores the nexus between human rights and conflict prevention. *Chapter three* outlines the dual theoretical lens grounding the analysis, with an account of both Cox’s critical international theory and poststructuralism. This chapter concludes by clarifying the tensions and synergies between both frameworks. In *Chapter Four*, the methodology underlying the study is detailed. This chapter describes the rationale behind the methodological choices, including the adoption of a poststructural policy analysis lens and the selection of Sudan and Colombia as examples. It outlines the process of data collection and the application of the WPR framework to the UPR recommendations of these countries. Additionally, it addresses the ethical considerations and potential limitations of the chosen methodological approach. *Chapter Five* presents the data findings and analysis, exploring the representation of “problems” within UPR recommendations, the underlying assumptions, and silences. This analysis critically investigates the expectations invested in the UPR’s preventive potential. *Chapter Six* reflects on the study’s findings, examines its limitations, and suggests areas for future research.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Outline

This chapter, organized thematically, engages with scholarly discussions at the nexus of human rights and conflict prevention. Initially, the chapter situates the UPR within the UN's comprehensive approach to human rights, examining the integration and synergy of the UPR with other international mechanisms. The following section explores the UPR's origins, delineating its foundational principles, key characteristics, modalities, and processes. The discussion progresses to the role of human rights in the prevention of conflicts. This section aims to dissect the dynamics through which human rights abuses indicate or contribute to conflict escalation. Concluding the chapter, the focus shifts to the evolving strategies of the UN regarding conflict prevention. It critically assesses recent initiatives and adaptations in the UN's approach.

### 2.2 The United Nations Approach to Human Rights

A comprehensive account of the UN's human rights work and institutions is an infinite task given that every atom of the organization is engaged in one way or another in the promotion or protection of human rights (Bantekas and Oette, 2020, p.157). The UPR operates within this complex expansive ecosystem, and it cannot be studied in isolation.

The UN's engagement with human rights has been marked by a complex interplay of ambitions, reforms, and a series of recalibrations of its human rights agenda (Mégret & Alston, 2020, p.7). Mégret and Alston (2020) critique the UN's human rights endeavors as lacking coherence, characterized by a fragmented approach that reflects not a meticulously designed system but rather the cumulative outcome of piecemeal reforms (p.7). Reflecting on this observation, it underscores a fundamental issue: the integration of human rights into the UN's framework is not the result of a strategic design but rather the byproduct of an evolutionary process, fraught with compromises and negotiations. This invites another question: is the approach to integrate human rights in peacebuilding, an informed vision, or another attempt to rectify a fragmented system?



### **2.2.1 Charter-Based and Treaty-Based Bodies: A Dual Approach**

Treaty bodies monitor state compliance with international human rights treaties<sup>1</sup>. State parties are required to enact measures guaranteeing that all individuals within their territory can enjoy the rights stipulated in these treaties. Independent experts assess states' adherence through focused reviews on treaty-specific issues, employing 'constructive dialogue' to promote non-confrontational compliance (Mertus, 2010, pp.64–65; Nowak, 2021, p.78; Rodley, 2012, pp.320–321; Smith, 2022, p.48). Conversely, Charter bodies function under a broad mandate derived from the Charter. The current Charter-based bodies are the HRC and its subsidiaries, including the UPR, the Advisory Committee, Special Procedures, and Complaint Procedure (Mégret & Alston, 2020, p.14; Mertus, 2010, p.37; Pisillo Mazzeschi, 2021, p.195).

Mégret and Alston (2020) highlight the fractures and tensions within the UN's human rights system, particularly in the Treaty/Charter bodies, which were structured to streamline efforts but inadvertently reveal systemic challenges (p.9). This echoes scholarly debates questioning the necessity of the treaty body system (Hathaway, 2002) and highlighting a "treaty fatigue" crisis (Crawford, 2000; Mertus, 2010, p.64), advocating for reforms (O'Flaherty, 2010). Rodley (2012) suggests that if the UN had initially adopted comprehensive human rights monitoring systems like the Charter-based procedures, treaty bodies might not have been necessary (p.352). This doubt, coupled with resource shortages,

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<sup>1</sup> The core treaties are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its optional protocols, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW), the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

leads to challenges like incoherence and ineffectiveness (Bantekas & Oette, 2020; Egan, 2013; Marks, 2016). Egan (2013) argues that this predicament has persisted for decades due to a piecemeal evolution of the system, hindering coherence and effectiveness (p.211).

In the context of the UPR, its relationship with treaty bodies has inspired an academic debate, primarily focusing on their synergies and potential for overlap. Gaer (2007), inquired whether the UPR might replicate the efforts of treaty bodies or, conversely, bolster their work by providing an additional layer of scrutiny (p.109). He concluded that while the UPR brings added value, it harbors the risk of diminishing the impact of treaty bodies through repetitive findings (p.136). Rodley (2012) acknowledged the risks of duplication and contradiction but also argued that the UPR serves as a crucial platform for raising the treaty bodies' concerns at an inter-governmental level, thereby potentially increasing their visibility and impact (p.330).

Supporting this notion, Egan (2013) observed a significant rise in treaty ratifications post-UPR, indicating that the UPR could enhance commitment to treaty obligations (p.211). Carraro (2022) moved the discussion forward by empirically examining the extent of duplication and contradiction in the recommendations made by these human rights mechanisms, specifically in the context of torture (p.355). Her findings reveal frequent duplications but limited contradictions, noting that while overlaps might seem redundant, they can enhance political pressure for implementing treaty bodies' recommendations (Carraro, 2022, p.375).

## **2.3 The Universal Periodic Review: Origins, Actors, and Processes**

### ***2.3.1 Genesis, Expectations, and High Hopes***

The UNGA Resolution 60/251 (UNGA, 2006) established the UPR under the auspices of the HRC, intended as a reformative response to the shortcomings of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights (the Commission). The inception of the UPR is deeply rooted in the political failures and “demise” of the Commission (Alston, 2006; Bernaz, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Gaer, 2007). This section does not aim to recount historical facts but to explore the dynamics and events that prompted the UPR creation, which will add depth by moving beyond “how” the mechanism works to “why” was it created in the first place, providing insight into the broader context and intentions that shaped its development.

The Commission, established in 1946, was increasingly criticized for its inefficiencies and politicization (Boyle, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Ghanea, 2006; Landolt, 2013; Lauren, 2007). Freedman (2011) critiqued its biased and selective scrutiny of human rights issues, which was indicative of deeper geopolitical influences allowing powerful states to manipulate outcomes to their advantage (pp.289-290). Such issues compromised not only the Commission's integrity but also that of the UN system. Kofi Annan highlighted this in his larger project of the UN reform, outlined in the report "In Larger Freedom", pointing out the instrumentalization of the Commission by states not to strengthen human rights but to shield themselves from criticism or to criticize others, thus creating a "credibility deficit" that affected the UN's reputation (Secretary-General, 2005, p.45).

This project, in my view, can be interpreted as either a strategic "damage control" to restore faith in the UN machinery or as a "genuine initiative" to strengthen the protection system. Both interpretations carry different implications for the potential of the UPR in conflict prevention. If viewed as a genuine initiative, the UPR holds the promise of enhancing monitoring mechanisms, thereby potentially contributing to conflict prevention efforts. In contrast, if questioned as a mere damage control, the UPR may be perceived as a superficial attempt to appease critics without addressing underlying issues. This perspective is pivotal for subsequent analysis as it lays the foundation for examining the underlying power dynamics and motivations that shape the process, crucial for assessing its preventive potential.

The reform project eventually led to the establishment of the UPR with significant anticipation for progress and hopes to restore credibility and professionalism. For instance, Annan noted that the new mechanism will reinforce the universality and indivisibility of human rights (Secretary-General, 2005). Similarly, Ban Ki-moon (2007) considered that the UPR "has a great potential to promote and protect human rights in the darkest corners of the world". I hold the view that while the expression "*darkest corners of the world*" might have been used for evocative purposes, it requires careful consideration of its implications. It is necessary to strike a balance between the urgency it might convey for human rights advocacy and the risks of oversimplification and stigmatization of the regions it aims to highlight.

Scholars critically engaged with these high hopes and aspirations, questioning the UPR's capacity to effectuate a meaningful departure from the Commission's politicized legacy (Alston, 2006; Cowan, 2021; Cox, 2019; Freedman, 2011; Gaer, 2007). Gaer (2007) and Alston (2006), reflecting on the UPR's inception, voiced concerns regarding its ability to augment existing human rights treaty bodies and avoid the Commission's pitfalls. Gaer (2007) emphasized the necessity for the UPR to deliver substantial scrutiny and complementarity with treaty bodies (p.131), while Alston (2006) focused on the imperative of sidestepping the political entanglements that beleaguered the Commission (p.28). Their critiques underscore the challenge of transforming the vision of an equitable and transparent human rights monitoring process into reality.

Amid the diverse dialogues and critiques surrounding the UPR's establishment, the UNGA burdened the HRC with a mandate focused on "ensuring universality, objectivity, and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights issues, and the elimination of double standards and politicization" (UNGA, 2006, p.2). This mandate required conducting a periodic review process that is equitable, objective, and based on reliable information to assess each state's adherence to human rights obligations and commitments (UNGA, 2006, p.3). This process includes the participation of other stakeholders in the review, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) (UNGA, 2006, p.2).

Following a year of consultations, the Institution-Building package was adopted by the HRC through Resolution 5/1, laying down the operational framework of the UPR and outlining its principles, objectives, periodicity, process, modalities, outcome, and follow-up measures (UNHRC, 2007). This resolution established the UPR Voluntary Funds (VF). The Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance was set up to provide financial and technical assistance to help them implement the recommendations made during their UPR process and the Voluntary Fund for Participation is aimed at supporting the participation of the least developed countries and small island developing states in the UPR process by covering the costs associated with attending the sessions in Geneva (*ibid.*).

Based on this framework, the UPR has sparked academic debates on its roles and processes. Abebe (2009) considered it a unique and novel approach (p.5). However, Bernaz (2009) labels it a “*new old idea*” because its conceptual foundation can be traced to earlier UN practices (p.85). Scholars drew a historical parallel with the Commission's reporting system from 1956 (Alston, 2006, pp.26-27; Bernaz, 2009, p.85; Gaer, 2007, p.116). This procedure required states to report every three years on human rights developments; these reports were then summarized and discussed during sessions of the Commission (Bernaz, 2009, p.100).

One can clearly notice the similarities, the UPR, while incorporating interactive dialogues, fundamentally continues the tradition of periodic self-reporting, underscoring an “*evolutionary*” rather than “*revolutionary*” approach. This debate is critical to my inquiry because it challenges the discussed assumption that the UPR represents a breakthrough in human rights practice. If the UPR primarily continues older practices, albeit with some modifications, it might merely repackage existing methodologies with minimal substantive advancement raising questions about its potential to monitor and address human rights violations that could lead to or exacerbate internal conflicts.

The scholarly division extends to the evaluation of the UPR's institutional strength and potential for facilitating human rights improvements. Etone (2019) categorizes the academic landscape into two perspectives: “*skeptical*” and “*evolutionary*” groups (p.2). “*Skeptics*” argue for the UPR's overhaul due to its perceived weaknesses, echoing this critical stance is a fundamental critique—that the peer review process, reliant on state assessments, lacks the impartiality that might be provided by independent experts (Nowak, 2011, p.23). Conversely, “*evolutionaries*” contend that the UPR is an evolving mechanism whose effectiveness is only limited by factors such as politicization (Bae, 2018; Carraro, 2017), regionalism (Terman & Voeten, 2018), and ritualism (Charlesworth & Larking, 2015).

In this context, Charlesworth and Larking (2015) provided the first theoretical analysis of the UPR through the lens of sociolegal theory, particularly focusing on how rituals and ritualistic behavior affect its operation. They identify “*ritualism*” as “*participation in the process of reports and meetings but an indifference to, or even reluctance about, increasing the protection of human rights*” (p.16). This observation suggests that while engagement in the UPR process exists, it does not always translate into meaningful action or improvement in

human rights conditions, thus emphasizing the performative rather than transformative potential of the mechanism.

### **2.3.2 The UPR: A State-Centric Mechanism**

The UPR serves as a public platform wherein the human rights practices of states are scrutinized by their peers, involving the participation of all 193 UN Member States and undergoing a peer review process that, in theory, emphasizes the universality and impartial treatment of all states (UNGA, 2006, pp.2-3). Such feature distinguishes the UPR by facilitating a process where states are both the reviewers and the reviewed, in stark contrast with other human rights mechanisms, such as treaty bodies and special procedures, where the evaluators are experts rather than states (Carraro, 2019, p.2; Gaer, 2007, p.113).

Despite the involvement of NGOs and NHRIs (McGaughey, 2017; Sweeney & Saito, 2009), the UPR remains predominantly a state-centric process, where states engage in self-reporting, examining human rights issues, preparing recommendations accordingly and, analyzing the outcome reports (Abebe, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Gaer, 2007). This arrangement restricts the role of non-state actors to merely providing information and observations. Gaer (2007) argues that the critical element is not the "information" itself but rather the "analysis" of this information (p.136). By excluding non-state actors from the analysis process, their participation is effectively diluted, which Abebe (2009) further interprets as a deliberate move to limit their active involvement (p.8).

Smith (2013) examines this state-to-state approach through an analysis of how the UPR process is applied to the five permanent members of the UNSC, highlighting the disproportionate power and influence these countries wield within the UN, owing to their permanent status and veto power (p.4). She argues that although these states often presume international human rights standards are less applicable to them, they are subject to an equal standard of scrutiny as all other UN member states (Smith, 2013, p.4). This foundational principle of equal treatment, strives to distinguish it from the shortcomings of its predecessor, particularly the practice of targeting certain countries, while others were overlooked (Freedman, 2011, pp.289–290). The UPR, by subjecting all states to scrutiny, attempts to move beyond these issues by eliminating country-specific resolutions and selective shaming (*Ibid.*). However, the challenge of politicization persists.

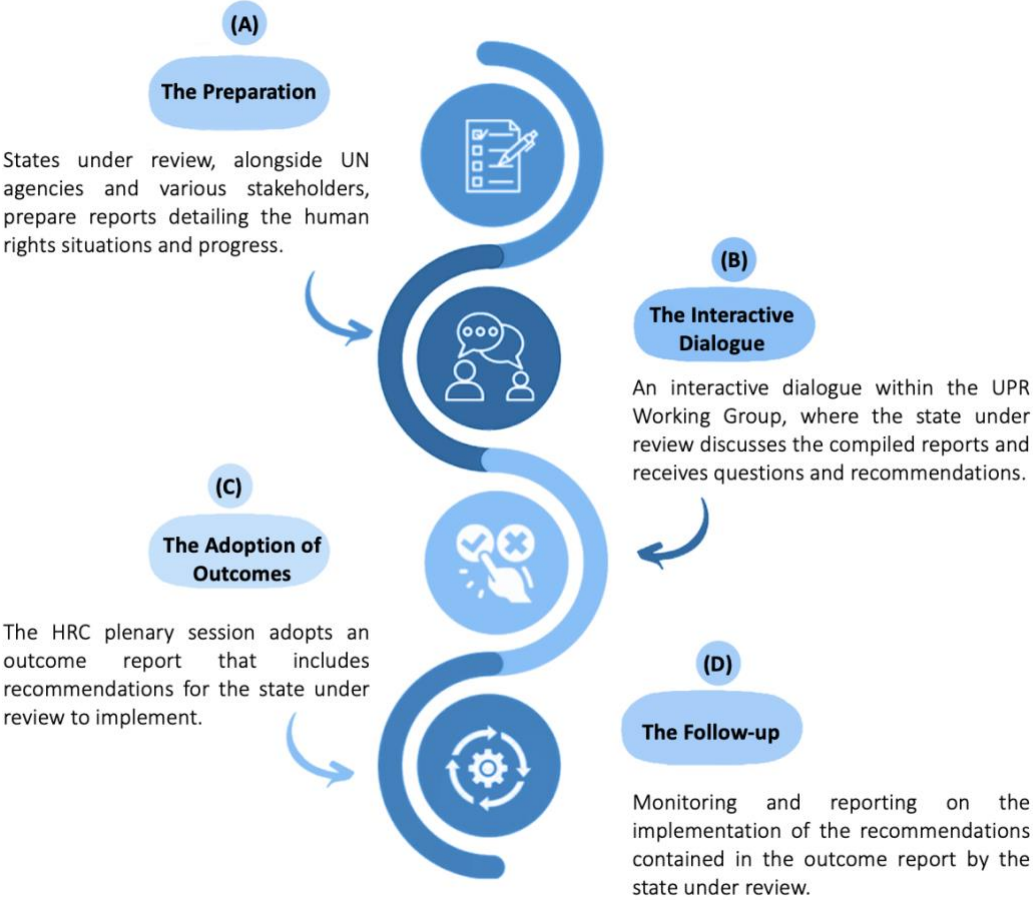
Scholars examined the extent of political influence on the UPR, exploring the dynamics that shape its outcomes (Abebe, 2009; Alston, 2006; Bae, 2018; Carraro, 2017; Cowan & Billaud, 2015; Freedman, 2011; Gaer, 2007; Terman & Voeten, 2018). Bringing these discussions to the table allows not only for a critical engagement with the initial optimism and enthusiasm that surrounded the UPR's establishment but also for evaluating the mechanism's roles in monitoring human rights abuses and potentially preventing conflicts. Should the peer review process be significantly swayed by underlying political agendas, it jeopardizes the role of the UPR in identifying and responding to conflicts.

Politicization can be understood in two ways: as a challenge or an opportunity. Reich (2014) criticizes it as a detriment, where states' geopolitical aims can compromise the organization's integrity (p.784). In contrast, Lyons et al. (1977) posit politicization as a beneficial bargaining process, allowing developing countries to promote their developmental agendas and address global inequalities (p.88). Within the UPR, Carraro (2017) notes politicization as manifesting through country bias, issue bias, and the instrumental use of cultural relativism, where cultural differences are strategically cited in the process (p.948). Terman and Voeten (2018) highlight how state relationships affect recommendation outcomes, while Bae (2018) points out that states with significant capabilities and trade exports wield greater influence. Abebe's analysis (2009) takes a similar conceptualization to that of Lyons et al. (1977), providing insights into the strategic bargaining by African states to advance their interests and address developmental issues.

The collective insights from these studies suggest that a deeper understanding of politicization requires an integrated approach to consider how these different elements—biases, relational dynamics, power imbalances, and national interests—interact to shape the UPR's outcomes. These factors are not random but are shaped by geopolitical and strategic considerations, which can distort the UPR outcomes away from an objective assessment of human rights records towards politically motivated issues. This manipulation of its agenda can detract from the process's monitoring mandate and preventive expectations.

**2.3.3 The UPR: A Periodic Process**

The UPR operates through periodic cycles. It has completed three cycles and is currently amid its fourth.<sup>2</sup> The review is based on the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Human Rights Law (IHRL), voluntary pledges, and IHL. The mechanism’s phases (*Figure 1*)<sup>3</sup> encompass the preparation of reports (A), leading to an interactive dialogue (B). This process culminates in the adoption of an outcome report (C), followed by a follow-up phase (D).



**Figure 1:** The Phases of the UPR Process

<sup>2</sup> The first cycle of the UPR spanned from 2008 to 2011, the second cycle from 2012 to 2016, the third cycle from 2017 to 2022, and the fourth cycle is from 2022 to 2027.

<sup>3</sup> This figure, created by this author, outlines the four phases of the UPR process that each participating state undergoes once per cycle.



**A. The preparation phase** consists of elaborating three documents: a national report submitted by the State-under-Review (SuR), a compilation from treaty bodies and UN agencies, and a stakeholder's report with inputs from NGOs, NHRIs, and other civil society actors. The OHCHR compiles these contributions ensuring the credibility and reliability of inputs which raised concerns regarding the criteria used to determine what constitutes "credible and reliable information" (Moss, 2010; Nie, 2023; Sweeney & Saito, 2009). Nie (2023) examines what she calls the "black box" of OHCHR, revealing that selection is based on three main criteria: the reputational status of NGOs, the neutrality of the language used in their reports, and the breadth of support from multiple organizations (p.53). Abebe (2009) noted that the OHCHR adopted a procedure to post full stakeholders' contributions on its website, addressing transparency concerns (p.27).

**B. The interactive dialogue** lasts three-and-a-half hours, with the SuR presenting its report for seventy minutes, while the rest of the time is for states to ask questions and provide recommendations. Other stakeholders can attend but not participate directly. Post-dialogue, a "troika" of three states assists in preparing the Working Group (WG) report which is adopted two days post-distribution. The SuR then has three to four months to consider recommendations and decide on their acceptance (UNHRC, 2007).

**C. The adoption** is during the subsequent HRC plenary session, each SuR has one hour to discuss its WG report. States and stakeholders can comment, and the outcomes are adopted under agenda item 6, documented in the HRC session report (*Ibid.*).

**D. The follow-up** is when SuRs are expected to report on the implementation of accepted recommendations through national reports in subsequent cycles and mid-term reports to the OHCHR. Despite being voluntary, this engagement has been praised as an "unprecedented" success in human rights review processes (Redondo, 2012, p. 694). However, I consider that equating such engagement with actual compliance may lead to an oversimplification that overlooks substantive improvements in human rights conditions on the ground. This view risks conflating formal participation with genuine compliance, potentially masking instances of veneer compliance and "ritualism", as defined by Charlesworth & Larking (2015).

### **2.3.4 The UPR: A Universal Coverage of Norms**

Treaty bodies, by design, engage only with states that have ratified respective treaties (Kjaerum, 2009, p.17; Mertus, 2010, pp.64–65; Nowak, 2021, p. 78; Rodley, 2012, pp.320–321; Smith, 2022, p.48). The UPR, however, provides “universal” coverage evaluating all human rights records of all UN Member States. Far from being a mere aspiration, the universality of the UPR serves as its defining characteristic (Milewicz & Goodin, 2018, p.7).

Some scholars support this universalist approach to human rights, contending that it not only fosters enhancements in global living standards but also establishes a fundamental connection between personal freedoms, individual rights, and economic development (Sen, 1993). Others assert that human rights are “relatively” universal and that cultures possess inherent adaptability, allowing for human rights to be embraced across varied cultural landscapes (Donnelly, 2007, p.107; Donnelly & Whelan, 2017, p.49). This perspective has been contested for decades by cultural relativists (Geertz, 1984; Zechenter, 1997), who argue that human rights, if they exist, must be interpreted through the intricate social, cultural, and historical contexts specific to each society (An-Na’im, 2002; Brems, 2001), raising questions about the extent to which human rights can be applied across diverse cultural settings without infringing on the sovereignty and traditional values of different societies.

Mutua (2004) further problematizes the concept of universality, suggesting that it is not an inherent truth but a constructed ideology and he cautions against the uncritical acceptance of such claims arguing that throughout modern history, it has often served as vehicles for promoting narrow, exclusionary ideologies under the guise of universal principles (Mutua, 2004, p.51). This cautionary stance is echoed in the historical analysis by Normand and Zaidi (2008), who trace the shaping of the human rights framework to significant United States (US) influence, suggesting that the agenda was less about creating binding legal standards and more aligned with disseminating US ideals (p.27).

This debate over universality also intersects with discussions on globalization and the transnational application of human rights norms. Moyn (2010) questions the adequacy of the current human rights framework in addressing global inequality and injustice, suggesting that it emerged in response to the failures of other utopian visions (p.10). Moyn (2018) further scrutinizes the human rights movement's response to economic inequality, arguing that it falls

short in theory and practice against the backdrop of market fundamentalism (p.216). He contends that human rights lack ambition and effectiveness in addressing issues of wealth redistribution and economic justice, advocating for a reevaluation of rights conceptualization and implementation (pp.217-218)

Against this backdrop, pluriversality offers a compelling framework that recognizes the existence of multiple, coexisting value systems. Originating from the Indigenous Zapatista movement's call for 'A World Where Many Worlds Fit' in 1994, pluriversality challenges the dichotomy between universality and cultural relativism, advocating for a world enriched by diverse understanding (Escobar, 2018, p.75). Rooted in decolonial thought, this approach aims to redefine global ethics, including the domain of human rights, to authentically respect and integrate a broad spectrum of worldviews and knowledge systems.

The UPR's universal coverage of human rights is underexplored in the literature, research has primarily focused on its effectiveness in promoting specific rights such as sexual and reproductive rights (Gilmore et al., 2015), the right to health (De Mesquita, 2019; World Health Organization, 2019), and indigenous rights (Higgins, 2019). Redondo and McMahon (2014) focused on this aspect examining the UPR's ability to navigate the tension between the universal application of human rights standards and the principle of national sovereignty. They advocate for the UPR's role in creating a collaborative platform that encourages states to engage in a holistic human rights discourse while acknowledging cultural differentiation (p.152). This stance raises pivotal questions: does the mechanism inadvertently reinforce a Western-Eurocentric view of human rights, or does it genuinely foster a collaborative space for diverse and decolonized perspectives?

Kalin (2015) introduces a critical angle by suggesting that states may leverage the UPR to advance specific rights agendas that "have not yet universal recognition" (p.34), pointing to the possibility of the UPR being used as a tool for normative influence that reflects particularistic interests. Cowan and Billaud (2015) add depth to this discourse by examining the UPR as a 'learning culture', where states are envisaged as both educators and learners. This model, emblematic of universalism, aims to facilitate an inclusive exchange of human rights knowledge. Yet, they warn of an underlying paternalism, where the model's ethical appeal might mask a dynamic in which the West, guides other nations perceived as less

advanced (pp.1187-1188). Cowan and Billaud (2015) direct attention to the representational and ethical dimensions of the UPR, they frame the process not just as a technical tool for human rights monitoring but as a cultural and educational platform that may perpetuate subtle forms of Western hegemony. Building on these insights, I critically assess whether the UPR reinforces existing power imbalances between Western and non-Western states, and how such dynamics affect its potential as a conflict prevention mechanism.

### **2.3.5 States' Compliance with UPR Recommendations**

States' compliance with International Law (IL) embodies a complex interplay of legal, moral, and political considerations. Central to understanding compliance is the question of motivation: what drives or deters states from adhering to these norms? Two predominant theories emerge in this discourse: rationalism, where states act out of self-interest due to external pressures (sanctions, reputational concerns, and cooperation benefits) and constructivism, which points to commitments to norms, values, and ideas (Davies, 2010, p.455; Hathaway, 2005, pp.476–477). These interpretations, in my view, rest on a somewhat reductionist view of state behavior. States do not operate in a vacuum; their actions are deeply embedded within a global system marked by inherent inequalities and power dynamics (Cox, 1981, 1992). The decision of a state to comply with or deviate from IL cannot be understood without acknowledging how global structures of power and production influence its capabilities and motivations.

In the context of the UPR, scholars examined state compliance *through* the mechanism, rather than compliance *with* its recommendations. Davies (2010) and Carraro (2019) highlight the UPR's cooperative nature, emphasizing its capacity to exert pressure without resorting to confrontational tactics, which is achieved through constructive dialogue (pp.10-11; p.458). Etone (2019) considers the UPR a platform for socialization among states, facilitating a process where peer pressure and the exchange of best practices contribute to compliance with IL. Lane (2022) expands this conversation by examining the role of domestic actor mobilization in the UPR process, suggesting that the mechanism empowers civil society organizations, parliamentarians, and other domestic actors to engage in meaningful dialogue with their governments.

However, the legal nature of the UPR recommendations and compliance *with* them are under-explored. These questions might seem distinct but are interrelated. Are UPR recommendations legitimate legal obligations that compel compliance, or are they followed for other reasons, if followed at all? Annually, the UPR process generates over sixty thousand recommendations, more than 70 percent of which are accepted by states (Menon, 2020, p. 59). This widespread acceptance could arguably contribute to their binding nature. Nonetheless, creating international legal obligations requires more than mere consent (Posner, 2002, p. 1910); it involves the formation of treaties or custom (Bantekas & Oette, 2020; Hathaway, 2005; Pisillo Mazzeschi, 2021). For a practice to contribute to customary IL, there must be evidence of a consistent state practice accompanied by *opinio juris*—recognition of such practice as a legal obligation (*Ibid.*).

Cowell (2018) examined whether consistent adherence to specific UPR recommendations might lead to their recognition as customary law. However, he notes that these recommendations are often viewed as political rather than legal, frequently failing to meet the *opinio juris* criteria. Given this perspective, some scholars describe UPR recommendations as "soft law" (Cowell, 2018; Menon, 2020). Critics of soft law argue that non-binding commitments are redundant, lack legal effectiveness, and blur boundaries between the law and the "non-law" (Handl et al., 1988; Klabbers, 2017; Weil, 1983). Nonetheless, although non-binding these arrangements still influence states' behavior and practice (Boyle, 2014; Lagoutte et al., 2016).

For instance, the UPR monitors state human rights practices, providing tailored recommendations aimed at enhancing these practices covering a range of issues spanning from the protection and promotion of human rights to calling states to become parties to certain treaties (Cowell, 2018; McMahon & Ascherio, 2012). The essence of these recommendations—through advisory and not legally binding—lies in their capacity to shape discourses around human rights and frame policy discussions within states. The use of poststructural policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009), to study UPR recommendations is predicated on the understanding that these recommendations, while not direct policies, have a direct impact on the formulation, revision, and implementation of national human rights policies. Through the provision of technical assistance (UNHRC, 2007), the UPR further supports states in translating these recommendations into national policies. This assistance facilitates the

integration of international norms into domestic legal and administrative frameworks, which is a critical aspect of policy creation and reform.

## **2.4 Conflict Prevention Through Human Rights and Global Governance**

### ***2.4.1 Definitions, Distinctions, and Differences***

Conflict, as defined by Wallensteen (2002), arises from incompatible disputes where two parties vie for scarce resources, either material or immaterial. There are two main types of armed conflicts, each with distinct human rights challenges and legal frameworks under IHL. The Geneva conventions (1949a; 1949b; 1949c; 1949d) and their additional protocols (1979a; 1979b) differentiate between International Armed Conflicts (IACs), which include wars between states even those involving national liberation movements, and Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs). The latter specifically addresses conflicts within a state, prescribing organizational and control standards for armed groups to ensure adequate command and territorial control for sustained military operations. Examining the economic dimensions of contemporary conflicts, Sriram et al. (2018) offer a nuanced perspective on how businesses, particularly multinational corporations, are involved through resource extraction and trade, contributing to conflicts and human rights abuses (p.80). They discuss "war economies," where national economies are driven by war financing through resource exploitation, implicating a broad range of businesses from extractive industries to financial sectors as key actors in these conflicts (p.81).

As for conflict prevention, its strategies have evolved to include a wide array of proactive tools, both non-coercive and coercive, as delineated in the UN Charter (1945, Chapters VI–VII). However, defining this concept remains a challenge, including debates on its scope—whether it should focus solely on early, non-escalatory stages or include escalation and post-conflict phases, and whether to address immediate triggers or underlying causes (Ackermann, 2003, p.341). Lund (1996) articulates a narrow interpretation of conflict prevention, focusing solely on preventing the escalation of political disputes (p.37). In contrast, Carment and Schnabel (2003) present a broader perspective, defining it as "a medium and long-term proactive operational or structural strategy undertaken by a variety of

actors, intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment" (p.11).

This study aligns with Carment and Schnabel's expansive definition, recognizing two main types of conflict prevention: operational and structural. Operational prevention refers to *short-term*, reactive measures designed to prevent the immediate escalation of tensions. These measures often involve diplomatic, economic, or military interventions (Carment & Schnabel, 2003, p.14; Melander & Pigache, 2007, p.5). Structural prevention, on the other hand, focuses on *long-term* strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of conflicts. It emphasizes promoting social justice, economic development, and political reforms to change the underlying conditions that lead to disputes (*ibid*).

#### **2.4.2 Human Rights Violations and the Onset of Conflicts**

Conflict resolution and human rights, traditionally viewed as distinct fields, have pursued different immediate and long-term objectives, with the first focusing on achieving peace agreements, while the former aiming at fostering peaceful political, economic, and social change processes over the long term (Fuentes-Julio & Ibrahim, 2019, p.262; Lutz et al., 2003, p.184; Sriram et al., 2018, pp.8–9). The exploration of the nexus between both fields began in the early 2000s. Initial studies, notably by Parlevliet (2002) and Lutz et al. (2003), focus on the theoretical and practical divide between human rights and conflict resolution.

Human rights violations can be symptoms and causes of conflict (Mertus & Helsing, 2006; Parlevliet, 2002, p.12; Sriram et al., 2018, p.4). The symptomatic nature is evident as the media continually report on the devastating human consequences of armed conflicts, including loss of life and mass displacement (Parlevliet, 2002, p.12). Conversely, the case of apartheid in South Africa demonstrates how systemic human rights denials fuel and cause intense conflicts (*ibid*). Similarly, the struggle in El Salvador, driven by efforts to address wealth disparities underscores the complex causes of conflicts. These include ethnic tensions, economic disparities, competition for resources, autonomy demands, corruption allegations, and the enduring impact of human rights abuses (Sriram et al., 2018, p.6). Addressing these underlying causes is crucial in conflict prevention efforts, highlighting that human rights violations are among many other concerns to be tackled (Sriram et al., 2018, p.4).

Such efforts must navigate the intricacies of causes and symptoms, with the understanding that human rights violations are inextricably linked with other conflict factors. For example, in Sudan, the conflict's catalysts encompassed religious repression, resource access, land control, and the violations themselves (Sriram et al., 2018, p.6). Moreover, other elements to consider include the influence of corporate powers, which can lead to localized conflicts (Wolin, 2017), and the impact of capital flows and elite decisions on local communities, which can also contribute to conflict (Fraser, 2017).

Despite this considerable academic focus on integrating human rights into conflict resolution, there remains a notable oversight in how this nexus is approached from the perspective of human rights actors. This gap, identified by Hillert (2023), underscores a lack of comprehensive analysis of how human rights organizations operationalize peacebuilding within their frameworks to foster enhanced cooperation (pp.5-6). Addressing this, some scholars have shifted focus towards the role of human rights actors in peacebuilding. Hannum (2006) and Butcher and Hallward (2017) have examined the contributions of the OHCHR and human rights NGOs, respectively, to peace efforts. Building on their work, Hillert (2023) broadens the inquiry to include the HRC, analyzing its understanding of the nexus between human rights and peacebuilding from an institutional perspective. This research further bridges the divide between both fields by exploring the potential of the UPR, a human rights monitoring mechanism, in the early detection of conflicts. By doing so, it examines the proactive capacities of human rights frameworks in identifying and addressing nascent conflicts.



### **2.4.3 The United Nations Approach to Conflict Prevention**

The aspiration for peaceful conflict resolution is a long-standing one, tracing its roots back to the aftermath of World War I, which catalyzed the international community to establish the League of Nations to institutionalize collective security, compelling member states to support any nation under attack. This initiative faltered marking a significant early 20th-century setback in peace initiatives (Butcher & Hallward, 2020, p.3; Nye & Welch, 2014, p.122). However, the vision of a global entity dedicated to fostering international peace and security persisted with the establishment of the UN (Butcher & Hallward, 2020, p.3; Luck, 2002, p.252).

Initially, the UN focused on the insecurities following World War II, and then it adapted its strategies in response to the Cold War's interstate conflicts and the surge in civilian violence (Butcher & Hallward, 2020). Nye and Welch (2014) highlight that the Cold War's deadlock, caused by disagreements on aggression and legitimate force, necessitated a shift from punitive collective security to preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping (*Figure 2*)<sup>4</sup>. The UN began deploying peacekeeping forces to serve as intermediaries between conflicting parties. Despite the centrality of peacekeeping in the UN's toolkit, its effectiveness has been inconsistent, with notable failures in Rwanda and Somalia illustrating the challenges of military-based peace initiatives (Bratt, 1996; Malone & Thakur, 2001; Richmond, 2004). In 1992, a significant shift occurred with the publication of "*An Agenda for Peace*" by Boutros-Ghali (1992), which emphasized prevention but primarily focused on post-conflict activities. This focus expanded in 2005, recognizing the need for coherent strategies in conflict-affected countries. The PBA was established to enhance synergy and coherence in the UN's and its Member States' peacebuilding efforts (Müller, 2016; Upadhyaya, 2021). This era marked a shift towards 'positive peace' as defined by Galtung (1969), a concept that not only seeks to prevent or end conflict but also to address its root causes through interventions during, before, and after conflicts (p.183).

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<sup>4</sup> This figure is created by the author, and it outlines the main landmarks in the evolution of the UN's preventive approach.

### 1948: Establishment of UNTSO

- The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization was created to monitor ceasefires in the Middle East, marking the first UN peacekeeping operation

### 1990s: Expansion of Peacekeeping

- **Peacekeeping Expansion:** Missions were expanded significantly post-Cold War, with notable operations in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda.
- **Complex Operations:** These missions faced significant challenges, including failures and controversies, particularly in Somalia, Rwanda, and the Balkans, leading to questions about the effectiveness and mandate of UN peacekeeping.

### 2000: Brahimi Report: Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations

- **Reform Proposals:** The report recommended comprehensive reforms to UN peacekeeping, emphasizing the need for clear mandates, sufficient resources, and stronger political support.

### 2015: High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations

- The panel's review led to recommendations for adapting to modern conflict challenges, emphasizing political solutions, partnerships, and protection of civilians.

### 2019: Establishment of DPPA and DPO

- Secretary-General António Guterres' reform separated political and peacebuilding functions into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and focused the Department of Peace Operations on peacekeeping activities.

### 1945: Founding of the UN

- **UN Charter:** established mechanisms for maintaining international peace and security, focusing on collective action and establishing the General Assembly, Security Council, and International Court of Justice.

### 1950: Uniting for Peace Resolution

- This resolution allowed the General Assembly to take action on peace and security when the Security Council is unable due to vetoes

### 1992: Boutros Boutros-Ghali : An Agenda for Peace

- **Preventive Diplomacy and Peacebuilding:** Expands the concept of peace operations to include prevention and addressing the root causes of conflicts

### 2005: World Summit Outcomes

- **R2P:** The Responsibility to Protect was endorsed, establishing state and international responsibilities in protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.
- **Peacebuilding Commission (PBC):** Established to help countries transition from war to peace, emphasizing the link between peacekeeping and long-term peacebuilding.

### 2016: Sustaining Peace Resolutions (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282)

- **Reconceptualizing Peacebuilding:** These resolutions, adopted by the UN Security Council and General Assembly, mark a transformative approach by emphasizing peacebuilding as integral not only to post-conflict recovery but also to the prevention of conflict onset, escalation, and recurrence. They advocate for a united UN system that transcends organizational silos, integrating efforts across peacekeeping, peacebuilding, development, and human rights.

**Figure 2: The Main Trends and Landmarks in the Evolution of the UN Prevention Approach**

However, this period witnessed critical evaluations of peacebuilding frameworks, marked by liberal ideologies prioritizing democratization and economic liberalization (Fettweis, 2017; He, 2021; Richmond, 2006; Richmond & Visoka, 2021; Torrent, 2022). He (2018) points out that the Western model of liberal peace typically involves establishing democratic and neoliberal economic institutions shortly after international interventions. This process often starts with elections followed by capacity building and security sector reforms aligned with liberal democratic norms, and the setup of neoliberal economic structures under the influence of global financial institutions (p.44). Turan (2016) and Burchill (2005) also note that the UN liberal peace model consistently focuses on institutional reforms, democratization, and free trade (p.122, p.59).

Critics of liberal peace argue that these approaches often involve imposing Western models without adequate consideration of local contexts or alternative peacebuilding strategies (Ginty, 2006, p.144; Tschirgi, 2004, pp.4-5). Richmond (2004) emphasized the discrepancy between the externally driven visions of peace and the perspectives of those living within conflict zones (p.91). He further critiqued this “conservative model” of liberal peace, associated with top-down approaches to peacebuilding and development, which tend towards coercion and are often perceived as expressions of hegemony and domination, sometimes enforced through military might or by creating dependency through conditionality (Richmond, 2006, p.300).

These insights pose substantial critiques to Donnelly's (2007) notion of "relative universality," which suggests that cultural frameworks inherently possess the flexibility to adapt to universal norms. Similarly, they challenge Redondo and McMahon's (2014) view that the UPR can effectively mediate the balance between universal standards and cultural particularism while fostering collaboration to prevent conflicts. Omach (2021) adds a nuanced perspective by emphasizing that peacebuilding efforts in Uganda often overlook the legacies of colonialism and local context. He argues that the prevailing liberal peacebuilding paradigm is excessively rigid, leading to further conflicts rather than the anticipated harmonization (pp.941-942).

In 2015, the UN adopted a "holistic version" of its preventive approach called "sustaining peace." This transformative strategy seeks to integrate development, peace,

justice, and the establishment of inclusive, resilient institutions to comprehensively address global challenges. Ramcharan and Ramcharan (2020) emphasized the central role of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, which focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring justice for all, and building accountable institutions.

However, Torrent (2022) notes that despite shifts toward more context-sensitive UN processes, significant challenges persist. He criticizes the UN's engagement methods, arguing they often reduce host societies to simplistic entities (Torrent, 2022, p. 211). Richmond (2006) describes these efforts as an "emancipatory model" aimed at fostering closer custodianship and local ownership (p. 301). However, he cautions that this model often leads to a dominant discourse and regulatory regime imposed by external actors, making it difficult for local societies to assert their own interests, thus questioning the effectiveness and ethical basis of these approaches (*ibid.*).

Additionally, the critique by Azarmandi (2023) on the racial and colonial underpinnings of UN approaches enriches this discourse, he points out that the evolution of peace and conflict studies—from their inception post-World War II to their expansion after the Cold War—has largely neglected issues of racial justice in the West by shifting focus to 'inter-ethnic' conflicts in post-colonial and post-socialist societies (p. 2). He further challenges the prevailing liberal peace paradigms through decolonial and pluriversal perspectives arguing that understanding the enduring impact of colonialism on current power structures—including racial and gender divisions—is essential (Azarmandi, 2023, p. 7).

Examining the UN's endeavors in prevention and peacekeeping, it is evident that the only constant is the continuous evolution and rebranding of its methodologies. Luck (2002) points out that the expansive use of terms such as "prevention," "human rights," and "development" within UN discourse has diluted their effectiveness. He argues that the broadening of these terms into overly generic concepts, like "sustainable development," undermines their capacity to drive specific and meaningful actions (p. 256). In essence, Luck (2002) critiques the UN's approach to prevention as more of a slogan than a strategy, mainly used to attract support rather than implement proactive measures (pp. 256-257).

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

The UPR was established amid high hopes to rejuvenate the UN's human rights framework. In the wake of initiatives aimed at dismantling UN silos and fostering an integrated approach to human rights within peacebuilding, the UPR is portrayed as a promising institution. Although the linkage between human rights violations and conflict is well-established, the UPR's capacity for conflict prevention remains under-examined amid criticisms of its politicization, inconsistencies with other human rights instruments, and the broader UN tendency to repackage established ideas. The subsequent analysis will build on this literature to critically evaluate the UPR's preventive potential.

## 3 Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Outline

Challenging conventional knowledge in International Relations (IR), Cox's critical international theory offers a reinterpretation of the global order, drawing from Gramsci's (1971) concepts of hegemony and historical blocs. This chapter begins by laying a foundational understanding of this framework. Acknowledging the limitations of this theory in comprehensively addressing the research question, the subsequent section bridges this gap through the poststructural underpinnings of the study's methodology (WPR). The final section confronts the debates surrounding the tensions between these frameworks. It posits that drawing productively on both theories can enrich and solidify this study's theoretical groundwork.

### 3.2 Critical International Relations Theory

#### 3.2.1 A Reinterpretation of World Orders

Preferring the concept of "*world order*" to the narrower focus of "*International Relations*", Cox expands the analysis beyond mere state interactions (Cox, 1992, p. 494). He shifts focus from the state-centric view to a broader scope where states are just one element of the world order (Cox & Sinclair, 1996, p. 68). Contrary to Waltz's (1979) neorealism, which positions states as the primary actors in an anarchic international system, Cox (1981) emphasizes the evolution of state forms and their interactions with supra-national entities and civil society (p.239). He argues that neorealism's focus on state sovereignty in an anarchic system neglects the influence of capital—both economic and social—on IR. Thus, he posits that civil society plays a crucial role in global politics, challenging the reductionist state-centric view of neorealism. Further, Cox (1981) integrates political, economic, and social factors in his analysis, arguing that human nature and societal development are intertwined and should be examined together to understand state behavior and international dynamics fully (pp. 132–133).

### **3.2.2 Critical Reflections: Beyond Problem-Solving**

Theoretical frameworks in IR extend beyond mere perspectives for analyzing global affairs; they fundamentally influence our understanding and the strategies we adopt for engagement. This influence is particularly evident in the distinction between problem-solving theory and critical theory, a dichotomy that underscores different approaches to addressing global challenges. To contrast these theories, Cox (1981) builds on Horkheimer's (2002) initial distinction between critical theory and traditional theory (Devetak, 2005, p. 141).

Problem-solving theory, true to its name, concentrates on resolving immediate issues within the established global order. Rooted in a pragmatist tradition, it assumes the current political and social structures as given and seeks solutions that operate within these parameters (Cox, 1981, 2012; Cox & Sinclair, 1996). This approach, prevalent in much of mainstream IR is adept at managing and mitigating conflicts and issues without challenging the underlying systemic factors that give rise to them. It aligns with the perspective that Cox eloquently critiqued, asserting that:

“Theory is always for someone and for some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspective derives from a position in time and space, specifically social and political time and space ... When any theory so presents itself, it is more important to examine it as ideology, and to lay bare its concealed perspective.” (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p.87)

Thus, the '*someone*', in the case of problem-solving theory, is often the prevailing power structure, and the '*purpose*' is the maintenance of the status quo. In stark contrast stands critical theory, which seeks not just to understand the world but to transform it. Emerging from a tradition of critical thought, it challenges the fundamental structures and assumptions that underpin international relations. Critical theory does not take the existing global order as a given; rather, it questions the historical and socio-political processes that have shaped these structures (Cox, 1981; Cox & Sinclair, 1996; Moolakkattu, 2009). It investigates issues of power, inequality, and hegemony, striving to uncover the root causes of global issues. Hence, critical theory is not just a “snapshot” of the world as it is, seeking continuity, but rather a call for transformation and change.

The choice of critical theory for this study is driven by its potential to provide a more profound and transformative insight into international phenomena. Analyzing UPR recommendations, a problem-solving approach might limit the scope of the study to the technicalities of compliance and implementation. However, critical theory opens a broader perspective, probing the power dynamics, historical legacies, and global structures that shape these recommendations and their impact. Moving beyond problem-solving theory, this study aligns with the poststructural principles embodied in the WPR approach. Bacchi (2009) extends Cox's skepticism of problem-solving theories, which often assume that the system is fundamentally sound and only needs minor adjustments (p. xvi). In contrast, Bacchi advocates for a "problem-questioning" approach, questioning the underlying assumptions of how problems are defined and addressed, fostering new forms of political thinking and assessment. This study aligns with these perspectives, seeking to transcend the immediate and apparent, to not just analyze but to question and challenge.

### ***3.2.3 The Interplay of Material Capabilities, Ideas, and Institutions***

In the ever-evolving human history, the notion that our past unfolds in a neat, linear progression is both simplistic and misleading. Rather, history is a dynamic, intricate web of events, influenced by shifting power, culture, and human interaction. This perspective, rooted in Quijano's (2000) insights, challenges us to view history not as a linear repository of dates but as a multidirectional process (p. 555). Through this lens, the critique of the problem-solving approach gains depth, highlighting its inadequacy in addressing the fluid and multifaceted nature of historical reality. This approach presumes that reality and knowledge are static, neutral, and universal, failing to address the dynamic nature of reality and thereby preserving a distorted representation of it (Cox, 1981).

Historicism offers a contrasting perspective to the positivist approach. It rejects the idea of general or universally valid laws, emphasizing that both human nature and the structures of human interaction evolve (Cox, 1985, p. 55). Building on Gramsci's (1971) concept of "historical bloc" (p.137), Cox (1985, 1981) advocates for historicism, highlighting its focus on revealing and explaining the historical structures characteristic of particular eras and the transformations between them. Cox's analysis of historical structures offers a nuanced understanding of how various forces shape the world order.



According to Cox (1981), a historical structure is not a comprehensive representation of the entire world but focuses on a specific sphere of human activity within its historical context (pp. 97-98). These structures are characterized by a unique combination of thought patterns, material conditions, and human institutions that together create a coherent framework. He suggests that the international system itself can be viewed as a historical structure, marked by distinct thought patterns, material conditions, and institutional arrangements.

Cox (1981) emphasizes that these structures act as "limited totalities", offering simplified yet logically coherent representations of complex realities (p.100). By serving as contrast models, historical structures help articulate the tendencies and limitations inherent in specific temporal and spatial contexts.

At the heart of Cox's framework (1981) is the interaction among three categories of forces: material capabilities, ideas, and institutions (Figure 3). This interplay forms a complex web of forces that shape the historical structures within which global actors operate. Cox's framework highlights the reciprocal nature of these relationships, where changes in one element can influence the others, thereby altering the overall structure (Cox & Sinclair, 1996, p. 8).

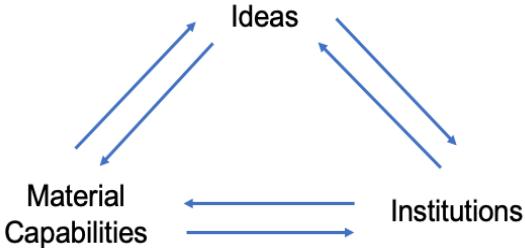


Figure 3: Cox's Model of Historical Structures. (Cox, 1981, p.98)

*Material capabilities* encompass both the productive and destructive potentials within societies. These capabilities are not limited to economic, or military resources but also include technological advancements and organizational capacities. Natural resources, industries, armaments, and the wealth that commands these resources are all integral to this category (Cox, 1981, p. 98).

*Ideas* are divided into two main types: intersubjective meanings and collective images of social order. Intersubjective meanings refer to the shared understandings that underpin social relations, perpetuating habits, and expectations of behavior (Cox, 1981, pp. 98–99). This concept aligns with poststructuralist views, where meaning is not inherent in words or objects

but is constructed through social interactions and practices (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 29). Collective images, on the other hand, represent the diverse visions different groups hold regarding the nature and legitimacy of power relations, justice, and the public good. These images are the lenses through which various actors view the world, often clashing and thereby revealing the potential for alternative developmental paths and the emergence of new social orders (Cox, 1981, pp. 98–99). This aspect resonates with poststructuralism's focus on the contingent nature of knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1980b, p. 93). In the WPR framework, these collective images can be seen as the underlying assumptions that shape how policies are formulated. Policies are not simply responses to objective problems but are shaped by the ways in which problems are conceived and understood within specific ideological frameworks (Bacchi, 2009).

*Institutions* play a critical role in stabilizing and perpetuating the existing order. Reflecting the power relations at the time of their creation, institutions tend to reinforce collective images that align with these dynamics. The establishment of international bodies like the League of Nations and the UN exemplifies how institutions can embody and perpetuate the power relations of their era, contributing to the stabilization of specific world orders. Puchala (2005) echoes this and highlights the dual nature of institutions both as elements and instruments of hegemony, he states that: “international organizations are elements in the structure of hegemony as well as the instruments of its imposition” (p.576). However, these institutions also reflect the changing dynamics of power and can become arenas for contestation and change, as new collective images and material capabilities emerge (Cox, 1981, p. 99).

### **3.2.4 Neo-Gramscian Hegemony**

Expanding Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony to IR, Cox's (1981) interpretation of hegemony transcends simple state relationships, encompassing a world order characterized by a dominant mode of production that integrates various economies and a network of social relationships that link different countries' social classes (p.136). This global hegemony manifests in universal norms, institutions, and mechanisms that establish behavioral rules across national boundaries, supporting the dominant production mode (p.137).

Central to this understanding of hegemony are international organizations, serving as platforms for developing the institutions and ideologies underpinning hegemony (Cox, 1981, p. 99, 1983, p. 137). These institutions reflect the power dynamics at their inception and evolve to embody and perpetuate these relations, becoming arenas for contestation or the promotion of alternative visions (Cox & Sinclair, 1996). The institutionalization process, as Gramsci suggested with hegemony, plays a crucial role in managing conflicts and minimizing force, facilitating a hegemonic order that subtly underpins global governance.

According to Cox (1983), international organizations manifest their hegemonic roles through various characteristics (p.62). They encapsulate rules that promote the expansion of hegemonic world orders (1) and are themselves outcomes of these orders (2). These organizations not only legitimize prevailing norms but also integrate elites from peripheral nations, thereby reinforcing the hegemonic status quo (3). Finally, they assimilate counter-hegemonic movements, subsuming alternative ideologies (4).

Central to this framework is the notion that institutions, like the UPR, do not function as neutral arbitrators but are imbued with the ideologies and power structures prevalent at their inception, playing a critical role in shaping and reinforcing hegemony by legitimizing certain norms. This perspective is crucial in assessing the UPR's potential in conflict prevention. If the UPR is merely a problem-solving mechanism within the existing world order, its capacity to prevent conflicts might be compromised. By promoting certain norms and practices through its recommendations, the process could perpetuate existing power imbalances rather than challenging them, thereby limiting its potential to address human rights violations and the root causes of conflicts that may stem from these imbalances.

While this macroscopic view of global relations outlines the structural and historical context within which the UPR operates, it fails to provide a focused lens looking inside the functioning of the mechanism itself, its techniques and discursive practices, exploring how they influence and shape perceptions, behaviors, and policies. To address this gap, I draw upon the poststructural principles underpinning the WPR approach, which forms the analytical framework for this research.

### **3.3 Poststructuralism, Problematization, and Governmentality**

*Poststructuralism*, with its focus on discourse and power relations, suggests that discourses critically shape our understanding of the world, including identities, social relations, and the construction of problems. This theoretical tradition, deeply influenced by Foucault's concept of power-knowledge relations (Foucault, 1980b), brings a keen awareness of the political dimensions embedded in discourses. In her examination of problematization through a Foucauldian poststructural lens, Bacchi (2009, 2012, 2015) introduces novel approaches to politics and policy studies. She aligns with Foucault's notion that identifying patterns in problematizations can uncover different modes or styles of governance, a focus further explored in governmentality studies (Bacchi, 2012, p.5).

#### **3.3.1 Truth and Problematization**

*Problematization* is not exclusive to poststructural analysis. For instance, Freire (2000) sees it as a pedagogical practice that challenges accepted "truths" by framing the "myths fed to the people by the oppressors" as "problems" (p.164). Thus, Freire uses problematization to disrupt complacent thinking. Foucauldian problematization also questions accepted "truths" but more as a practice of thought rather than a diagnosis of ideological manipulation (Bacchi, 2012, pp.1-2). In Foucault's (1980a) words, "we must think problematically rather than question and answer dialectically" (p.186). In this sense, he employs problematization as a method of analysis to examine how issues are questioned and regulated in specific contexts. He also understands problematization as a two-stage process identifying what becomes a problem and how it is shaped as an object for thought (Bacchi, 2012, p.1; Foucault et al., 2019).

The WPR approach builds on this foundation and applies it to policy analysis, focusing on how issues are problematized through public policies and proposals (Bacchi, 2012, pp. 4–5). This approach posits that policy can be used as starting points to access the problematizations through which we are governed, with each policy representing a specific problematization (*Ibid.*).

### **3.3.2 Governmentality Studies**

*Governmentality* draws on the concept of problematization to examine styles of governing and how rules are rationalized and rendered effective (Bacchi, 2012, p. 5). Foucault (1991) cornered the concept to refer to “the art of governing” and the various ways governments seek to shape and control the conduct of individuals and populations (p.96). This concept combines the terms "government" and "mentality," and it represents a form of governance that operates through techniques and strategies that guide the behavior of populations.

Unlike the stark oppressiveness of direct power (Foucault’s (1977) concept of discipline), governmentality operates subtly—it manufactures 'free' individuals who believe their thoughts and behaviors arise spontaneously and naturally. Accordingly, this nuanced form of power is not just suppressive; it is also generative, crafting subjects who perceive their constructed freedoms and societal roles as inherent, rather than imposed. In his exploration of governmentality, Foucault (1991) identifies several key elements. First, the rationality of governance (pp.78-79). These rationalities dictate the techniques and strategies used to govern populations, emphasizing the importance of aligning political power with a particular logic or reason. Second, the techniques and technologies of power (p.107). Governmentality focuses on these techniques employed by governments to control and regulate populations.

Bacchi (2009, 2012, 2015) builds on this concept of governmentality to examine how policies construct "problems" and how these constructions govern the conduct of individuals and populations. She argues that policy proposals represent specific problematizations, which reflect how governments seek to shape behavior and manage populations (Bacchi, 2015, p.6). Similar to Foucault’s focus on rationalities of governance, Bacchi examines how policies embody specific ways of thinking and reasoning about governance, shaping what is considered a "problem" and what solutions are proposed. Bacchi (2012) also extends Foucault’s analysis of the techniques of governance to policymaking. She examines how policies use various techniques to influence behavior, such as through education, training, or regulation, and how these techniques align with broader governmental rationalities (p.5). Like Foucault, Bacchi (2012) is further interested in how policies shape individual subjectivities, examining how policies create certain types of subjects, such as "needy," "dependent," or "criminal" individuals, and how these subjectivities align with governmental objectives.

The concept of governmentality transcends the narrow confines of traditional state-centric governance, engaging instead with a broader spectrum of governing entities, practices, and rationalities (Bacchi, 2012, pp.5-6). In this sense, governmentality encompasses not just state institutions but also diverse organizations, practices, and modes of governing. In this study, the UPR practice of monitoring and reviewing the human rights records of all UN member states is understood as a form of governance and its recommendations as a means of guiding state behavior and policy, serving as a soft regulatory mechanism. Applying a poststructural policy analysis lens allows the examination of how these UPR's practices and recommendations construct human rights "problems" and "solutions" in specific ways and how these may serve (or fail) to identify and prevent root causes of conflicts.

### ***3.3.3 Neo-Gramscian and Poststructural Perspectives: Tensions and Synergies***

To address the research question comprehensively, I chose to engage with both Cox's critical international theory, rooted in Gramscian thought, and poststructural policy analysis inspired by Foucauldian poststructuralism. However, Barnett (2005) highlights that the differences between "neo-Marxist" approaches and Foucauldian perspectives are significant enough to warrant caution when combining them. He suggests that scholarship attempting this synthesis is, at best, theoretically clumsy and, at worst, naïve. He argues that "they imply different models of the nature of explanatory concepts; different models of causality and determination; different models of social relations and agency; and different normative understandings of political power" (p.8).

Barnett's (2005) caution is valid, the distinctions between Neo-Gramscian and Foucauldian approaches highlight their differing conceptualizations of power and society. Neo-Gramscian focus on structural power and hegemony, emphasizing power imbalances and how powerful groups maintain power (Cox, 1981). Whereas Foucault (1991) emphasizes decentralized and productive power, showing how power operates through discourse and practices. For Cox (1981), institutions are elements and instruments of hegemonic control, while Foucault (1977) sees them as sites of disciplinary power, regulating behavior and identities.

However, Kreps (2016) reviewed literature that considers the work of Gramsci and Foucault together, which extends across various disciplines, and he concluded that such a consideration is far more fruitful than merely dismissing one in favor of the other (p.8). I share Kreps's viewpoint. Despite the differences and tensions between the approaches, they offer avenues for productive engagement, which this study explores. Without combining them, both theories can work together at different levels of analysis. A Neo-Gramscian perspective explores the top-down dimension of power, its verticality, and authoritative aspects, while a poststructural lens analyzes the bottom-up dimension of power, its horizontality, its constitutive aspects, and its capacity to shape space and the subjects over which power is exercised (Bilancetti, 2020).

Similarly, this study conducts a two-level analysis. A Coxian perspective provides a macroscopic view of global relations, exploring how institutions like the UPR are not only embedded within but also shaped by the broader structures of global power and hegemony. It scrutinizes the role of the UPR within the world order, assessing how global power dynamics might dictate or influence the framing and prioritization of human rights issues. Thus, this lens helps to reveal whether the UPR's recommendations are genuine efforts to enhance human rights or if they predominantly reflect the strategic interests of powerful states within the global hegemony. On a granular level, a poststructural lens interrogates the discourses propagated by the UPR, analyzing how they construct certain realities, shape identities, and influence international norms and practices. It critically examines the foundational truths and knowledge that the UPR disseminates, questioning whether these narratives might inadvertently obscure or misrepresent underlying human rights issues. By examining the UPR's discursive practices, this approach reveals how representations and interpretations of human rights within its recommendations might contribute to or hinder conflict identification and resolution efforts.

### **3.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter establishes the dual theoretical lenses through which the UPR recommendations will be analyzed. The Coxian approach brings an understanding of the institutional and structural power within which the UPR operates, while the poststructuralist lens offers insights into the micro-level discursive impacts of its recommendations. This dual analysis facilitates a deeper understanding of the UPR's potential to identify and address the root causes of conflicts through its human rights monitoring.



## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Outline

The methodological framework of this study is shaped by the research questions: *how are human rights issues represented within the UPR recommendations and what implications do these representations have for identifying and preventing emerging internal conflicts?* This chapter delineates the methodology employed, beginning by situating and justifying this inquiry as a poststructural policy analysis and then elucidating the selection criteria for the country examples under scrutiny. Subsequently, I explain the analytical framework adopted—namely, the WPR method, as developed by Bacchi (2009). In the interest of transparency, I provide a detailed account of the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter reflects on ethical considerations, articulates the researcher's position within the study, and discusses the challenges encountered.

### 4.2 Rationale Behind the Methodological Choices for This Study

#### ***4.2.1 Poststructural Policy Analysis as the Research Strategy***

There are different discursive-oriented critical methodologies, including cultural political economy approaches (Jessop, 2010); critical discourse analysis approaches (Fairclough, 2010); and poststructural policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009). The choice to engage with Bacchi's approach was driven by its resonant fit with the study's broad aims, particularly its utility in mobilizing critique. The WPR approach does not just engage a study of modes of language use or rhetoric. Rather, unique to WPR, is its focus on policies as instruments of problematization, revealing how governmental practices construct "problems" in specific manners (Bacchi, 2009, 2012). On a pragmatic level, WPR's application offers a well-developed methodology for dissecting policy formulations thus facilitating a granular analysis of recommendations, questioning the underlying assumptions and implications.

In the discussions of the usefulness of poststructural analysis, particularly those influenced by Foucault, there is a common critique: the approach's apparent failure to provide precise recommendations for action (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 24). Critics argue that such analysis may leave policymakers and practitioners mired in a field of competing

interpretations, without clear directives on how to proceed. Foucault (1991) was wary of the reformist impulse to declare what needed to be done, emphasizing instead the importance of a critical stance towards the very framing of problems (pp.84-85). This approach advocates for a continuous process of problematization, where the goal is not to settle on a final answer but to maintain a state of inquiry, challenging and reevaluating the ways problems are represented and addressed (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 25). Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) highlight that the objective of such analysis is not to render action impossible but to ensure that any action taken is the result of thorough reflection and critical engagement with the issue at hand.

It is crucial to understand how these perspectives relate to my study. The emphasis on critical reflection, the avoidance of prescriptive solutions, and the commitment to re-problematization are not just theoretical choices; they significantly influence the methodology and potential outcomes of research endeavors, including my own. This study deliberately diverges from a problem-solving methodology that seeks to address immediate issues without challenging underlying systemic factors (Cox & Sinclair, 1996).

Furthermore, my reluctance to provide prescriptive recommendations aligns with Cox's (1981) insights into the roles of international institutions. He contends that these institutions are integral to the fabric of world orders, influencing and being influenced by them in a dynamic, ongoing process. They are not static, and neither are their analyses. Rooted in complex structures, they defy simplistic, one-size-fits-all solutions. Like Cox, I view the examination of these institutions as a continual process of questioning and evolution. Thus, within the context of this research, the critique is transformed: the apparent lack of a prescriptive solution is seen not as an absence but as a reflective space.

#### ***4.2.2 Selection of Examples***

In the exploration of the UPR's role in identifying emerging conflicts through the lens of human rights issues, I opted to select Sudan and Colombia as examples. Choosing examples over case studies allows for a broad analysis that focuses on the UPR as a policy-oriented mechanism, rather than examining the specific contexts of these countries. The intent is to scrutinize and problematize the UPR recommendations. Conducting case studies on Sudan and Colombia would entail a detailed, context-specific analysis that goes beyond the scope of examining the

UPR's role in human rights monitoring and conflict prevention on a broader scale. Instead, using these countries as examples allows for a focused examination of the UPR recommendations' content and implications. Thus, while case studies involve an in-depth investigation, emphasizing the complexities and unique characteristics of a single case or a small number of cases (Yin, 2018, pp. 45–46), the nature of this research necessitates a wider lens. Given the definitions provided by Yin (2018), a case study's depth and methodological rigor exceed the requirements for addressing my research questions.

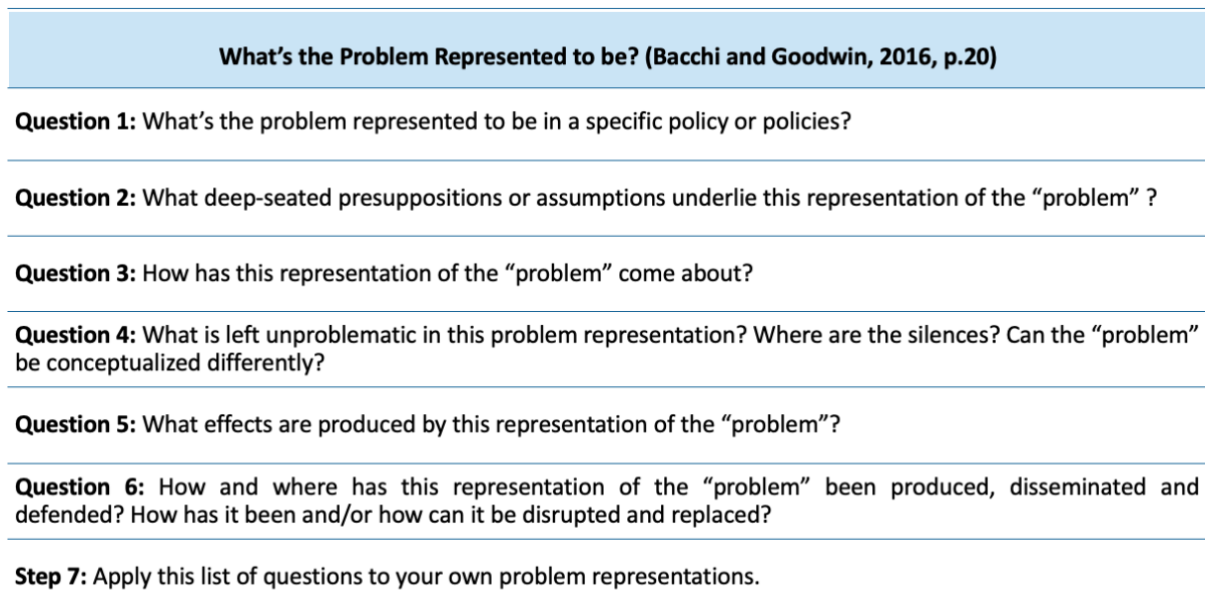
While current conflicts such as those in Palestine and Ukraine are prominent, they were not chosen due to their nature. The conflict in Ukraine is international rather than internal, and the Palestinian conflict encompasses colonialism (FitzGerald, 2023; Hughes, 2020) and may also be considered an international conflict, which does not align with a focus on internal conflicts. In contrast, Sudanese and Colombian long-standing internal conflicts, provide clearer contexts for examining the UPR's potential in identifying and preventing internal armed conflicts.

Sudan has been entrenched in a relentless cycle of strife for decades, with conflicts deeply rooted in a complex interplay of factors including ethnic tensions (Idris, 2005), military hegemony (Fiseha, 2024, p. p.292), power and resource centralization (Hassan Alredaisy, 2024), competition over energy with major powers (Belmadi & Kadri, 2024), and political exclusion (Brosché, 2023). These elements have perpetuated violence, leading to widespread displacement and severe human rights violations (Barltrop, 2011; Idris, 2005; Musa, 2018). In 2023, simmering power struggles erupted, resulting in profound suffering for the Sudanese populace. By April 2024, the toll was grim: thousands were dead, over six million were internally displaced, and now half of the population is in desperate need of humanitarian aid, with fundamental necessities like food, medical care, and education scarce (International Rescue Committee, 2024, p. 4). In 2022, just months prior to this escalation, Sudan had engaged in its third UPR presenting an opportunity for insightful research. With the nation on the brink of collapse, one must consider whether examining the human rights concerns highlighted in the UPR recommendations could have anticipated and possibly mitigated the underlying causes of this conflict.

Colombia offers a contrasting example through its 2016 Peace Agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army, which received international acclaim (Prieto Bustos & Manrique-Hernandez, 2024, p. 111). This arrangement aimed to challenge criticism about the liberal, top-down approaches to peacebuilding (Fettweis, 2017; Richmond, 2006; Torrent, 2022; Yin, 2018), by promoting a bottom-up, locally-owned post-conflict strategy addressing the structural causes of violence, including unequal land access and broad-based exclusion from central decision-making processes (Vélez-Torres et al., 2022). Despite these aspirations, Colombia continues to grapple with significant structural issues such as state fragility, challenges in land distribution, and rural impoverishment (Cairo et al., 2024; Camacho & Rodriguez, 2013; Ríos, 2024; Rojas & Meltzer, 2005; Ruelle-Orihuela et al., 2023). This scenario prompts a critical examination of how the UPR portrays this post-conflict context. Does it merely celebrate the peace agreement, or does it critically acknowledge the ongoing gaps and accurately represent the persistent human rights challenges and their root causes?

### 4.3 WPR: What’s the Problem Represented to be?

The WPR approach challenges the assumption that policies are reactions to pre-existing problems. Instead, it argues that policies actively construct "problems" as specific types of issues. This construction, in turn, significantly influences both individuals' lives and societal structures (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 16). Thus, a critical task emerges: to scrutinize how policies frame and define problems. (*ibid.*). Bacchi (2009) introduced the concept of "problem representation," defining it as the framing or interpretation of an issue within a specific context, it suggests that by examining a proposal, one can discern the underlying representation of the "problem" it seeks to address (p.2). The WPR framework is structured around the following guiding questions (*Figure 4*)<sup>5</sup> which facilitate a thorough policy analysis. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) provide an additional 7<sup>th</sup> step about *Self-Problematization* inviting the researcher to apply this list of questions to their own problem representations.



**Figure 4:** The WPR questions.

<sup>5</sup> This figure, created by the author, outlines the WPR approach questions as provided by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016).

**Question 1** initiates the analysis by examining how the policy conceptualizes the "problem". It encourages analysts to "*reverse-engineer*" the policy to uncover the implied issues. Identifying dominant problem representations and their interrelations is crucial in this stage.

**Question 2** shifts the focus to the underlying assumptions of the problem's representation. This involves dissecting policy discourse to reveal the constructed meanings and the authoritative knowledge that support these interpretations.

**Question 3** directs attention to the historical evolution of the problem representation, challenging its perceived inevitability and highlighting the power dynamics and knowledge struggles involved in its formation.

**Question 4** is a two-part prompt encouraging the investigation of what the current problem representation omits or silences and to further explore alternative ways of conceptualizing the "problem."

**Question 5** covers the broader implications of the problem representation, including its discursive subjectification, and lived effects on different groups and individuals.

**Question 6** explores the mechanisms through which problem representations gain legitimacy and authority and considers strategies for challenging and rethinking these representations.

Bacchi (2009) highlights the flexibility of the WPR approach, allowing for adaptations to suit different studies. In this study, I apply questions 1 to 4 and 7. The focus on questions 1 to 4 is motivated by the research's primary aim to critically analyse the representation of human rights violations within the UPR recommendations and to explore their potential as signals for emerging conflicts. By examining how problems are framed, the assumptions underlying these representations, their origins, and the aspects that are omitted or remain unchallenged, the study aims to uncover the complexities and implications of these representations for early conflict detection.

Furthermore, the application of Question 7 (section 4.6), focusing on self-problematization, aligns with the study's theoretical and methodological grounding. "Theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p.87). Cox argues that every theory and thus every researcher operates from a specific social and political perspective that influences how problems and solutions are conceptualized. Aligning with this

perspective, self-problematization prompts researchers to reflect on their own positions—such as their cultural, academic, and political backgrounds—and how these positions shape their interpretations and representations of problems.

The exclusion of Questions 5 and 6 from the analysis is justified by the research's thematic and methodological boundaries. The aim is not to explore the broader processes through which problem representations are disseminated, defended, or challenged within the international human rights system, nor to assess the practical effects of these representations. Instead, the study concentrates on examining the framing of human rights issues and their implications for the identification of early conflict signals. This focused approach ensures that the research remains aligned with its core objectives.

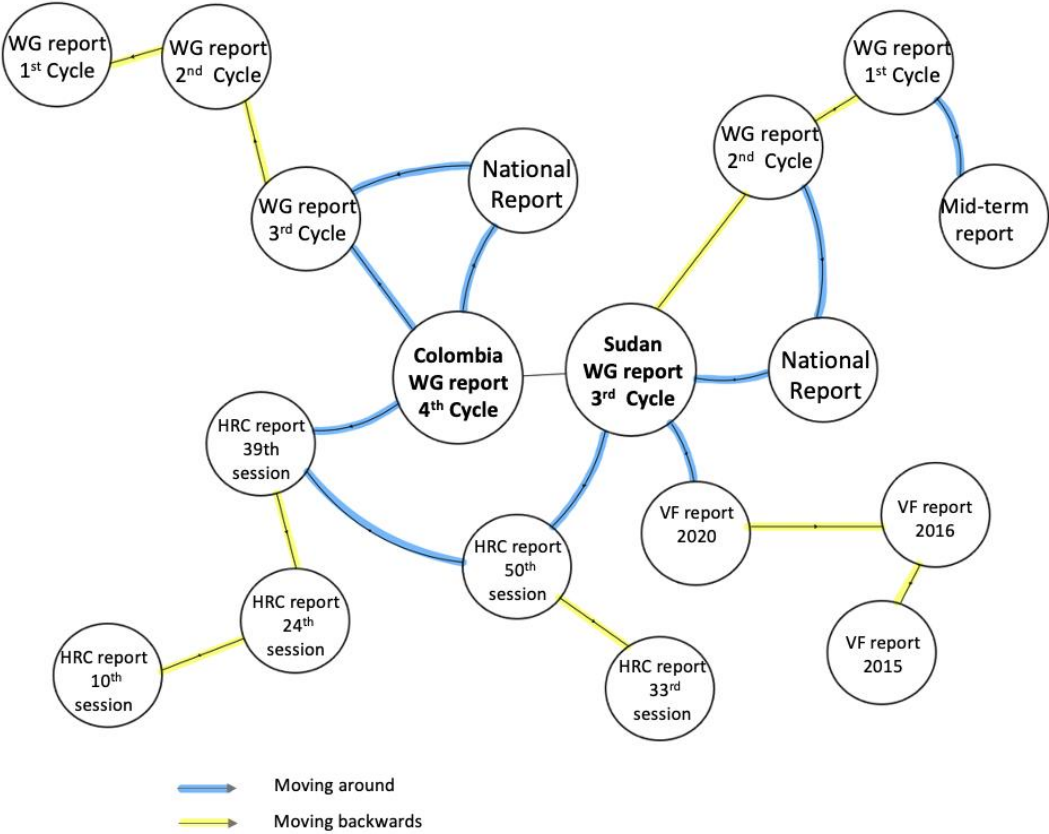
#### 4.4 Data Collection

To capture the intricate and non-linear essence of poststructural research methodologies, this research is not depicted as a sequential and neatly organized series of steps. The linear representation, while offering clarity and structure, simplifies the complex nature of knowledge production. Therefore, I propose visualizing the data collection process as a 'web' of interconnected reports (Figure 5)<sup>6</sup>. This web consists of an entry point, then allowing for movement that is not just forward but also backwards and around, adapting as the research unfolds. Such representation embraces the inherent 'messiness' of research, acknowledging

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<sup>6</sup> This figure, created by the author, visualizes the non-linear data collection process. It depicts an interconnected web that outlines the selected reports. The latest WG reports for Sudan and Colombia served as the entry points. The yellow line represents the effort to move backward, tracing the evolution of the reports and recommendations. The blue line illustrates the effort to move around, selecting additional relevant reports to provide further insights into the selected countries' perspectives (national reports), NGO inputs (HRC reports), and the financial and technical support mechanisms under the UPR (VF reports).

that the path of inquiry is not predetermined but is constructed through a series of interconnected decisions and discoveries.



**Figure 5:** Data Collection Process: An Interconnected "web"

**4.4.1 The Entry Point: Selection of Documents**

In the preliminary phase of my data collection, the objective was to scrutinize the latest recommendations for Colombia (from its 4th cycle) and Sudan (from its 3rd cycle) obtained from the Human Rights Index website and downloaded in the form of an Excel file. However, this plan encountered an obstacle: the recommendations for Colombia were not yet available on this platform since Colombia was recently reviewed in November 2023. This necessitated a redirection towards alternative sources for the recommendations, leading to the selection of the WG reports for each country's latest cycle available on the OHCHR website. This pivot



was not merely a workaround but a substantial enhancement to the data collection process. The WGRs proved to be a more valuable resource than initially anticipated. They offer a holistic view of the UPR process, encompassing the SuR's presentation, the interactive dialogue, and the received recommendations. This broader dataset is inherently more suited to a critical analysis through the WPR lens.

#### ***4.4.2 Navigating the Web: Moving Backwards and Around***

After establishing the entry point in the research process by selecting documents for analysis, the methodology evolved to encompass a more comprehensive exploration. In this exploration, after the analysis of the WG reports for Colombia and Sudan (OHCHR, 2022c, 2023), I expanded the analytical perspective by incorporating the national reports of these countries (Colombia, 2023; Sudan, 2021). Moving around the 'web' to integrate insights from NGOs, I examined HRC reports detailing their interventions (OHCHR, 2009, 2012, 2020c, 2020b, 2022a, 2022b). Further analysis involved the voluntary funds reports to understand the financial and technical support mechanisms under the UPR (OHCHR, 2015, 2016a, 2021) and Sudan's (2013) mid-term report. In a backward movement, previous WG reports cycles were reviewed to trace the evolution of the recommendations and their framing of problems (Colombia, 2008, 2013, 2018; Sudan, 2011, 2016). The culmination of this process was the collection of 18 documents, as detailed in (Table 1). All these documents are publicly available on the OHCHR website.

Report	Cycle	Date	Number of pages	Reference
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Colombia	4th Cycle November 2023	2023	25	A/HRC/55/7
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Sudan	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle July 2022	2022	27	A/HRC/50/16
Colombia National report	4th Cycle November 2023	2023	22	A/HRC/WG.6 /44/COL/1
Sudan National Report	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle July 2022	2021	29	A/HRC/WG.6 /39/SDN/1
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Colombia	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle May 2018	2018	24	A/HRC/39/6
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Colombia	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle May 2013	2013	31	A/HRC/24/6
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Colombia	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle December 2008	2008	31	A/HRC/10/82
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Sudan	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle July 2016	2016	29	A/HRC/33/8
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Sudan	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle July 2011	2011	26	A/HRC/18/16
Sudan's National mid-term Report	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle July 2011	2013	52	N/A
Report of the Human Rights Council on its 50th session	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle June-July 2022	2022	182 (6 pages are relevant; pp.130-136)	A/HRC/50/2
Report of the Human Rights Council on its 39th session	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle September 2018	2020	165 (5 pages are relevant; pp.75-80)	A/HRC/39/2

Report	Cycle	Date	Number of pages	Reference
Report of the Human Rights Council on its 33 <sup>h</sup> session	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle September 2016	2020	172 (6 pages are relevant; pp.68-74)	A/HRC/33/2
Report of the Human Rights Council on its 24 <sup>th</sup> session	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle September 2013	2022	240 (5 pages are relevant; pp.140-145)	A/HRC/24/2
Report of the Human Rights Council on its 10 <sup>th</sup> session	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle March 2009	2009	265 (8 pages are relevant; pp.188-196)	A/HRC/10/29
Operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review	N/A	2021	14	A/HRC/47/19
Operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review	N/A	2016	11	A/HRC/32/28
Operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review	N/A	2015	12	A/HRC/29/22

**Table 1:** Summary of the selected documents for the application of WPR framework.

## 4.5 Applying the WPR Framework

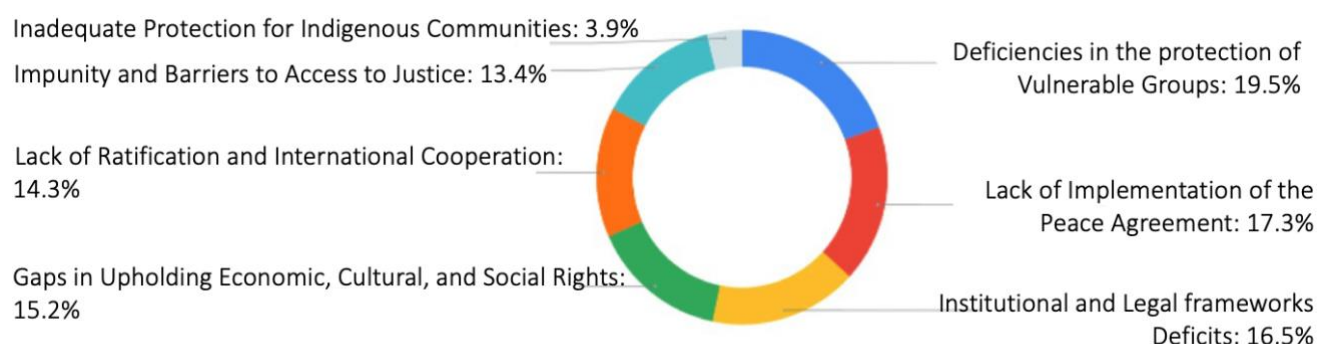
I applied questions 1 to 4 to the collected data in two phases. *Table 2* outlines the procedural application of the WPR framework delineating how each WPR question is employed to not only identify the constructed 'problems' within the policies but also to deeply contextualize and critically challenge these representations. This systematic process is fundamental in directly addressing the core research questions of the study, particularly how human rights issues are represented and the subsequent implications of these representations for predicting and managing emerging conflicts.

Phase of Analysis	WPR Questions	Analytical Focus	Relevance to Research Questions
Identification Phase	Question 1	Identify and articulate the 'problems'.	Address the first part of the research question by delineating how human rights issues are framed.
Critical Analysis Phase	Questions 2, 3, and 4	Contextualize the problem representation, deconstruct underlying assumptions, and identify any gaps or silences.	Explore the implications of problem representations, informing the second part of the research question regarding their role in foreshadowing conflicts.

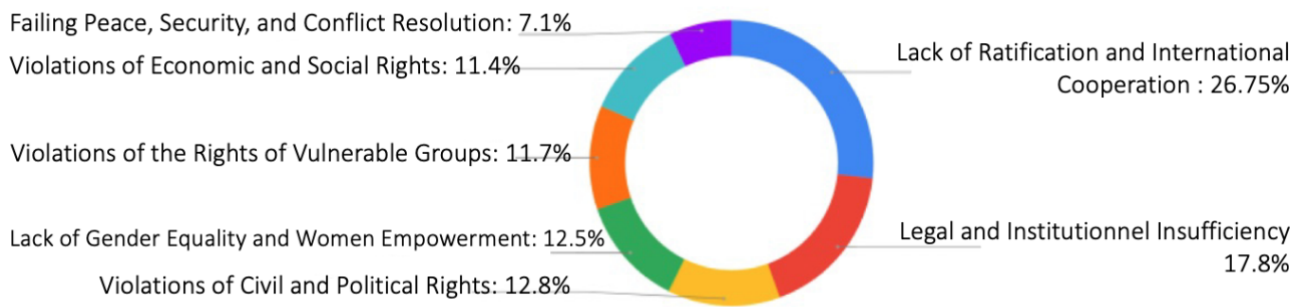
**Table 2:** Phases of the application of WPR framework

In the initial phase of analysis, I examined the WG reports for both countries focusing on understanding the nature of the 'problems' as they were represented within these human rights contexts and their implications. This analysis was guided by WPR's first question which seeks to identify the 'problem' constructed within the policy or recommendation.

Sudan's third cycle Working Group report encompassed 283 recommendations, and Colombia's fourth cycle report included 231 recommendations. The next step was to transfer this data into a spreadsheet for each country to systematically categorize and manage the information. This allowed for the thematic categorization of the recommendations, making it possible to discern patterns and identify predominant issues. With the data categorized, for Sudan, 7 distinct 'problem' representations were identified from the recommendations (*Figure 6*). And for Colombia, another set of 7 'problem' representations emerged (*Figure 7*).



**Figure 6:** "Problems" Representations in Sudan Recommendations (3rd Cycle)



**Figure 7:** "Problems" Representations in Colombia Recommendations (4th Cycle)

In the analysis of the recommendations for Sudan and Colombia, these visual tools serve as a medium to convey the prominence and scale of various human rights issues as perceived by the global community. The charts provide a nuanced snapshot that not only identifies the different problems but also offers a comparative perspective on their relative magnitude. Larger segments suggest a collective consensus on the urgency or severity of certain issues, which may reflect not only the realities on the ground but also the ideological and political influences. In contrast, smaller segments could point to areas that are potentially underrepresented or emerging, warranting closer scrutiny.

## 4.6 Ethical Guidelines

In the quest to ascertain the trustworthiness of this qualitative research, I have conscientiously adopted the evaluative standards of trustworthiness, drawing upon the established criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Schwandt et al., 2007, p.18). I ensured credibility through consistent and methodical engagement with the data, fostered transferability by providing dense descriptions that allow for the application of findings in other contexts, and secured dependability and confirmability through a transparent and verifiable research process.

Simultaneously, this study maintains a vigilant awareness of the researcher's positionality and the ethical dimensions involved, especially considering my previous internship with the UPR. Prior knowledge plays a significant role in shaping both the definition of research problems and their operationalization in the process of conducting a study (Bryman, 2012, pp. 149-150). But this knowledge is not static; it evolves with the researcher's engagement with the study underscoring the importance of reflexivity in research. Acknowledging the principles of reflexivity as set forth by Bacchi's seventh step in the WPR approach (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 20), this analysis is conducted with an understanding that the researcher is not detached from the subject matter. It is recognized that my own perspectives, informed by my experience and social and academic positioning, shape the interpretation of the UPR recommendations and their representations of human rights issues. By engaging with the WPR's self-problematization process, I aim to ensure that my analysis does not inadvertently reinforce the very structures of power it seeks to critique.

## 4.7 Methodological Limitations

The primary challenge faced in this study lies in the complex nature of the subject matter itself. Human rights issues, especially as they relate to the emergence and mitigation of conflicts, are deeply embedded within the socio-political fabric of individual countries and the international community. Furthermore, the application of Cox's approach, though robust, presents its own set of challenges. The framework demands a critical examination of historical structures, material capabilities, ideas, and institutions, which requires a detailed and nuanced understanding of both historical and contemporary geopolitical contexts.

Moreover, while I decided against using a case study methodology due to its expansive nature beyond the scope of this study, maintaining a focus solely on the UPR process, rather than on detailed instances from individual countries such as Sudan and Colombia, presented significant challenges. The complexity of this task stemmed from the need to effectively illustrate the specific UPR recommendations without confining the analysis to distinct national narratives, which might inadvertently shift the emphasis away from the UPR framework. Further, operationalizing the WPR approach to answer the research questions while keeping the focus on the UPR process required a delicate balance. This involved navigating between analyzing broad UPR trends and the implications of these trends within specific contexts, thereby ensuring that the study remained aligned with the global mechanism of the UPR rather than localized instances.

## 5 Data Findings and Analysis

### 5.1 Outline

The WPR approach was applied to two distinct examples, however, the aim here is not to delineate findings example by example. Instead, the findings are organized based on the WPR prompts to align with and address the research questions, informed by the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The subsequent sections will first present the “problems” representations embedded within the UPR recommendations and how these problems have been discursively constructed. This identification phase marks the first step of the analysis (*Table 2*). Following this I apply WPR questions 2, 3, and 4. In this phase, I examine the rationalities undergirding these constructions, to clarify, contextualize, and deconstruct these problem representations, thereby uncovering the underlying assumptions and bringing to light aspects that have remained unproblematized. In doing so, I interrogate the impact of human rights representations on the UPR's potential in the detection and prevention of conflicts. Prior to this examination, it is essential to contextualize the discussion by providing an overview of both countries' relations and commitments to the UPR.

### 5.2 Context Baseline: Engagement with the UPR

#### ***5.2.1 Sudan's Engagement with the UPR***

Sudan's interaction with the UPR has spanned three cycles to date, during which it has submitted and presented its national reports (Sudan, 2011, 2016, 2021). Throughout these cycles, Sudan has received several recommendations from other member states, signaling international concern and suggestions for improvement. Sudan's responses have ranged from support, partial acceptance, to declining these recommendations, reflecting a commitment—at least nominally—to enhancing its human rights landscape (*Figure 8*)<sup>7</sup>. With regards to

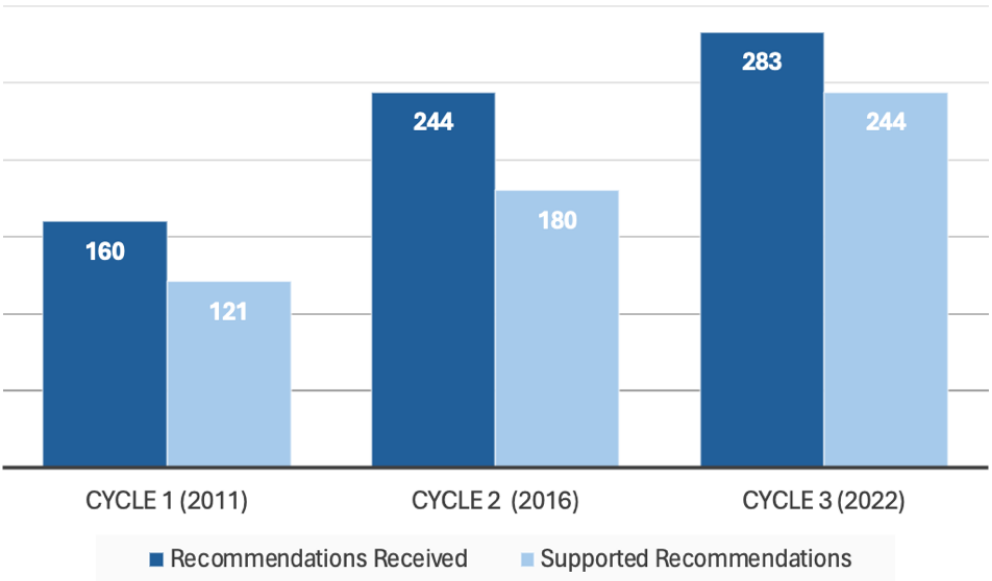
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<sup>7</sup> This figure, created by the author, summarizes the number of received and accepted recommendations by Sudan from the first to the third UPR cycles.



reporting on progress through mid-term reporting, Sudan submitted only once after the first cycle (Sudan, 2013).

Sudan has taken steps to institutionalize its human rights efforts following the received recommendations, notably through the establishment of national human rights institution in 2021 and the ratification of instruments namely; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified in 2021; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, ratified in 2021; and the Convention against Discrimination in Education, ratified in 2018 (Sudan, 2021). Despite these formal engagements and the acceptance of recommendations, tangible improvements in the living conditions and rights of the Sudanese people remain elusive. The persistent conflict in Darfur currently illustrates the rift between formal engagement with the UPR process and the realization of meaningful, on-the-ground human rights improvements.



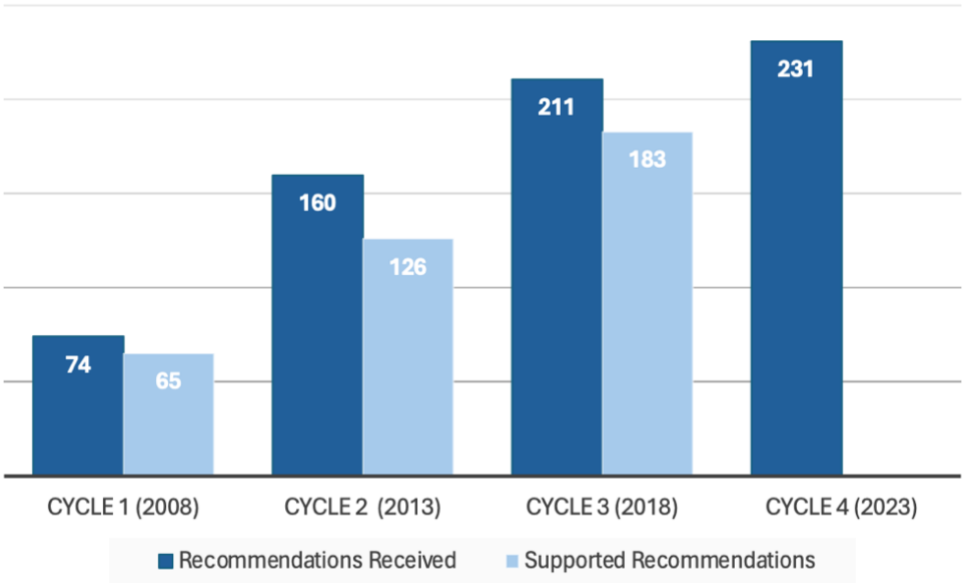
**Figure 8:** Sudan’s Engagement with the UPR

### 5.2.2 Colombia’s Engagement with the UPR

Colombia's participation through the UPR mechanism has extended across four cycles marked by active participation and engagement. This commitment is evidenced by its submission and presentation of national reports and submission of voluntary pledges (Colombia, 2008, 2008,

2013, 2023). Colombia is yet to submit its position to the recommendations received during the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle.

Since the first cycle, the number of recommendations and acceptance rate have grown accordingly (Figure 9)<sup>8</sup>. Similarly to Sudan, Colombia submitted a mid-term report (Colombia, 2009) only once after the first cycle, which raises the question if this procedure monitoring the implementation was only a “trend” that faded over time. Despite Colombia's robust engagement with the UPR process and its support for numerous recommendations, challenges persist (Cairo et al., 2024; Camacho & Rodriguez, 2013; Ríos, 2024; Rojas & Meltzer, 2005; Ruetten-Orihuela et al., 2023).



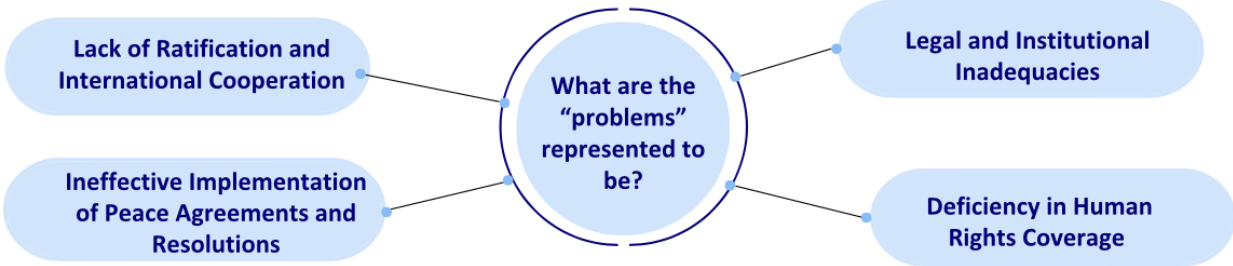
**Figure 9: Colombia’s Engagement with the UPR**

<sup>8</sup> This figure, created by the author, summarizes the number of received and accepted recommendations by Colombia from the first to the fourth UPR cycles. With regards to Colombia’s position on the fourth cycle’s recommendations, it is not included in the figure because this information is not available yet.

### 5.3 Question 1: What are the “Problems” Represented to be?

Power's productive nature, as highlighted by Foucault (1984), challenges traditional views that narrowly cast it in a role of suppression (pp.204-205). Drawing on Foucault's assertion that power creates reality, domains of objects, and rituals of truth, it is argued that policy recommendations are not merely responses to pre-existing issues but actively construct those issues as particular types of problems within specific contexts (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.39). Addressing the first part of the research question “How are human rights issues represented within the UPR recommendations?”, this section examines the framing of human rights issues within the UPR recommendations. It focuses on how these recommendations articulate "problems" and the implications of such problematizations. As Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) assert, policies are inherently problematizing, constructing the issues they aim to address (p.62). This inherent characteristic requires a backward analytical approach, starting from policy proposals to uncover the represented "problem."

By applying WPR Question 1, to the latest WG reports of Sudan and Colombia (OHCHR, 2022c, 2023) four problem representations emerge (Figure 10)<sup>9</sup>: Lack of Ratification and International Cooperation, Legal and Institutional Inadequacies, Comprehensive Human Rights Coverage Deficiency, and Ineffective Implementation of Peace Agreements and Resolutions. The application of Question 1 and the identification of these “problems” is only the initial building bloc of the process, subsequent sections will delve deeper into the analysis.



**Figure 10:** "Problem" representations in the UPR recommendations

<sup>9</sup> This figure, created by the author, outlines the identified problem representations resulting from the application of the first question in the WPR framework. This is the initial step of the analysis.

### **5.3.1 Problem 1: Lack of Ratification and International Cooperation**

The emphasis on treaty ratification and cooperation with international mechanisms as benchmarks for commitment and progress is deeply ingrained in the UPR recommendations.

*Ratification* is highlighted as a measure of progress, as seen in Colombia's recommendations (116.1 to 116.18)<sup>10</sup> where the country was urged to "continue its efforts to ratify international human rights treaties" (OHCHR, 2023, para. 116.14). Similarly, Sudan was advised to "ratify the international human rights conventions that it has not yet ratified" (OHCHR, 2022, para. 137.1), across a comprehensive list of recommendations (137.1 to 137.53). These recommendations often pinpoint the ratification of specific conventions and protocols, constructing ratification as a "targeted solution", to address human rights issues. For example, Colombia received recommendations to "ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT)," "ratify the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women", and "ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (OHCHR, 2023, pp. 10-11). Similarly, Sudan was urged to ratify OPCAT and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OHCHR, 2022, pp. 12-14).

This institutional focus on ratification as a form of commitment tends to elevate a formalistic approach to human rights and peace, one that values the appearance of compliance. Such an approach is symptomatic, aligning with Cox's criticism of problem-solving theory, which operates within the parameters set by the prevailing world order and focuses

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<sup>10</sup> These are the references to the examined recommendations. Within the WG reports each recommendation is accorded a reference which is a combination of the paragraph number and the recommendation number. For Sudan the reference starts with (137.) followed by the number of recommendation and for Colombia the reference starts with (116.). The full list of recommendations received by both countries is provided in the (Annex) along with the "solution" it creates.

on managing “problems” without challenging the underlying structures that produce and perpetuate inequalities and violations (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p.87).

From the same perspective, material capabilities, which include economic resources and political stability, significantly determine a state's abilities and practices (Cox, 1981, p. 98). However, this focus on ratification overlooks these disparities, assuming instead that all states, regardless of their material conditions, possess equal capacity for implementation. Moreover, the historical context of international human rights norms reveals that these standards were established and are maintained in a context that does not merely reflect a consensus on moral values but also the economic and political interests of the dominant states (Mutua, 2004, p. 51; Normand & Zaidi, 2008, p. 27). The push for ratification thus becomes another arena for the exercise of power, where international legal commitments are used to shape the political and economic behavior of states, often aligning with the strategic interests of the most powerful. Consequently, a critical examination of the UPR and its emphasis on treaty ratification must question not only the efficacy of this approach in achieving substantive human rights improvements and preventing conflicts but also the extent to which it serves to reinforce existing global power structures.

*Cooperation* with the UN system is pointed out in several recommendations calling Colombia to “cooperate fully with United Nations special procedure mandate holders” (OHCHR, 2023, p.11) and Sudan to “*Cooperate fully with human rights mechanisms*” and to “*Cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court*” (OHCHR, 2022, pp. 14 and 18).

This set of recommendations stresses the importance of formalizing commitments through ratification and enhancing international cooperation, with 26.7% directed at Sudan and 14.3% at Colombia, underscoring a transformative potential for each country's human rights framework (Figures 6 and 7). Structured as direct mandates, these recommendations advocate for stronger engagement with UN human rights mechanisms. Terms like “strengthen,” “enhance cooperation,” “cooperate fully,” and “continue to cooperate” (OHCHR, 2022, p.14) not only prescribe actions but also weave these nations into the global human rights discourse, positioning them at the periphery of the international community pending their full compliance with established norms. Furthermore, the prescriptive language urging “continue to make progress towards,” “ratify,” and “consider ratifying” (OHCHR, 2023,

pp. 10-11) signifies a push for active participation in fulfilling international obligations. This rhetoric elevates global standards to authoritative benchmarks and emphasizes the urgency of compliance through phrases such as "intensify efforts" and "expedite ratification" (*Ibid.*)

These repetitive recommendations to intensify, expedite, and accelerate efforts towards ratification and cooperation can be seen as more than procedural directives; they are subtle instruments that reinforce hegemonic values within the international system. Cox (1981; 1983) would interpret these recommendations as a strategic maneuver by the UN to deepen global compliance with its established norms and standards. In his view, this push for ratification and heightened cooperation under the auspices of the UPR is indicative of the UN's broader agenda to integrate diverse states into a Western-centric, hegemonic framework that consolidates its authority and universalizes its model of human rights overlooking underlying structural problems and power imbalances within its core (Cox, 1981, p. 99; 1983, p. 137). Further, he would argue that these recommendations do not merely seek to improve human rights practices but rather aim to reinforce the legitimacy and dominance of the UN system by standardizing compliance across different geopolitical and cultural landscapes (*Ibid.*). This strategy reflects the UN's role in perpetuating existing global power dynamics, where institutional mechanisms like the UPR serve to maintain this influence (Puchala, 2005, p. 576).

This influence, when viewed through the analytical lens of hegemonic stability and power dynamics (Cox, 1981, 1983), becomes apparent in the interplay between treaty bodies and the UPR. Upon the establishment of the process, scholars focused only on potential overlaps and duplications with existing treaty mechanisms (Gaer, 2007, p. 136; Rodley, 2012, p.330; Carraro, 2022, p.375). However, I argue that a deeper scrutiny of the UPR's persistent emphasis on ratification as a "solution" reveals a more complex dynamic than mere redundancy between mechanisms.

The portrayal of ratification as the remedy serves not to enhance human rights practices but to address the problem of "treaty fatigue" (Crawford, 2000; Mertus, 2010, p. 64). Treaty bodies' existence is questioned, and often criticized for its incoherence with constant calls for reform (Crawford, 2000; Mertus, 2010; Hathaway, 2002; O'Flaherty, 2010; Rodley, 2012). This mechanism finds in the UPR a means to assert its viability and relevance. Such perspective is supported by Egan's (2013) observations, noting a substantial increase in treaty

ratifications following UPR reviews (p.201), indicating that the UPR is effectively reinforcing the status quo. Thus, absorbing and blocking possible avenues for change (Cox, 1983, p.62). From this perspective, the UPR might inadvertently exacerbate conditions that could lead to conflict, rather than prevent them.

One might contend that the emphasis on ratification and cooperation, while seemingly bureaucratic and procedural, holds substantive value by fostering a universal dialogue on human rights and compelling states to engage with human rights norms in a structured manner, potentially laying the groundwork for more robust global compliance (Carraro, 2019; Davies, 2010). However, the critical issue here is not the existence or strengthening of treaty bodies per se but the perpetuation of a system riddled with inefficiencies that requires profound transformation (Hathaway, 2002; O’Flaherty, 2010; Rodley, 2012). It is not the strengthening of treaty bodies that is called into question but rather the manner and the framework within which such strengthening occurs. Indeed, the recurrent push for ratification and cooperation might superficially appear to broaden human rights practices globally, yet it risks embedding a static, Western-centric worldview that may not account adequately for diverse geopolitical and cultural realities.

To genuinely address the structural problems within the international human rights regime, one must advocate for reform that goes beyond surface adjustments. Such reform should aim at enhancing the effectiveness, accountability, and transparency of treaty bodies. Further, addressing structural issues involves critically analyzing the power dynamics that govern the creation and enforcement of international norms. The prevailing structures often reflect and serve the interests of powerful states, thereby influencing the priorities and operations of human rights mechanisms. This influence can overshadow local and regional contexts, leading to a one-size-fits-all approach that may not be suitable for all societies.

Is it negative to strengthen treaty bodies? Not inherently. However, this practice should be mindful of the existing flaws—aiming not merely to fortify the status quo but to innovate and adapt in response to the evolving global landscape. This involves a critical re-evaluation of how these bodies operate accompanied by sincere and deep-reaching reforms that address the underlying issues.

### **5.3.2 Problem 2: Legal and Institutional Inadequacies**

During the process of identifying “problems” representations, several recommendations prescribe a series of comprehensive legal and institutional reforms (OHCHR, 2023, p. 11; OHCHR, 2022, pp. 16-17). This encompasses the modification, enactment, and abolition of laws to ensure their consonance with international human rights treaties and norms<sup>11</sup>. The recommendations calling for reforms, while tailored to the specific contexts of each country, converge on the critical need for legal reforms and the strengthening of institutional capacities as essential steps towards the realization of human rights.

In Sudan, the discourse emphasizes the imperative of legislative reforms to “prohibit discrimination, ill-treatment and criminal offences committed by members of the law enforcement agencies against civilians”, “adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination and equalities law, banning discrimination on such grounds as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, age or disability,” and “adopt a comprehensive national poverty reduction strategy, using a human rights-based approach” (OHCHR, 2022, pp. 17 and 21). Similarly, the recommendations for Colombia (OHCHR, 2023) stress the necessity of legal and institutional reforms, particularly to “consider a reform of the national model of protection for human rights defenders” (p.15), and to “review the national regulatory and legal framework on gender-based violence to improve the mechanism of prevention and protection of victims” (p.20).

This framing of legal and institutional reforms illustrates, once again a typical problem-solving approach, predominantly addressing the symptoms of deeper, systemic

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<sup>11</sup> Recommendations on ratification aim to formalize state commitments to international agreements (Section 5.3.1), while those urging for reforms focus on enhancing internal structures like the judiciary and legal systems. Thus, both “solutions” are interconnected but operate differently within — the internal versus international dimensions of state responsibility and action.



issues rather than fundamentally altering the underlying structures that perpetuate these problems (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p.87). In both Sudan and Colombia, the recommendations for legal reforms—such as enhancing protections against discrimination and violence and strengthening institutional frameworks for human rights—are crucial yet primarily symptomatic treatments (Mertus & Helsing, 2006; Parlevliet, 2002, p. 12; Sriram et al., 2018, p. 4). This approach focusing on the surface-level symptoms is reactive rather than proactive. However, preventing conflicts requires efforts that address the symptoms and root causes of conflicts (Sriram et al., 2018, p. 6).

For instance, laws against discrimination and violence in law enforcement in Sudan are needed; however, they do not directly change the longstanding ethnic tensions and the political exploitation that have been ingrained in the country's fabric through decades of conflict and governance failures (Barltrop, 2011; Idris, 2005; Musa, 2018). Similarly, in Colombia, although reform recommendations acknowledge deep-rooted conflict drivers, the solutions proposed remain largely “snapshots” and legalistic (Smith, 2013, p. 13). For example, the call to “implement the comprehensive rural reform, so as to improve economic, social and cultural rights and address drivers of conflict” (OHCHR, 2023, p.17) superficially touches on these issues without providing a robust mechanism for tackling the underlying challenges. This superficial treatment of problems often overlooks the root causes of human rights violations and fails to address the conflicts they might lead to. When the recommendations primarily focus on legal reforms or institutional changes without addressing deeper societal issues, such as systemic inequality, historical grievances, or political exploitation (Sriram et al., 2018), they risk becoming ineffective in preventing conflicts.

Moreover, this approach reflects a responsive governance model that typically skirts around the more challenging task of transforming the foundational historical structures that Cox (1981) describes. These structures are shaped by colonial legacies, entrenched class systems, and persistent unequal power dynamics that require more than just legal tweaks to reconfigure. This responsive method perpetuates a cycle where issues continue to manifest in various forms of injustice and conflict, only to be met repeatedly by similar surface-level solutions. True transformation, according to Cox’s critical theory (1981), would involve a re-evaluation of these embedded social forces and power relations (p.90). This requires a shift towards comprehensive social, economic, and political reforms that go beyond the “quick fix”

legal approach. It's crucial to clarify that my argument here is not against legal reforms but stresses that such reforms are not sufficient on their own. Legal reforms serve as steps towards broader societal change; however, if they operate in isolation, disconnected from the socio-economic realities they aim to govern, they can result in ineffective or incomplete solutions. This misalignment risks exacerbating the very conflicts they aim to resolve.

Further examination through an iterative questioning process reveals "capacity building and technical support" as a "nesting problem" embedded within the problem of "legal and institutional inadequacies" (Bacchi, 2009, p.20). For Colombia, recommendations urge to "continue to pursue capacity-building and technical cooperation opportunities to enhance, in particular, its reparations framework" and to "consolidate the capacities of its national system of human rights and international humanitarian Law" (OHCHR, 2023, pp.11-12).

Similarly, Sudan provides a clear example of how international assistance is often conceptualized and constructed as a solution to legal and institutional inadequacy. The country has received financial and technical support on three occasions, facilitated through the UPR VFs (OHCHR, 2015, 2016a, 2021). This assistance aims to "strengthen the capacity of the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur" (OHCHR, 2015, para. 30) and "enhancing the participants' knowledge of national and international justice mechanisms and participants' skills in incorporating transitional justice techniques effectively in their line of work" (OHCHR, 2016, para. 33).

The use of the phrase "enhancing participants' knowledge" in the recommendation is particularly noteworthy, as it highlights an effort to influence behavior through education and training, aligning with Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality, where governance involves shaping and guiding behavior through various techniques (p.107). Both examples illustrate how capacity building functions as a technique of governance, using policy mechanisms to shape behavior in line with broader governmental rationalities. However, in both Colombia and Sudan, this capacity-building approach also fails to address the root causes of conflict. The focus on legal and institutional strengthening, while important, overlooks deeper societal issues such as structural inequalities and power imbalances that contribute to human rights violations and conflict (Sriram et al., 2018).

Moreover, the workshops and training programs, in Sudan, involving key judicial and law enforcement personnel, including those facilitated by the Embassy of the US, are particularly telling (*ibid.*). These programs not only transfer Western knowledge but also subtly recalibrate the foundational principles and operational philosophies of these institutions to reflect those of the West. This observation resonates with the critique by Normand and Zaidi (2008), who argue that the agenda behind the human rights framework often transcends legal standards, serving instead as a conduit for proliferating American ideals worldwide (p.27).

Further, from Cox's (1981, 1983) viewpoint, these forms of assistance are deeply intertwined with the dynamics of power. The alignment of local judicial processes in Colombia and Sudan with international, predominantly Western, norms is not a matter of improving justice delivery but is a strategic alignment that maintains Western hegemony. These interventions, while packaged as “capacity-building”, subtly bind these nations to a global order that privileges Western legal traditions and suppresses local jurisprudential identities. In this context, the UPR is operationalized as a platform legitimizing this process through facilitating and normalizing the transfer of prevailing powers ideologies in local contexts blocking and sidelining local knowledge and approaches. Thus, once again<sup>12</sup>, the mechanism is reinforcing the structure of hegemony (Cox, 1983, p.62).

Interestingly, the capacity-building “solution” funded by the UPR is directed exclusively to the Global South (OHCHR, 2021, para. 28)<sup>13</sup> which goes against Smith’s (2013) argument that the UPR upholds equal treatment (p.4). This selective focus supports Cowan

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<sup>12</sup> See also Section (5.3.2)

<sup>13</sup> In 2020, the Voluntary Fund approved financial and technical assistance for activities in the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Brazil, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mongolia, Nigeria, Peru, the Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uruguay and Yemen.

and Billaud's (2015) critique of the UPR as fostering a "learning culture" steeped in paternalism, wherein the West assumes the role of the 'educator' and other nations, perceived as less developed, the 'learners' (p.1188). Such differential treatment implicitly suggests that governance systems in the Global North are inherently effective, possessing the necessary legal and policy frameworks to autonomously integrate and uphold international human rights standards (Smith, 2013). This assumption infers not only a presumed adequacy in the institutional capacities of these countries but also a strong political will to support and enhance human rights practices.

It might be argued that the Global North does not require financial assistance to meet human rights obligations. Nevertheless, the support provided is also technical, involving help with implementing UPR recommendations, which should ideally be available to every participating state without the exemption of the "good guys" (Freedman, 2014), assuming they inherently possess the requisite knowledge and capacity to fulfill their commitments independently.

These implications are accepted by Sudan and Colombia through their active pursuit of capacity-building and technical support. For instance, Colombia reported "the adoption of HRC resolution 53/22 to enhance technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights" (OHCHR, 2023, p.2). Similarly, Sudan expressed gratitude for technical assistance claiming its positive impact on its human rights commitments and asked for further support (OHCHR, 2022, p.7). This arrangement exemplifies Cox's concept of hegemony, which rests not on coercion but on the consent of the governed, manifesting through the consensual acceptance of international norms prescribed by hegemonic powers (Cox, 1983, p. 135).

### ***5.3.3 Problem 3: Deficiency in Human Rights Coverage***

Each WG report (OHCHR, 2022c, 2023) dedicates substantial attention to recommendations that, while distinct, share intersectional underpinnings. For instance, the promotion and protection of the rights of women urging, "continue efforts on equality between women and men, and the fight against discrimination, violence against women and trafficking" (OHCHR, 2023, p.20). Similarly, the rights of children are emphasized, recommending "enhance efforts to guarantee the rights of the children and protect them from violence, abuse and

involvement in armed conflict” (OHCHR, 2022, p. 25). The recommendations urge Colombia to “maintain measures for the protection of Afro-Colombians and Indigenous Peoples and the promotion of their ethnocultural heritage and wealth” (OHCHR, 2023, p. 22). Moreover, recommendations highlight “reducing poverty and improving the living conditions” (OHCHR, 2022, p.22). Environmental rights are also addressed through advocating for investment in renewable energy and a rapid reduction of reliance on fossil fuels to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on human rights (OHCHR, 2023, p.18).

In relation to conflicts, Sudan’s recommendations address the participation of children in armed conflict, urging the state to " guarantee the rights of the children and protect them from violence, abuse and involvement in armed conflict” (OHCHR, 2022, p.23). Similarly, for Colombia, the recommendations advocate to "ensure full protection of ex-combatants" and "reinforce the safeguarding of human rights defenders and ex-combatants" (OHCHR, 2023, p.13). These recommendations highlight the complex nexus between human rights and conflict, indicating a need for proactive measures to address these issues. By integrating such recommendations, the mechanism exhibits the potential to function at the critical juncture of human rights and peace. However, this potential is constrained by its inability to comprehensively identify or prevent conflict. The dangers faced by children, human rights defenders, and ex-combatants, poverty, environmental degradation, and discrimination, are symptomatic of deeper-rooted causes of conflict. These issues reveal deeper structural challenges that necessitate thorough and systemic solutions (Sriram et al., 2018). Addressing only the symptoms of these challenges without confronting the underlying issues will merely defer conflict or, worse, exacerbate it.

With regards to the discourse employed in the recommendations, similarly to the previously examined problem representations, the language used aimed at expanding human rights coverage and scope is based on verbs of action – all are procedures of power (Foucault, 1981, pp.61-62), discursive instruments that aim to configure a social reality that conforms to a particular vision of what it means to live within the fold of 'human rights'. Each suggestion to 'implement', 'strengthen', or 'ensure' is not a neutral proposition but an imperative that carries the weight of power.

The frequent invocation of terms such as 'broadening', 'inclusion', and 'participation' (OHCHR, 2022, p.20; OHCHR, 2023, p.13), within these recommendations, does not merely reflect a benign lexicon but embodies a strategic construction of human rights as universally applicable norms that states are compelled to adopt. This construction presupposes a linear progression towards an ideal state of human rights coverage. Such a framework positions human rights in a linear narrative that seems to naturally evolve towards an ever-more inclusive and comprehensive global order. However, Moyn (2010) challenges this stance suggesting that the prominence of human rights arose not due to their inherent or universal nature but as an ideological successor in a time when other utopian ideals had collapsed (p.10). He further disrupts the narrative of linear progression by highlighting the sporadic and crisis-driven emergence of human rights norms (pp. 146-147), which contradicts the gradualist view embedded in the recommendations.

Further, one must acknowledge the intricate mechanisms through which the discourse on human rights constructs its subjects. The discourse within these reports performs the subtle work of "subjectification" (Bacchi, 2009, p.16). Women become subjects when their lack of participation in peace processes is noted; indigenous peoples become subjects through the recognition of their marginalization. This subjectification is double-edged; it simultaneously recognizes and subjugates, liberates, and controls. The articulation of each 'problem' is an act of power, defining, delimiting, and shaping the realities it purports to only describe. This subjectification process can be harmful and limiting (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.50).

For instance, recommendations about Indigenous People, while aimed at promoting their rights and participation, urging Colombia to "take measures to allow Indigenous Peoples to have access to social infrastructure," to "enable" their "representation in the peace process" and to guarantee their "right to free, prior and informed consultation" (OHCHR, 2023, p.22), may inadvertently perpetuate a view of these communities as primarily victims or passive recipients of policy measures, rather than active agents. These calls to "allow," "guarantee," and "enable" can limit the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' agency, resilience, and the diverse ways they are already contributing to and leading their own development and rights advocacy.

The emphasis on state or international bodies' role in "allowing" or "ensuring" their participation can also imply a hierarchical relationship where Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians are dependent on external validation and support for their rights and agency. It risks embedding a narrative that sees Indigenous communities through a lens of deficiency and dependence, overshadowing their capacities, autonomy, and knowledge systems.

The process of subjectification, embedded in these discourses, operates as a form of governance, where power is exercised not merely through overt control but through shaping what is seen as normal, desirable, or problematic. This manifests Foucault's (1991) concept of "governmentality" which illustrates how power extends beyond political structures into the very ways we think and act, molding individuals and populations according to specific norms and objectives. The recommendations on Indigenous Peoples thus become a form of governance that categorizes and manages, positioning the state as the benevolent overseer of Indigenous well-being while simultaneously constraining their roles and identities.

In this process, the dualistic representations of victim versus agent, marginalized versus empowered, are limiting. They constrain how these groups are understood and how they can act, failing to account for their resistance to such characterizations (Fenelon & Hall, 2008). Such recommendations constrain the scope of engagement with Indigenous issues to those areas predefined by external actors, potentially overlooking priorities and solutions identified by Indigenous Peoples themselves. This resonates with Mezzanotti and Kvalvaag's (2022) argument for a pluriversal approach to human rights, where Indigenous cosmologies and worldviews lead the way, challenging top-down solutions.

#### ***5.3.3.1 Problem 4: Ineffective Implementation of Peace Agreement and Resolutions***

The last solution woven throughout the recommendations, suggests a different approach that seeks to prescribe the necessary elements for the effective implementation of peace agreements. In Colombia, the emphasis on "legal, institutional, and financial resources" across several recommendations highlighting "expanded funding," calling to "ensure sufficient resources for implementing the peace agreement," and to "ensure reform of the police," (OHCHR, 2023, pp.13-13) suggesting that the peace processes to date may be inadequately supported in these areas. The recommendations, extend beyond resource allocation,

highlighting the need for a comprehensive and inclusive execution of peace agreements that incorporates “gender measure” (p.12) and “meaningful inclusion of ethnic communities” (p.22). While these considerations are pertinent, they oversimplify the shortcomings of the Colombian peace agreement. Significant structural issues like state fragility, unequal land distribution, and rural poverty persist (Prieto Bustos & Manrique-Hernandez, 2024; Vélez-Torres et al., 2022). The marginalization and violence against indigenous leaders and communities are largely overlooked (Ruelle-Orihuela et al., 2023). Neglecting these underlying issues and the power dynamics they represent risks the failure of the peace process. Ignoring them could potentially lead to further conflict, as the accumulation of grievances goes unaddressed.

For Sudan (OHCHR, 2022), recommendations focus on democratic transition. These include the Netherlands' call to "ensure a return to democratic transition" (p.23), the US urging to “build legislative, judicial and electoral bodies” (p.20) and “restore immediately a civilian-led transition to democracy with United Nations facilitation” (p.15), and Australia's urging for the development of "a path towards democracy and peace"(p.20). These recommendations collectively prioritize the reinstatement and strengthening of democratic structures as a “solution” for Sudan's conflict.

For both countries, the provided solutions are embedded within a broader discourse that reflects liberal ideals in international peacebuilding efforts. This alignment is evident in the way recommendations are framed—emphasizing democratization, institutional reform, and economic liberalization as essential steps following conflict. Scholars have critiqued these models for their often formulaic and prescriptive nature, which typically includes initiating democratically held elections, followed by extensive state-building measures that align with Western norms of governance and market-oriented economic policies (Burchill, 2005, p.59; He, 2021, p.44; Turan, 2016, p. 122).

This framework raises several concerns about the suitability and effectiveness of imported models of democracy in contexts that may not support such structures organically. The insistence on rapid democratization and economic reforms can appear as a superficial application of Western templates onto non-Western crises, disregarding the local socio-political fabric, cultural nuances, and historical contexts that critically shape sustainable



governance structures. Critics like Ginty (2006) and Tschirgi (2004) have argued that such externally imposed models fail to address the underlying causes of conflict and may exacerbate local tensions by imposing alien governance structures.

Once again, Cox's critique of problem-solving theories —that they tend to maintain the status quo by solving issues without altering the underlying structures of power—applies aptly here (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p.87). Recommendations for both countries, framed within Western neoliberal and democratic frameworks, will not effectively address the unique and root causes of each conflict but instead manage them in a surface-level manner. These approaches ignore the deeper historical and social dynamics that contribute to conflict and unrest (Sriram et al., 2018, p.4). By neglecting these foundational causes, the measures fall short of identifying and averting conflicts.

Moreover, Cox (1981) would interpret the prescriptions for institutional reforms and economic policies as part of a broader strategy to integrate these countries into a global order that benefits the prevailing power. This integration often involves significant trade-offs for local autonomy and cultural contexts. As highlighted in Omach's (2021) critique of peacebuilding efforts, they impose "universal" norms without considering local traditions and social structures, which he considers a neo-colonial practice by enforcing a top-down approach that is alien to the locals. Such approaches provoke resistance that is not merely oppositional but is based on a profound sense of cultural imperialism, where foreign interventions are seen as attempts to overwrite local identities.

## **5.4 Question 2: What assumptions underlie the UPR "problems" representations?**

In the progression of applying Bacchi's WPR method (Bacchi, 2009), the focus on problem representations is merely the commencement of an extensive analytical process. The second question "*What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem"?*" propels the analysis into uncovering the underlying assumptions of these representations. Bacchi (2009) considers the operationalization of this question an exercise in Foucauldian archaeology aiming to reveal what is taken for granted and assumed thoughts behind problem representations (p.5).

Assumptions in policymaking play an invisible yet formidable role, silently guiding decisions, shaping objectives, and influencing outcomes. The significance of examining assumptions stems from their capacity to mold policy directions and priorities. They are the bedrock upon which policies are built, subtly determining what is identified as a 'problem,' whose voices gain prominence, and which solutions are legitimized. Thus, assumptions embedded in the UPR recommendations carry profound implications for how human rights issues are framed and, by extension, how equipped the UPR is to foresee potential conflicts.

<b>Binaries</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Concepts</b>
Progress vs. Challenges	Legislative Reforms	Human Rights Mechanisms
Ratification vs. Non-ratification	International Obligations	Democratic Transition
Legal Reforms vs. Persistent Discriminatory Practices	Recommendations	Transitional Justice
Peace Agreement Implementation vs. Ongoing Conflict Realities	Social and Economic Rights	Inclusive Participation and Representation
Legislative Progress vs. Implementation Gaps	Violence and Discrimination	Total Peace Policy
International Commitments vs. Domestic Realities	Gender Equality and Women's Rights	International Cooperation

In this context, an assumption is identified as a foundational belief or presupposition that quietly orchestrates the articulation of problems and the crafting of solutions within the UPR recommendations. These assumptions might be explicit, directly woven into the text, or implicit, subtly influencing the narrative without clear acknowledgement. Bacchi (2009) posits that bringing these assumptions to light is a challenging but necessary task, and it can be facilitated by certain analytical tools, notably discourse analysis (p.7). Since policies are constructed through discourse — not just through language but as a medium carrying assumptions, values, and symbols — Bacchi (2009) directs attention to what she terms “conceptual logics” (p.5). These are the invisible threads that weave together the fabric of policy narratives integral yet often unobserved. Policy, in its essence, is an act of meaning creation, and the analytical challenge is to reveal how this meaning is constructed.

To undertake this task, it is instrumental to engage in discourse analysis, which involves the identification and critical interrogation of the binaries, key concepts, and categories that are operational within a policy context (Bacchi, 2009, pp.7-9). Applying this approach to the Working Group reports of Sudan and Colombia serves as an initial step in

**Table 3:** Binaries, Categories, and Concepts in the UPR Recommendations

uncovering the embedded assumptions within these documents. The results of this discourse analysis are encapsulated in the subsequent table (*Table 3*).

Several key assumptions can be identified in the table. First, the binaries such as 'Progress vs. Challenges' and 'Ratification vs. Non-ratification' hinge on the belief that state actions and international engagements are pivotal in human rights advocacy. They denote an underlying expectation that state entities are, or should be, the primary protectors and enforcers of human rights norms. This ties into categories like 'Legislative Reforms' and 'International Obligations', which strengthen the view of the state's central role in initiating and implementing human rights measures. The presence of concepts like 'Transitional Justice' and 'Democratic Transition' further assumes that adherence to and incorporation of international human rights standards is inherently beneficial, advocating for universality in human rights norms that transcend domestic boundaries and legal systems.

These aspects also hint at a trust in the transformative power of formal mechanisms, including legal frameworks and peace agreements, as foundational tools for enacting change and preventing conflict. The emphasis on 'Legislative Reforms' and 'Peace Agreement Implementation' reveals an assumption that formal institutional changes are effective levers for societal improvement and stability. The focus on 'Gender Equality and Women's Rights' within categories suggests a universal standard for human rights that applies across different national and cultural contexts, asserting the universal applicability of human rights norms.

Synthesizing these points, three overarching assumptions for further analysis emerge: the primacy of state mechanisms in human rights protection (1), the universal applicability of human rights norms (2), and the effectiveness of formal agreements as instruments of change (3). These synthesized assumptions provide a structured foundation for deeper exploration and critique, particularly in how they shape policies, influence international relations, and impact human rights discourse and practice. The following analysis will consider these assumptions in detail.

**5.4.1 The Primacy of State Mechanisms in Human Rights Protection**

At the outset, the UPR was perceived as an innovative mechanism promising an inclusive forum for dialogue and cooperation (Redondo & McMahon, 2014; Smith, 2013). It was

designed not only to facilitate state participation but also to acknowledge and incorporate the crucial roles of non-state actors and other stakeholders in the human rights discourse (UNGA, 2006, p.2).

Yet, as observed by scholars, the dynamics of the UPR process have tended to reaffirm the state as the central figure in the human rights field (Abebe, 2009; Alston, 2006; Charlesworth & Larking, 2015; Gaer, 2007). States undertake self-reporting and engage in the peer review, positioning them simultaneously as both assessors and subjects of the review process. Such an arrangement inherently invites politicization, where power dynamics significantly skew the process. Bae (2018) underscores this point by illustrating how states with significant economic prowess and export capabilities can wield disproportionate influence. This is particularly evident with Western countries, including the US, which use the UPR platform to push for legal and democratic reforms and promote economic interdependence as mechanisms for peace, as seen in the recommendations to Sudan<sup>14</sup>.

Furthermore, the concept of "bargaining" as described by Lyons et al. (1977) and Abebe (2009), reveals a more positive facet of politicization. This negotiation enables countries, particularly African states, to leverage the UPR process to forward their interests and developmental issues. For example, Kuwait's recommendations to Sudan calling for "international support to improve the Sudanese economy" (OHCHR, 2022, p.15). Meanwhile, Bolivia uniquely addressed the impact of colonial legacies on Indigenous People, urging Colombia to tackle the enduring "effects of racism, racial discrimination, and colonialism on Indigenous Peoples" (OHCHR, 2023, p.22). This recommendation can be seen as a form of diplomatic bargaining, where Bolivia negotiates the inclusion of broader historical grievances in the human rights and peace discourses, thus leveraging the UPR to influence recognition and redress for the consequences of colonialism.

Further, I argue that the UPR state-centric model, while procedural in nature, extends its influence on the substantive aspects of the process, particularly in the content and formulation of the recommendations. The "solutions" framed within the UPR

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<sup>14</sup> See (Section 5.3.4)

recommendations to address the discussed problems representations—ranging from the lack of treaty ratification and international cooperation to legal and institutional inadequacies, as well as deficiencies in comprehensive human rights coverage and the ineffective implementation of peace agreements and resolutions—revealing an implicit presupposition. The recommendations—whether urging states to “ratify,” “consider ratifying,” “cooperate,” “reform,” “prohibit,” “establish,” or “strengthen” mechanisms, “protect,” “guarantee,” and “ensure the full implementation”—assume the state's primary responsibility and capability in safeguarding human rights.

This approach, as Freedman (2014) critiques, systematically overlooks the situations where states are not just “failing to protect” rights but are actively undermining them (pp.94-95). For instance, recommendations to states to “ensure the full implementation” of agreements assume the functionality and impartiality of state mechanisms that may not exist (*ibid.*). In contexts where the state apparatus is compromised, corrupt, or hostile to human rights norms, such recommendations serve more as bureaucratic formalities than effective interventions.

The assumption embedded in the recommendations is deeply rooted in a realist perspective of IR that upholds state sovereignty as the cornerstone of the international order (Waltz, 1979), positing states as the principal actors in the global arena, endowed with the autonomy and authority to enact human rights protections (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017). However, this narrow state-centric model, while reflective of the prevailing norms of IL and governance, requires a critical examination against the backdrop of the global political economy and the historical conditions that shape state behavior and capacities (Cox, 1981, 1985).

Foremost, it is widely recognized in scholarly research and practical observations that states frequently stand as primary violators and perpetrators of human rights abuses<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This does not mean that states are the sole human rights violators, non-states actors could also breach IHRL (McCorquodale, 2002).

(Howland & White, 2009; Huskey, 2014; Green & Ward, 2004). To presume their role as rational entities effectively safeguarding the rights of individuals and groups constitutes a significant mischaracterization. This presumption leads to a disconnect between the recommendations posited and the tangible human rights conditions experienced. This discrepancy not only undermines the authenticity of the UPR's evaluative process but also potentially obscures critical areas requiring urgent attention and remediation.

Secondly, the reliance on states as the primary defenders of human rights does not fully account for the complexities of globalization, where transnational forces, economic structures, and power relations extend beyond national borders, influencing state actions and policies in profound ways (Cox, 1991, pp.192–193). The global capitalist system, characterized by uneven development and inherent inequalities, creates conditions under which states operate, affecting their ability to effectively protect and promote human rights. States are not monolithic entities acting in a vacuum but are embedded in a web of IR and economic dependencies that can constrain their sovereignty and policy choices.

This focus on state-led solutions underscores the dependence on states to report accurately and faithfully implement recommendations. It assumes their willingness and ability to address human rights violations, yet overlooks the possibility that their participation might merely be perfunctory. States might engage in the UPR process as a "ritual"—attending meetings, submitting reports, and fulfilling procedural requirements without a genuine commitment or the necessary resolve to enact meaningful change (Charlesworth & Larking, 2015; Kälin, 2015).

My critique of the UPR's state-centric approach does not constitute an argument against the involvement of states per se, nor does it seek to diminish the importance of human rights or related institutions. Rather, it concerns the foundational structures that underpin these mechanisms. My concern stems from the observation that when the UPR provides a platform where states predominantly control the review process, the potential for genuine critique and accountability is significantly diminished. In such a setup, states—motivated by diplomatic interests and geopolitical alliances—tend to avoid delivering candid and critical evaluations of each other's human rights records. The process often results in a scenario where states exchange lenient assessments in a diplomatic dance that softens the critique of

serious human rights issues (Abebe, 2009). This dynamic dilutes the integrity of the UPR's outcomes, leading to recommendations that are diplomatically convenient rather than genuinely transformative.

At the core of my argument is the recognition that while states have a critical role in the implementation of human rights norms, the UPR's efficacy as a tool for conflict prevention and human rights monitoring would be enhanced by a more balanced approach. I advocate for stronger, genuine participation from experts, civil society, and other non-state actors, during all phases of the process. Their involvement would provide a necessary counterbalance in the review process, ensuring that states are held to account more rigorously and that the UPR's recommendations are robust, actionable, and aligned with the real human rights needs on the ground. I propose this inclusive approach as a necessary alternative but not as an oversimplification of the complexities inherent in international diplomacy, with an awareness of the practical difficulties that such a change entails.

#### ***5.4.2 The Universal Applicability of Human Rights Norms***

The assumption about the universal applicability of human rights norms remains a contentious issue within human rights literature, reflecting broader debates about global governance, cultural diversity, and the legacies of colonialism (Donnelly, 2007; Mutua, 2002; Benhabib, 2002). In the UPR, the mechanism itself is predicated on the universality of human rights norms (Milewicz & Goodin, 2018, p.7). This is explicit in its design aiming to review the human rights records of all UN member states under a common framework, emphasizing the indivisibility and interconnectedness of all human rights. The underlying assumption here is that these standards are universally relevant and applicable, capable of being seamlessly integrated into the legal and social fabrics of varied national contexts, as supported by Donnelly (2007, p.107). This assumption is not merely procedural but ideological, suggesting a global consensus on the nature of rights and the obligations of states to uphold them.

The notion of universality is profoundly merged into the discourse and recommendations of the UPR, evidenced by recurrent exhortations for SuR to harmonize their domestic legal frameworks "in line with" or to "align them with" international human rights standards. Examples of such recommendations include:

“137.264 **Align** national legislation with commitments to international human rights mechanisms...”

“137.91 Continue institutional and legislative reform efforts **in line with** its international obligations on human rights.

116.210 Strengthen existing procedures, **in line with** international standards...”

This emphasis on alignment is not only present in the recommendations themselves but also acknowledged by the SuR. For instance, for Colombia “the delegation reaffirmed the importance of aligning foreign policy with the State’s international commitments...” (OHCHR, 2023, para.18). The head of Colombia's delegation reiterated their dedication to international human rights obligations, highlighting it as a foundational element of the national government's policies (*Ibid.*, para.5).

Such statements and recommendations underscore the prevailing expectation that compliance with international agreements is intrinsically linked to the strengthening of human rights protections within national jurisdictions. This perspective fosters the envisioning of a globally unified order, characterized by common values and principles. It reflects an underlying belief in the universal applicability and relevance of international human rights norms, advocating for their incorporation into varied national legal and policy frameworks to achieve a harmonized and cohesive global community (Nowak, 2021).

This view inadvertently assumes a form of cultural imperialism, where international standards, often shaped by dominant global narratives, are expected to be assimilated into the local fabric of diverse societies (Azarmandi, 2023; Omach, 2021; Richmond, 2006). The result is a tension between universal human rights norms and respect for cultural sovereignty (Omach, 2021, p.941). This tension is critical as it may lead states to resist or reject human rights norms that seem incompatible with their cultural identity or national interests, which they might perceive as a threat to their social fabric or political autonomy. For instance, in the process of adopting outcomes, Sudan's decision to note (rather than accept) certain recommendations highlights this critical issue. The country cited contradictions with its traditions and culture as the reason for this stance:

“Concerning the noted 39 recommendations out of 283, as already indicated, the majority of the recommendations received have been accepted (around more than 80 per cent), and those reservations and comments were due to their inconsistency with the Sudanese constitutional



and legal system, and some run contrary to the traditions and culture of the country.” (HRC, 2022, para.1011)

This statement exemplifies the friction between global human rights standards and national cultural practices. However, the appeal to "cultural relativism" can sometimes serve as a protective veil for states to sidestep adherence to these universal norms, potentially exacerbating human rights violations and violence under the guise of cultural preservation (Brems, 2001; Carraro, 2017; Cowan et al., 2001; Freedman, 2014; Omach, 2021; Zechenter, 1997). A pertinent example is Sudan's stance on not ratifying CEDAW (e.g., 137.7; 137.9; 137.26), citing it as incongruent with its cultural norms. This scenario reveals not just the complexities of applying a universal one-size-fits-all model to human rights but also the ease with which such models can be manipulated.

This situation points to the necessity of rethinking how human rights are conceptualized and implemented. It suggests a movement beyond the binary of universalism versus cultural relativism. This reimagining invites us to consider human rights within a pluriversal framework, recognizing a diversity of existences and epistemologies that challenge the notion of a singular, universal standard. Inspired by the Indigenous concept of the Pluriverse, (Mignolo, 2018; Mezzanotti and Kvalvaag, 2022). This perspective rejects the idea that modernity's claim to universality is the only legitimate pathway, advocating instead for a paradigm that values and sustains various ways of living and understanding our world for the collective well-being of humanity and the planet (Rodriguez, 2021, p.84).

Embracing the cosmologies of the Zapatista movement, the idea of Pluriversality promotes the coexistence of multiple worlds (Escobar, 2018). This approach foregrounds a cosmocentric relationality that intertwines the destinies of people, nature, and land, offering a holistic and interconnected view of existence. Such a paradigm shift is reflective of decolonial responses to dominant, North-centric global narratives, as echoed in the works of Escobar (2018), and Mignolo and Walsh (2018). Adopting Pluriversal approaches to human rights signifies a move towards emancipatory human rights practices. It opens avenues for innovative and diverse forms of thinking, experiencing, and interacting with the world that challenge and extend beyond the confines of North-centric epistemologies (Mezzanotti & Kvalvaag, 2022, pp.476-477).

The reimagined perspective on human rights, grounded in Pluriversality, directly challenges the UPR underlying assumption regarding the universal applicability of human rights norms and liberal peacebuilding approaches. This assumption corresponds with the interests and values of dominant states or coalitions within the international system, subsequently framed as universal standards, despite originating from a limited set of cultural and ideological viewpoints. Incorporating a pluriversal understanding into the UPR process would necessitate a paradigm shift in how global norms are negotiated, interpreted, and applied. It would challenge the international community to engage in deeper reflections on the decolonial responses to human rights (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) and consider transformative practices that acknowledge the legitimacy and value of multiple ways of being.

The integration of a pluriversal understanding within the UPR process aligns with Cox's (1981) view of institutions as fluid entities where global norms are actively contested and reshaped (p.99). According to Cox (1981), institutions can be seen as perpetuating the norms of the hegemonic world order, but they can also be a space where alternative visions and practices are presented (Cox & Sinclair, 1996). In this vein, the UPR assumption often serves to entrench the hegemonic order of the international system, wherein the leading states or groups of states establish norms that align with their own values and interests. This hegemonic embedding of specific human rights norms under the guise of universality not only undermines the potential for a genuinely inclusive and representative global human rights dialogue but also sidelines the pluriversal approach. Furthermore, the embedded assumption of universality may affect the UPR's role in identifying conflicts. By overlooking the complexities of cultural and national particularities, the UPR risks providing recommendations that are either unfeasible or ineffective within certain contexts.

### ***5.4.3 The Effectiveness of Formal Agreements as Instruments of Change***

The belief in the primacy of state mechanisms for human rights protection and peacebuilding and the universal applicability of norms together set the stage for the assumption that formal agreements can effectively bring about change. Essentially, if states are seen as the main protectors of human rights and these rights are understood to be globally relevant, then it follows that state-endorsed formal agreements are viewed as powerful tools for change.

By formal agreements, I mean commitments that states have committed to under IL or within peace treaties, and they may include actions such as constitutional or legislative amendments, ratification of treaties, and establishment or reform of national institutions to comply with international standards. For instance, in the context of peacebuilding, a formal agreement might be a peace treaty that includes provisions for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants. In human rights, formal agreements could include the ratification of international conventions such as those on the elimination of discrimination against women, protection from torture, or the rights of children.

The assumption embedded within the discourse of the WG reports (OHCHR, 2023, 2022), is that these formal agreements inherently possess the capacity to engender substantial societal change. The recurrence of phrases praising the advantages of "legislative reforms," "ratification of international conventions," and the "implementation of agreements" operates within a discursive field that presupposes the efficacy of these formalized structures. This discursive practice, by its repetition and presentation as the logical pathway to change, renders the assumption invisible, embedded so deeply within the text that it ceases to be recognized as an assumption.

This assumption, however, does more than merely shape the discourse; it enacts a form of discursive "closure", limiting the scope of what can be thought and said about the processes of achieving peace and human rights. By positioning formal agreements as the cornerstone of progress, the discourse effaces alternative modes of understanding and engaging with these concepts. It situates the state and formal international structures at the center of the narrative, relegating to the margins the numerous local, informal, and grassroots efforts that also play crucial roles in the dynamics of change. The discursive strategy here is subtle yet profound: what is consistently articulated becomes perceived as the natural order of things, obscuring the constructedness and contingency of such assumptions.

In the examined documents, this assumption is articulated through the language of progress and achievement, where the ratification of conventions, enactment of reforms, and signing of peace treaties are signaled as pivotal milestones. This narrative is reinforced by the recurrent enumeration of these agreements as evidence of commitment and action on the part of the states involved. For example, the documentation of Colombia's efforts to reinforce

peace and human rights is presented not just as policy actions but as manifestations of a deeper conviction in the efficacy of formal agreements. In its WG report (OHCHR, 2023), the Colombian delegation articulates its commitment to peace, through the establishment of dedicated units and plans for the implementation of peace agreements (para.6), underscoring a preference for a formalized approach to peacebuilding.

Highlighted actions, such as the advancement of policies to dismantle criminal organizations, to ratify OPCAT, and initiatives to humanize prisons (para.7), further illustrate this belief in formal mechanisms as drivers of change. Furthermore, the National Report (Colombia, 2022) amplifies this account by showcasing Colombia's compliance with its previously stated commitments and its engagement in creating new legal and policy instruments (para.33). The establishment of the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Stabilization and Consolidation (para.32), alongside the introduction of legislative and regulatory decrees, is framed as evidence of progress, firmly anchoring the discourse within a framework that prioritizes formalized, state-led actions.

This perspective raises a central question: Can these agreements alone address the underlying causes of conflict and human rights abuses, or do they risk merely papering over deep-seated grievances and structural inequalities? This framing emphasizes formal mechanisms as the primary, if not sole, avenue for societal transformation, alternative understandings and methodologies. This strategy, by elevating certain forms of action and sidelining others, narrows the scope of conceivable solutions and approaches to peacebuilding and human rights enhancement.

In the same vein, highlighting ineffective implementation of peace agreements assumes that the frameworks and resolutions currently in place are adequate in design and merely falter in application (Colombia, 2022, p.2). This perspective foregrounds procedural rectitude over the substance of peacebuilding efforts and assumes that fidelity to the terms of agreements is synonymous with real progress towards peace. The untold implication here is that conflicts and their residues can be managed away through administrative diligence, an approach that may risk papering over the cracks rather than rebuilding the foundation.

Another aspect of this assumption is the implicit faith in legal frameworks as the bedrock for human rights protection, equating the enactment of laws with the realization of rights, for example:

“116.136 Promote public policies to address disparities in access to education for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women and girls”

“116.142 Continue its national policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty levels...”

“137.143 Modify legislation to ensure freedom of expression and press.”

This perspective is founded on a belief in the inherent goodness and neutrality of legal systems, assuming that the mere existence of laws is synonymous with justice, disregarding the discrepancies that often exist between law and practice and the many ways in which laws can be used to entrench power rather than to distribute it equitably (Barnett, 2014; Cohen, 1986; Maravall, 2001; Peerenboom, 2004). The rule of law, from this vantage point, does not necessarily ensure the protection of rights if the legal system itself is steeped in inequalities or if the enforcement mechanisms are biased. Peerenboom (2004) astutely notes that:

“The rule of law has existed side by side with great injustice, including slavery, racism, apartheid, patriarchy, colonialism, capitalist exploitation and callous disregard for the suffering of others” (p.20).

By focusing on formal agreements as a primary mechanism for achieving peace and human rights objectives, the UPR implicitly endorses the current international system and its institutions as adequate foundations for solving problems. The process aims to address specific issues through the drafting, signing, and implementation of agreements without necessarily questioning the underlying structures or power dynamics that contribute to these problems in the first place. By not challenging the status quo or the structural conditions that give rise to conflicts and human rights abuses, the UPR’s problem-solving approach may reinforce those conditions, overlooking the need for fundamental changes in social, economic, and political structures that critical theory emphasizes as essential for genuine transformation.

## 5.5 Question 3: How did the UPR “problems” representations come about?

Tracing the evolution of problem representations aims to reveal the conditions fostering the emergence of these representations, focusing on pivotal developments and decisions rather than solely on discursive practices (Bacchi, 2009, p.10). This endeavor seeks to understand why certain representations have gained dominance, sidelining alternative perspectives across time and geographical contexts (Bacchi, 2009, pp.10-11). The evolution of the UPR problem representations is not only a reflection of their direct historical antecedents but also the result of broader ideological, theoretical, and policy shifts that have occurred globally. These shifts often begin with specific catalyst events or developments that provoke new ways of thinking about and approaching human rights.

The problem representations identified are the Lack of Ratification and International Cooperation, Legal and Institutional Inadequacies, Comprehensive Human Rights Coverage Deficiency, and Ineffective Implementation of Peace Agreements and Resolutions. Upon initial examination of their “history”, these problem areas might appear as distinct and separate concerns within the UPR's scope. However, a deeper analysis reveals that they are interlinked and converging. This convergence became apparent to me through what initially felt like repetitive elements in the analysis. In the previous cycles, the “problems” in states’ human rights practices, embedded in the recommendations were quite similar to the problem representations identified in the latest cycles (Figure 10). The prescribed solutions were also about ratification (OHCHR, 2008, p.8, 2011, pp.12–13, 2013, p.22, 2016b, pp.12–14, 2018, pp.22–23) , cooperation (OHCHR, 2011, p.13, 2013, pp.22–23, 2016b, pp.14–15, 2018, p.16), aligning domestic laws and institutions with international standards (OHCHR, 2011, pp.23–24, 2016b, p.16, 2018, p.18), broadening the scope of human rights protection to specific groups (OHCHR, 2008, p.10, 2018, pp.15–16), and strengthening the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement (OHCHR, 2018, p.12).

At first, this repetition seemed to suggest redundancy, but a deeper reflection revealed a different truth: these perceived redundancies were not superfluous. Instead, they signified the interconnected nature of these problems, all converging towards a singular goal.

This insight shifted my understanding, highlighting that the analysis was uncovering a coherent strategy within the UPR's recommendations, rather than merely repeating itself.

These problem representations collectively serve a dual purpose: Firstly, they pinpoint precise domains within the international human rights system that are ripe for state intervention and adherence, thereby framing a normative benchmark for assessing state conduct. Secondly, and perhaps more fundamentally, these representations weave a discourse that underlines the prospects for enhancement and cooperative engagement not just between states but also involving international entities and civil society. This discourse is pivotal, as it strengthens faith in the current human rights apparatus, casting the UPR not merely as an evaluative tool, but as a dynamic catalyst for reform, collaboration and progress (Redondo & McMahon, 2014; Lane, 2022).

But the question remains: when did ratification deficits, cooperation lapses, universal coverage deficiencies and implementation failures become a “problem”? Tracing the genealogy of these problem representations reveals that their origins are intricately tied to the inception of the mechanism itself and the purposes behind it. The establishment of the UPR is not merely a natural chronological development within the international human rights regime. Instead, it represents a strategic maneuver, a response to a crisis of faith in a system struggling with politicization and inefficacy (Boyle, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Ghanea, 2006; Landolt, 2013). This move, while cloaked in the rhetoric of collaboration and dialogue, serves to perpetuate the existing global order under the guise of “innovation”.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed a growing disappointment with the international human rights infrastructure. Criticisms mounted over selective engagements, politicization, double standards, and the ineffectual nature of numerous international mechanisms designed to safeguard human rights (Boyle, 2009; Bernaz, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Ghanea, 2006; Landolt, 2013; Lauren, 2007; Gaer, 2007). The very credibility of the human rights system was called into question, threatening the foundational belief in its capacity to effectuate global justice (Secretary-General, 2005, p. 45).

In this context, the establishment of the UPR can be seen as a pivotal strategy aimed at recuperating the legitimacy of the human rights regime. Thus, the UPR was promoted with optimism as the beginning of a new era of dialogue, cooperation, and advancement of human rights.<sup>16</sup> This discourse was not only upon its inception, but it persisted. During the adoption of the UPR outcomes at the HRC 50<sup>th</sup> plenary session, the president of the Council highlighted that:

“At the time of the first session of the Council in June 2006, the universal periodic review had not yet existed, except for a paragraph in General Assembly resolution 60/251. Since then, the universal periodic review has become the most fundamental tool created by the international community through the Council and all Member States see this mechanism providing the roadmap to follow to achieve development with a human rights perspective at the national level.” (OHCHR, 2022, para.1015)

By instituting a process that ostensibly prioritizes universal participation, peer review, and constructive dialogue, the UPR seeks to craft an image of a more inclusive, less confrontational approach to addressing human rights issues globally. However, this strategic move, while innovative, does not escape the gravitational pull of existing power dynamics and geopolitical interests. The problem representations that have come to dominate the discourse within the UPR framework are indicative of a broader attempt to reaffirm faith in the system. Yet, they do so by circumscribing the discourse to parameters that reinforce the *status quo*. These problematizations serve to redirect focus towards state compliance and engagement, subtly steering the conversation away from more radical, transformative changes that might challenge the prevailing global order.

The recommendation for states to ratify treaties and improve cooperation with international mechanisms, for instance, reinforces a perspective that posits the system itself as fundamentally sound, suggesting that the primary issue lies in state-level compliance rather than in the architecture of the international human rights system itself. Conversely, Mégret & Alston (2020) argue that the implementation challenges and the limited enforceability of

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<sup>16</sup> See Section 2.3.1



human rights norms are intrinsic to the operations of charter bodies. They suggest that these difficulties are exacerbated by the politically charged nature of the field, which inherently stymies the effectiveness of their outcomes (p.13)

Thus, the genealogy of these problem representations within the UPR recommendations reveals a complex interplay of crisis response, strategic repositioning, and an underlying commitment to preserving the global hegemony of established powers. This exploration, while not explicitly invoking Cox, resonates with his insights on the institutionalization process as a mechanism for stabilizing certain global arrangements (Cox, 1981, p. 99, 1983, p. 137). This approach not only diverts the process from its initial mandate to monitor human rights but also hinders its ability to identify emerging conflicts.

## **5.6 Question 4: What was left unproblematic in the UPR recommendations?**

The policy-making process inherently constructs problems and prescribes solutions, which, by their very nature, exclude certain perspectives and considerations, leading to significant silences and omissions (Bacchi, 2009, p.13). Identifying what is left unproblematic or the silences within the UPR recommendations, as per Bacchi's fourth WPR question, involves examining what the UPR does not address in its process and outcomes. These gaps, provide a window into understanding where the UPR might fall short in tackling the complexities of human rights challenges or in identifying nascent conflicts. This analysis does not merely seek to catalog these omissions but aims to critically examine the implications of what is silenced. The subsequent sections are presented under the key "silences": Structural Inequalities and Local Realities (1); External Actors and Global dynamics (2); Transparency in Implementing Recommendations (3); Civil Society's Constrained Voices (4)

### ***5.6.1 Structural Inequalities and Local Realities***

The UPR approach to socioeconomic rights, while seemingly comprehensive, tends to overlook the multifaceted nature of socioeconomic injustices and the complexities involved in their redress. Using terms like "productive and decent employment" and "sustainable economic and social development", recommendations exhibit a trend towards the

development discourse, emphasizing "efforts," "measures," and "systems" to advance socioeconomic rights. For example, recommendations like "intensify efforts to provide productive and decent employment" or "redouble efforts to improve economic conditions" reflect an action-oriented language but do not specify the nature of these efforts or the mechanisms through which they should be implemented (OHCHR, 2023, pp.19-20; OHCHR, 2022, p.20).

There is also a recurring broad theme of combatting poverty through comprehensive programs urging to "strengthen the strategy to combat multidimensional poverty" and to "eradicate poverty" (OHCHR, 2022, pp.20-21). Apart from lacking depth (Smith, 2013, p.13), this language presents poverty as a condition to be managed or mitigated through programmatic interventions, without necessarily challenging the structural factors that lead to poverty. Moyn (2018) argues that while human rights have set minimum standards for living conditions (a floor for sufficiency), they have largely failed to challenge the ceilings of wealth accumulation and the broader economic systems that perpetuate inequality (pp.217-218). Connecting these insights to the language of combating poverty through broad programmatic interventions, these strategies manage poverty on a superficial level without challenging the underlying economic and social structures that generate and sustain it, potentially creating conditions ripe for conflict.

Moreover, the language used in these recommendations often abstracts the issues from their political and economic context. Phrases like "promote sustainable economic and social development" and "maintain peace and stability" (OHCHR, 2022, p.20), present a depoliticized view of development, disregarding the ways in which peace and stability are deeply political issues intertwined with governance, representation, and the distribution of resources. Consequently, the discourse around socio-economic rights within the UPR recommendations often mirrors the broader discourse of development as defined by the SDGs. This alignment implicitly subscribes to a model that privileges economic growth and market-based solutions as the primary means for achieving socioeconomic equity. Integrating development in human rights and peace, while supported by some (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020), reflects the principles of international liberalism, suggesting that economic growth, and robust institutions and legal frameworks, supported by global interdependence, can protect human rights and mitigate conflicts (Fettweis, 2017; Richmond, 2006; Richmond & Visoka,

2021; Torrent, 2022; Yin, 2018). Such a stance inadvertently marginalizes alternative understandings of development and well-being that might be more congruent with local contexts and Indigenous knowledge systems. The emphasis on state-led initiatives and international cooperation further reinforces a hierarchical model of development, where solutions are top-down and externally defined rather than emerging from the lived experiences of those most affected by socioeconomic disparities.

A deeper analysis reveals that the recommendations frequently fail to address the root causes of socioeconomic inequalities and tend to concentrate on the symptoms rather than the roots, merely grazing the surface of deeper issues. However, an effective preventive approach must navigate and address both symptoms and causes (Sriram et al., 2018, p. 6). For instance, recommending continuing “to improve living standards”, primarily focuses on mitigating immediate economic hardships without addressing the systemic economic structures and policies that perpetuate inequality. Similarly, initiatives to “increase educational enrollment” and “improve health sector access” offer solutions to immediate concerns (OHCHR, 2022, p.22). These recommendations often overlook the underlying systemic issues such as unequal resource distribution, historical injustices, and the lingering effects of colonial legacies that fundamentally contribute to these disparities. This oversight mirrors concerns about neglecting issues of colonialism in the UN peace approach (Azarmandi, 2023). If the UPR is to fulfill a role in conflict prevention, overlooking the enduring impact of colonialism on current power structures will reinforce the system’s shortcomings and its efforts in identifying and mitigating conflict will be superficial.

In essence, Historical injustices, systemic racism, colonial legacies, and the unequal distribution of power and resources remain unexamined in the UPR recommendations. By not problematizing these underlying issues, the recommendations risk perpetuating a simplified view of socioeconomic rights that can be resolved through policy adjustments alone. This approach neglects the structural transformations necessary to dismantle the systems of oppression. The omission of the roles of external actors in perpetuating these structures further complicates the potential for addressing the roots of these socioeconomic injustices.

### **5.6.2 External Actors and Global Dynamics**

The examined discourse frequently adopting a developmentalist perspective, presumes equality in the international system and suggests that all states can progress if they adopt the recommended measures. By not explicitly addressing the role of international actors, there is silence about how the policies and actions of more powerful states and global institutions can affect human rights situations. This absence implies that these actors are neutral entities that do not significantly impact the dynamics of inequality and rights realization (McCorquodale, 2002). This perspective fails to question how international actors might contribute to perpetuating inequalities or how their involvement could either support or undermine the efforts of states to achieve equitable socioeconomic development. By not problematizing these aspects, the discourse does not fully address the systemic changes required to realize human rights.

Notably, the role of external actors in influencing Colombia's narcotics policies, as well as the involvement of large extraction corporations in shaping its economic landscape, are largely left unexamined. For instance, the activities of extraction corporations, which significantly impact the social and environmental fabric of the country, are seldom problematized, obscuring the interplay between corporate interests, state sovereignty, and the rights of local communities, particularly Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. The omission of these elements suggests a discourse that assumes Colombia operates in a vacuum where domestic policy can be reformed independently of international influence and economic pressures (Belmadi & Kadri, 2024; Cairo et al., 2024; Ríos, 2024; Rojas & Meltzer, 2005).

Turning to Sudan, the UPR discourse largely focuses on recommendations for improving the domestic human rights situation without a profound engagement with the country's history of foreign interests in its resources, the lasting impacts of colonialism, and the support of various regimes by external actors (Barltrop, 2011; Idris, 2005; Musa, 2018; Sriram et al., 2018). This approach effectively depoliticizes the socioeconomic rights issues by not acknowledging the historical and ongoing geopolitical gamesmanship that has profound implications for human rights within the country.

By not critically examining the influence of external actors, there is a failure to recognize how these factors contribute to internal conflict. This perspective overlooks the significant impact of international economic interests, foreign policy, and the legacies of historical power imbalances on the domestic capacity to realize human rights.

### ***5.6.3 Transparency in Implementing Recommendations***

In examining the implementation of UPR recommendations, a crucial aspect to scrutinize is the reliability of self-reporting by states. The process rests on the assumption that states will not only implement the agreed-upon recommendations but also accurately report on their progress (Charlesworth & Larking, 2015; Kälin, 2015). This approach assumes a level of transparency and accountability that may not align with the complex realities within member states. The practice of self-reporting without independent verification or the availability of comprehensive data can create a veneer of compliance, while the actual situation may remain unchanged or may have even deteriorated.

This discrepancy highlights a notable silence in the UPR process—the gap between reported progress and on-the-ground realities. While submissions of mid-term reviews by states suggest an initial engagement with the UPR mechanism, discontinuing these reviews after the first cycle casts doubts on the sustained commitment to fulfilling the recommendations. Moreover, even the mid-term reports from the initial cycle are marred by a lack of transparency and accuracy, failing to provide trustworthy information and data on the implementation status. For instance, in Sudan’s 1<sup>st</sup> cycle mid-term report<sup>17</sup> (Sudan, 2013), recommendations to “continue to make concerted efforts to find a permanent and peaceful solution to the conflict in Darfur” (p.9), and to “end all indiscriminate attacks against civilians and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, especially in Darfur” (p.10) are reported implemented. These claims of full implementation are made even though the country remains embroiled in conflict, challenging the veracity of these reports and

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<sup>17</sup> Even though Colombia also submitted a mid-term report after the first cycle, examples are not provided because the report was submitted in Spanish only.

highlighting a gap between the UPR's recorded achievements and the persisting realities within the country.

This reliance on state-generated reports, without adequate mechanisms for cross-verification or engagement with third-party assessments, particularly those from civil society organizations (CSOs), represents a significant gap. These actors often point to a lack of implementation, which contradicts the official accounts provided by the state (OHCHR, 2009, 2012, 2020). For example, an NGO noted that "Sudan had failed to implement most of the recommendations that it had accepted during its first universal periodic review". The Sudanese delegation dismissed these allegations as inaccurate (OHCHR, 2012, p.73). Further exacerbating the issue, similar concerns have been echoed. NGOs have urged the government to "fulfil the commitments made during the UPR" (OHCHR, 2022a, p.134), and highlighted Sudan's lack of progress in implementing the majority of its previously accepted recommendations, pointing out ongoing violations against civilians (OHCHR, 2020c, p.511). Similarly for Colombia, an NGO "hoped the Government's acceptance of recommendations would result in serious measures" and added that despite accepting recommendations "indigenous communities continued to be threatened, citing a number of threats of social cleansing" (OHCHR, 2009, p.193)

To bridge this gap, CSOs have consistently advocated for the creation of robust mechanisms that would "ensure the effective follow-up on UPR recommendations", including proposals for "a transparent, tripartite framework involving civil society to monitor and report" on progress post-UPR (OHCHR, 2009, p.193; OHCHR, 2020, pp.78-79). These suggestions were met with silence. This silence brings to the forefront critical questions. Originally mandated to monitor human rights records, the UPR's role at domestic levels appears insufficient when compared to its intended goals. Particularly concerning is the persistent disregard for suggestions to follow up implementation transparently and in collaboration with CSOs. This neglect raises fundamental doubts about the UPR's capability to fulfill the expectations placed upon it, notably its role in conflict prevention.

#### **5.6.4 Civil Society's Constrained Voices**

In the examined reports there is a conspicuous silence regarding the true extent and depth of participation by civil society and other stakeholders. Reports often assert that they were formulated in consultation with these groups, “the content of the report was discussed during a meeting of the Peace Advisory Commission in which representatives of the Ombudsman’s Office, academia, trade unions and civil society organizations working to safeguard human rights took part” (Colombia, 2023, para.7). Similarly for Sudan, “Sudan engaged in a high-level consultative process involving all relevant stakeholders in the executive, the legislature and the judiciary as well as the Office of the Public Prosecution, competent agencies, civil society organizations, the national human rights institution and development partners”(OHCHR, 2022c, para.8). Yet, an NGO reported that “civil society had not been consulted for the preparation of the national report” (OHCHR, 2022b, p.144)

There is a notable lack of transparency about these consultations. The voices and views of stakeholders, and the data supporting them, are frequently marginalized, a fact that stands in stark contrast to the discourse of inclusive and comprehensive stakeholder engagement (Sweeney & Saito, 2009). The participation of stakeholders, as set forth in the foundational resolution of the UPR, appears constricted (UNGA, 2006, p.2). Submissions by non-governmental entities are condensed into summaries by the OHCHR, adhering to a template with strict word limits. Assuming the OHCHR’s integrity is not questioned (Abebe, 2009, p.27), the brevity required by the format means that only a fraction of the stakeholders’ input is reflected. The result is a distilled version of concerns and recommendations.

Moreover, stakeholder involvement is further restricted during the HRC plenary sessions to adopt the outcomes of the UPR, where they may present their views and advocate for their integration into the review and implementation process. This platform, while valuable, offers but a narrow opportunity for engagement, marked by limitations on speaking time and inclusion in the official report. In the HRC reports a recurrent note is that “The statements of the stakeholders that were unable to deliver them owing to time constraints are posted, if available, on the extranet” (OHCHR, 2022, pp.72, 116, and 110). Consequently, discrepancies in state self-reporting and vital issues surrounding the implementation of

recommendations may only be fleetingly highlighted and lack the necessary visibility to prompt action.

This paradox of participation within the UPR process creates a facade of inclusivity, where the role of civil society and other stakeholders is recognized but substantively limited. These observations challenge Lane's (2022) argument that the UPR is a catalyst for domestic mobilization through collaboration with CSOs. Not adequately addressing this dissonance, the process risks upholding an appearance of consensus and compliance that may not hold up to scrutiny. The restricted space for genuine engagement and the underrepresentation of stakeholder views not only question the comprehensiveness of the review but also impede the critical examination of state actions and the effective monitoring of human rights obligations.

The discussed political and ideological motivations and expectations surrounding the inception of the mechanism, along with its state-centric model, present a barrier to its inclusivity and potential for substantial improvement of human rights conditions on the ground, let alone its ability to prevent conflicts and address their root causes. This challenge is not unique to the UPR; it reflects a broader crisis facing multilateral institutions (Brenner, 1995; Carayannis & Weiss, 2021; Cox, 1992, 1997; Espinosa, 2023; Guilbaud et al., 2023).

As mentioned earlier, my argument is not to revoke II, diminish the role of state actors, human rights norms, and relevant institutions, and start anew. Rather, it's a call for change. This entails genuinely acknowledging the current failures, dismantling existing structures of power and exploitation, and addressing the fundamental root causes of injustices and grievances, instead of merely skimming the surface with an illusion of inclusivity and cooperation.



## 6 Final Considerations: Early Warning or Missed Signals?

The central aim of this research is to contribute to the ongoing discourse on integrating human rights within peacebuilding frameworks to prevent conflicts, particularly through the UPR. This was achieved by interrogating the assertions that:

“UPR recommendations covering human rights holistically have preventive potential and can be valuable for peacebuilding analysis, strategy and programming at the country level: identifying and assessing root causes and drivers of conflict and violence” (OHCHR, 2020a, pp.8-9).

Consequently, the study posed the following research question: *how are human rights issues represented within the UPR recommendations and what implications do these representations have for identifying and preventing emerging internal conflicts?*

The analysis addressing this question was informed by a dual theoretical lens. Cox’s (1981) theory provided a macro lens to examine the institutional and structural power within which the UPR operates, while the poststructuralist lens offered insights into the micro-level discursive impacts of its recommendations. Concurrently, Bacchi’s (2009) WPR approach was employed to scrutinize the UPR recommendations for Sudan and Colombia.

The analysis unfolded in two phases: The initial phase involved the application of the first WPR question to uncover how “problems” were represented and their implications. The subsequent phase entailed a critical examination of the recommendations by deploying the second, third, and fourth WPR questions. This phase was pivotal in elucidating, contextualizing, and deconstructing the problem representations, to assess their impact on the UPR’s preventive potential. In the identification phase, the analysis discerned that the recommendations constructed four "problems":

- Lack of Ratification and International Cooperation
- Legal and Institutional Inadequacies
- Comprehensive Human Rights Coverage Deficiency
- Ineffective Implementation of Peace Agreements and Resolutions

While these recommendations supposedly propose “solutions”, they subtly impose hegemonic norms, hinting at an underlying agenda to reinforce and maintain a Western-

centric global order. The focus on treaty ratification and international cooperation extends beyond merely bolstering human rights infrastructures; it serves to legitimize and fortify UN human rights mechanisms, which have faced longstanding critiques. The advocacy for legal and institutional reform, presumed to be neutral and progressively linear, fails to confront the foundational causes of conflicts and injustices, thus maintaining the prevailing conditions. This superficial treatment risks perpetuating cycles of injustice and conflict by neglecting the deep-seated historical structures and power dynamics at play (Sriram et al., 2018). Additionally, the expansion of human rights coverage often shapes the identity of subjects in ways that may curtail their autonomy (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 50), depicting groups such as Indigenous Peoples primarily as victims rather than as empowered stakeholders. Further, the analysis highlighted how the UPR's strategies concerning peace agreements and the promotion of democratization underscore the imposition of Western liberal democratic models that may not be apt across varied cultural and historical contexts (Burchill, 2005; Ginty, 2006; Richmond, 2006; Tschirgi, 2004; Turan, 2016). These models tend to neglect local knowledge and colonial legacies, which can intensify tensions and escalate conflicts (Azarmandi, 2023; Omach, 2021).

The second phase of the analysis elucidated that the UPR is structured around embedded assumptions and marked by significant omissions that shape its operational framework. The genesis of the UPR was a response to the perceived politicization and ineffectiveness of its predecessors (K. Boyle, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Ghanea, 2006; Landolt, 2013; Lauren, 2007), aimed at restoring credibility to the UN's integrity. Rather than being a mere evolutionary progression in the international human rights field, the establishment of the UPR was a strategic move—a reaction to a crisis of confidence in the system.

This initiative, while draped in the language of cooperation and dialogue (Carraro, 2019; Davies, 2010), inherently serves to sustain the prevailing global order (Cox, 1981). At the core of this understanding is the acknowledgement of a state-centric model at the heart of the UPR process, which fundamentally depends on states, as rational architects of change, to evaluate and report on their human rights conditions. This reliance presumes a willingness and honesty on the part of states to confront human rights abuses (Howland & White, 2009; Huskey, 2014; Green & Ward, 2004).

Among the notable omissions in the UPR's recommendations is the absence of any mention of external actors and their potential roles in human rights violations and exacerbation of conflicts (Belmadi & Kadri, 2024; Hassan Alredaisy, 2024; Sriram et al., 2018). In addition, the contributions from NGOs and civil society are frequently sidelined, even though their involvement is highlighted in the UPR's founding resolutions, reports, and scholarly literature (Abebe, 2009; Butcher & Hallward, 2017; Moss, 2010; Nie, 2023; Sweeney & Saito, 2009). The analysis exposed an illusion of inclusivity, where the participation of civil society and other stakeholders is acknowledged but substantially restricted and diluted.

Finally, the lack of a potent enforcement mechanism further undermines the UPR's effectiveness, relegating the review process to a perfunctory "ritual" that states might participate in without any real commitment to substantive change (Charlesworth & Larking, 2015; Kälin, 2015). Although this research was intended to evaluate the UPR's preventive potential to identify and prevent conflict, the findings raise serious doubts about its capacity to fulfill its primary mandate of human rights monitoring. The absence of empirical research on the impact of these recommendations on domestic levels, combined with repeated NGO reports on the lack of implementation and their marginalized role in the follow-up process (OHCHR, 2009, 2012, 2020), provokes grave concerns about the efficacy and sincerity of the mechanism.

These findings affirm that the UPR, initially established as a strategic response to a system in crisis, is once again positioned as a solution within attempts to integrate human rights into peacebuilding and address the UN's inherent fragmentation problems. Thus, the solutions proposed in the recommendations obscure the real underlying objective: to reinforce a hegemonic framework that absorbs and blocks any alternative approaches ((Cox, 1981, 1983; Puchala, 2005). Therefore, the politicized recommendations of the UPR, with their problem-solving approach that merely skims the surface to maintain the status quo, cannot function as an early warning mechanism. Rather than missing signals, they actively construct an image that is distorted from reality, perpetuating existing power imbalances rather than challenging them and fostering meaningful change.

The current global system, with the UN at its helm, often reinforces existing power imbalances (Puchala, 2005). The world is punctuated by a series of crises that expose the limitations and contradictions inherent in this system; the lingering impacts of the 2008 economic crisis, a global pandemic, climate change, conflicts, genocide, extreme poverty, and new concerns arising from technological advancements. These challenges are compounded by the ineffectiveness of multilateral solutions and institutions, particularly the failure of the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions in addressing these global issues. (Brenner, 1995; Carayannis & Weiss, 2021; Cox, 1992, 1997). This aligns with Gramsci's (1971) observation that "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (p.276).

The existing order suffers from problems that are unlikely to be solved within the restrictions of the old framework. Meanwhile, a new order does not appear to be emerging. Informed by critical poststructuralist perspectives, this thesis answered the research question, but it ignites further inquiries. Questions about inclusivity in the UPR process, its responsiveness to the fast-evolving global issues like digital rights and climate justice, and its capacity to adapt to the changing dynamics of international relations—demand further exploration. Thus, this project is a beginning—an invitation to continue exploring, questioning, and expanding the discourse around human rights governance. By continuously challenging and rethinking the established norms, we can contribute to the slow but essential evolution of a system more capable of managing the complexities of the global human landscape.

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# 8 Annexes

## 8.1 Recommendations Received by Colombia during its 4th UPR Cycle

Recommendation	"Solutions"
116.1 Continue to make progress towards the early ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Chile);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.2 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Austria) (Denmark) (Estonia) (Liechtenstein) (Luxembourg) (Madagascar);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.3 Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Peru) (Senegal);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.4 Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (France);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.5 Intensify efforts to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Ghana);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.6 Facilitate the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Latvia);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties

116.7 Ratify the Amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the crime of aggression (Liechtenstein);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.8 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Liechtenstein);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.9 Consider ratifying the Convention against Discrimination in Education (Mauritius) (Senegal);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.10 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Cyprus) (Mexico) (Namibia) (Niger);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.11 Further strengthen the legislative and policy framework for human rights protection, including by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Montenegro);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.12 Finalize the ratification process of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Niger);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.13 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the instruments and provisions for the acceptance of competence over individual communications of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee against Torture (Paraguay);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties



116.14 Continue its efforts to ratify international human rights treaties (Serbia);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.15 Consider ratifying the international human rights treaties that it has not yet ratified (South Africa);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.16 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Ukraine);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.17 Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Uruguay);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.18 Ratify the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (Brazil) (Namibia);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.19 Cooperate fully with United Nations special procedure mandate holders (Latvia);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.20 Extend a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders and facilitate their access to the country (Sierra Leone);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.21 Establish mechanisms for the active involvement of civil society, including Colombia's youth, in the design and evaluation of policies related to the protection of human rights defenders (Canada);	Institutional & Legal Reforms

116.22 Continue adopting policies, actions and legal instruments to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights (Cuba);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.23 Continue strengthening the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Women’s Equity by providing it with the necessary political and technical support (Georgia);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.24 Proceed with the reform of the National Police and enhance training on human rights for the members of the public security forces (Italy);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.25 Step up efforts to advance the implementation of the final peace agreement by taking all stakeholders on board (Nepal);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.26 Redouble efforts and guarantee the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the final peace agreement, especially the gender measures and the provisions of its Ethnic Chapter (Peru);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.27 Ensure sufficient resources for implementing the peace agreement, and ensure reform of the police in an open and transparent way (New Zealand);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.28 Continue moving towards the implementation of the final peace agreement and the recommendations of the 2022 commission for the clarification of truth (Plurinational State of Bolivia);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.29 Commit the necessary legal, institutional and financial resources to fulfil the 2016 peace agreement by the intended implementation deadline (Australia);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation

116.30 Continue the implementation of the final peace agreement and the recommendations of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (Italy);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.31 Continue to implement the final peace agreement, with a focus on the human rights dimensions and the integration of the demobilized (Sudan);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.32 Fully implement the 2016 peace accord with FARC by addressing the underlying causes of violence and conflict as well as ensuring that the rights of victims are guaranteed (Sweden);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.33 Accelerate implementation of the 2016 peace agreement, specifically provisions related to ethnicity, actions supporting gender and women’s rights and reparations (Canada);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.34 Guarantee the 2016 peace agreement and address delays in its implementation, particularly the Ethnic Chapter and gender provisions, including by ensuring adequate funding (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.35 Continue efforts to implement the provisions of all signed peace agreements (Sierra Leone);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.36 Reform the National Police through a transparent and participatory process with measures to demilitarize the institution, considering the possibility that the National Police be integrated within the Ministry of the Interior (Spain);	Institutional & Legal Reforms

<p>116.37 Consider a reform of the national model of protection for human rights defenders, developed in collaboration with defenders and civil society, in order to strengthen prevention, collective protection and differentiated means of support for defenders, depending on their specific needs (Kingdom of the Netherlands);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.38 Support the autonomous and independent work of the comprehensive truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition system (Sierra Leone);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.39 Ensure effective victim-centred reparations and guarantees of non- repetition, as part of the implementation of chapter 5 of the peace agreement, (Switzerland);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.40 Continue to pursue capacity-building and technical cooperation opportunities to enhance, in particular, its reparations framework (Trinidad and Tobago);</p>	<p>Capacity-building and Technical Cooperation</p>
<p>116.41 Implement the programmes and policies of the National Development Plan with the participation of vulnerable groups, guaranteeing adequate financial resources (Brazil);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.42 Continue to provide sufficient human and financial resources for the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (Honduras);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.43 Finalize a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325/2000 (Iceland);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>

<p>116.44 Implement the Safe Schools Declaration in coordination with local authorities and discontinue the organization of civilian-military activities with children (Liechtenstein);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.45 Consolidate the capacities of its national system of human rights and international humanitarian Law as a national mechanism for the implementation, reporting and follow-up of human rights recommendations, considering the possibility of receiving cooperation for this purpose (Paraguay);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.46 Strengthen support for the role of the national reporting and follow- up mechanism on the implementation of recommendations issued under the universal periodic review (Egypt);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.47 Promote the social inclusion of all segments of the population (Cameroon);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.48 Develop a comprehensive national strategy to combat stereotypical patriarchal and sexist attitudes about gender roles and responsibilities and allocate resources for its implementation (Costa Rica);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.49 Continue efforts to effectively implement and expand existing measures aimed at protecting women and LGBTIQ+ persons from discrimination and violence in close cooperation with civil society (Czechia);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.50 Increase measures to prevent and combat xenophobic discourse and discrimination against migrants, and continue efforts to promote their socioeconomic inclusion (Ecuador);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>

116.51 Continue to protect and promote the human rights of women, children and persons with disabilities (Egypt);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.52 Take further measures to reduce the gender inequalities, including by conducting inclusive awareness-raising campaigns on the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality (Estonia);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.53 Intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially against women, members of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities (Republic of Korea);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.54 Advance measures to eliminate discrimination against women (Sri Lanka);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.55 Take effective measures to prevent and combat hate speech, incitement to racial discrimination and manifestations of racism (Togo);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.56 Continue its efforts in achieving gender equality and equity by strengthening the legal and institutional framework ensuring women's increased participation and awareness-raising strategies (Azerbaijan);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.57 Abolish compulsory military service (Costa Rica);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.58 Take further measures to ensure full protection of ex-combatants and human rights defenders (Iceland);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.59 Strengthen the protection of human rights defenders, ex-combatants and other vulnerable groups,	Institutional & Legal Reforms

and ensure impartial, rigorous and effective investigation of cases of violence, intimidation and reprisals (Ireland);	
116.60 Take further measures to prevent acts of violence, threats, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and ensure that all allegations of such acts are investigated (Luxembourg);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.61 Continue its efforts to prevent violence by non-State armed groups and criminal organizations (Poland);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.62 Take a set of effective measures to improve the situation in the penitentiary system concerning overcrowding in the prisons and conditions of detention of the prisoners (Russian Federation);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.63 Ensure the full implementation of the Framework Plan for Implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, including in the areas of transitional justice, reintegration of former combatants and reparation of victims (Indonesia);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.64 Design and implement a public policy that guarantees the statistical visibility of the Afro-Colombian population, particularly in the education, judiciary and public service sectors (Mexico);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.65 Strengthen the judicial system, increasing its provision of specialized financial, technical and human resources, particularly in rural areas (Dominican Republic);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.66 Intensify efforts to guarantee access to justice for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities,	Institutional & Legal Reforms

and continue efforts to recognize, respect and strengthen the Indigenous justice system (Dominican Republic);	
116.67 Continue to support the independence of the truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition commission, ensuring that the framework remains unobstructed in its mission to promote justice and healing (Gambia);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.68 Take effective measures to fight impunity for violations of human rights in the ordinary justice system, inter alia by increasing the presence and capacity of judicial police officers, prosecutors and judges in remote areas and further strengthening specialized units to dismantle organized armed and criminal groups and their support networks (Germany);	Access to Justice and Impunity Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.69 Support the autonomous and independent work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and create the necessary conditions to ensure that the system of restorative sanctions to be imposed contributes to restoring the rights of victims (Kingdom of the Netherlands);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.70 Further expand access to justice and reparations for victims of the armed conflict, particularly women and Indigenous Peoples (Philippines);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.71 Strengthen the judicial system, including through additional financial, technical and specialized human resources, particularly in rural areas, and adopt policies for improving access to justice for all (Romania);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.72 Investigate thoroughly the facts where law enforcement officers exceeded their powers and bring perpetrators to justice (Russian Federation);	Access to Justice and Impunity



116.73 Strengthen its judicial system through financial, technical and specialized human resources, ensuring access to justice to all (Serbia);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.74 Take urgent steps to ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of attacks and threats against human rights defenders and social leaders and their communities, and bring to justice all those responsible (Switzerland);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.75 Redouble efforts to ensure access to justice for Indigenous Peoples and communities of African descent, and continue its efforts to recognize, respect and strengthen the Indigenous justice system (Togo);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.76 Redouble efforts to strengthen the institutional framework that guarantees the right to truth, reparation and non-repetition so that those responsible for human rights violations are duly investigated and punished, with a view to eradicating impunity in these cases (Argentina);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.77 Continue efforts to achieve justice for victims of the conflict through the Special Jurisdiction for Peace's investigation into past crimes (Australia);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.78 Take urgent measures to curb cases of killings of human rights defenders and prevent impunity (Chile);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.79 Consider conducting an objective investigation into the killings of human rights defenders and social activists and all allegations on the possible use of force in the context of social protests (Lithuania);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.80 Improve protection of human rights defenders and social leaders by ensuring that judicial authorities conduct a prompt and impartial investigation into	Access to Justice and Impunity

violations against human rights defenders and advance investigations of these crimes (Finland);	
116.81 Ensure that perpetrators of threats and attacks against human rights defenders are brought to justice (Austria);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.82 Eliminate obstacles and improve impartiality in the procedure for exercising the right to conscientious objection to military service, especially for ethical and philosophical reasons (Costa Rica);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.83 Take concrete steps to prevent killings of and attacks of any kind on human rights defenders, including land and environmental defenders, and thoroughly investigate all such crimes (Czechia);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.84 Ensure and fully respect freedom of the press and media independence, including protection of journalists against all forms of violence and discrimination (Czechia);	Civil and Political Rights
116.85 Guarantee fully the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and adopt measures to prevent unlawful use of force by the police (Czechia);	Civil and Political Rights
116.86 Enhance protection mechanisms for human rights defenders and environmental defenders by advancing the necessary budget allocation to carry out the reform process of the national protection unit, while ensuring the participation of civil society (Denmark);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.87 Decriminalize defamation and include it in the Civil Code in line with international standards (Estonia);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties

<p>116.88 Implement practical measures ensuring the safety of journalists and other media workers, both physically and in the digital space (Lithuania);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.89 Reinforce the measures to protect human rights defenders against violence, threats, intimidation and reprisals (Portugal);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.90 Continue efforts to prevent acts of violence, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and social leaders (Republic of Korea);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.91 Take additional and effective measures to prevent acts of attacks, threats, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and to hold to account the perpetrators of such acts (Slovenia);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.92 Implement effective collective and comprehensive protection measures for human rights defenders that address violence and its structural causes, and adopt urgent measures to promote prompt, independent and impartial criminal investigations into complaints of attacks and threats, ending impunity (Spain);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.93 Protect human rights defenders, including by investigating alleged human rights violations and abuses against them (Australia);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.94 Take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders, especially those working in rural conflict-prone areas, in order to ensure that they are able to carry out their work free from intimidation, threats, harassment, and attacks (Sweden);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>

<p>116.95 Strengthen prevention mechanisms and advance timely, independent and impartial criminal investigations into allegations of attacks and threats against human rights defenders, social leaders, environmental activists and female leaders, especially in Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, and prosecute those responsible (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.96 Improve the model of prevention and protection for human rights defenders, including women rights defenders, journalists and Indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, and ensure that thorough investigations are held for crimes committed against them, and perpetrators are held accountable (Belgium);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.97 Update medical classifications in alignment with the International Classification of Disease 11th Revision to eliminate forced or mandatory psychiatric evaluations for trans and gender-diverse persons (Iceland);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.98 Complete the approval of the bill that modified the minimum age for marriage, in order to harmonize its legislation with international human rights law (Dominican Republic);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.99 Adopt legislative and public policy measures to transform the social, cultural and legal practices that perpetuate child marriage and early unions, with a comprehensive scope to guarantee and protect the human rights of girls and adolescents, including through access to education, health services and social</p>	<p>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</p>

protection services, gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence (Panama);	
116.100 Amend the relevant law by raising the legal age of marriage, even with parental consent, in order to prevent child marriage (Sierra Leone);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.101 Combat human trafficking (Cameroon);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.102 Carry on with measures aimed at combating trafficking in persons (Georgia);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.103 Further increase the efforts in combating human trafficking, including by developing protocols for the care of victims of trafficking, with special emphasis on women and children (Montenegro);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.104 Enhance the implementation of measures to combat the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children, especially in the context of the armed conflict (Philippines);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.105 Implement effective actions to prevent, address, investigate and prosecute cases of violence and trafficking in persons, especially children and women (Romania);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.106 Effectively implement the National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons by enhancing legislative, policy and institutional measures in this regard, and also strengthen preventive measures and the provision of	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation

protection and assistance to all trafficking victims (Thailand);	
116.107 Expand services to victims of human trafficking, particularly adults, including the investigation, prosecution and appropriate punishment of acts of gender-based violence (United States of America);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.108 Successfully implement the 2020–2024 National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons adopted by the Government, which establishes guidelines, campaigns and programmes for preventing and investigating the crime and bringing the perpetrators to justice (Azerbaijan);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.109 Continue efforts in the implementation of national strategies to advance equal employment opportunities for men and women (Cuba);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.110 Take measures to eliminate horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, including special measures to promote women’s access to employment, to enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, and to reduce and close the gender pay gap (Togo);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.111 Respect, promote and realize in good faith fundamental labour rights recognized in the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (United States of America);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.112 Further reinforce measures for enhancement of people’s right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work, especially for the most vulnerable groups (Pakistan);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

116.113 Continue to promote the establishment of a comprehensive social security system and further safeguard the rights of groups in vulnerable situations (China);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.114 Continue efforts to increase women’s access to the social security system (Iraq);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.115 Continue to make every effort to strengthen the social protection system and to optimize poverty reduction measures (Paraguay);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.116 Continue consolidating its successful social policies and programmes in favour of its people, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable sectors (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.117 Continue its strategy of rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine victims and education of the population about mine risks through awareness- raising activities (Azerbaijan);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.118 Implement measures to improve infrastructure in rural and remote areas, bridging the development gap between urban and rural areas (China);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.119 Implement the comprehensive rural reform, so as to improve economic, social and cultural rights and address drivers of conflict (Germany);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.120 Continue efforts towards speeding up the adoption of the national policy and plan concerning the	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

right to food, including following up with civil society involved (State of Palestine);	
116.121 Continue strengthening measures to guarantee the economic, social and cultural rights of the population, including in rural areas (Plurinational State of Bolivia);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.122 Take measures to reduce the country's high maternal mortality rates (Cyprus);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.123 Ensure the enforceability of abortion rights recognized by the Constitutional Court, including measures to eliminate discrimination in access to abortion services (Iceland);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.124 Implement policies and programmes ensuring the enforceability of abortion rights recognized by the Constitutional Court (Estonia);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.125 Implement fully the "Causa Justa" or C-055/2022 ruling, particularly so that Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women and girls and women and girls living in poverty can access abortion as a health service (Mexico);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.126 Eliminate the crime of abortion in the criminal code (New Zealand);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.127 Strengthen measures to guarantee access to public health in rural areas, with special emphasis on areas inhabited by Indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, as well as specialized care for women and girls (Honduras);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.128 Continue efforts to strengthen health-care services in rural and remote areas (Iraq);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



<p>116.129 Step up efforts to guarantee the human rights of trans and gender- diverse persons, such as the right to health, including through the adoption of medical guidelines and protocols to guarantee good-quality health-care services and health-related information for trans and gender-diverse persons (Kingdom of the Netherlands);</p>	<p>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</p>
<p>116.130 Implement the commitment made at the Nairobi Summit on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) to accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal morbidity and mortality in rural and remote areas through the provision of quality services and the adoption of a differentiated approach to dismantle stereotypes that lead to discrimination against women, girls, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities (Panama);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.131 Intensify actions to reduce the disparities in access to health services faced by people living in rural areas (Peru);</p>	<p>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</p>
<p>116.132 Take further measures to guarantee access to equality and non- discriminatory health services in remote areas and rural areas to ensure the realization of the right to health (Portugal);</p>	<p>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</p>
<p>116.133 Bolster efforts to ensure that all health personnel are aware of and apply the Constitutional Court judgment decriminalizing the voluntary termination of pregnancy and consider eliminating the offence of abortion from the Criminal Code (South Africa);</p>	<p>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</p>

116.134 Increase efforts to ensure access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health, for persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (Uruguay);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.135 Ensure equitable access to health care and address health-care disparities, particularly in rural and marginalized areas (Bahamas);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.136 Promote public policies to address disparities in access to education for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women and girls (Ecuador);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.137 Intensify the efforts, also through legislative initiatives, on inclusion and retention of women and girls in schools (Latvia);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.138 Continue to implement the National Human Rights Education Plan to strengthen accessibility to schools and increase the quality of education in rural areas (Malaysia);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.139 Strengthen access to education and enhance the retention rate of girls in schools and in higher education institutions (Maldives);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.140 Extend free education to cover at least 12 years of primary and secondary education, in line with the recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Mauritius);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.141 Enhance adequate access to health and education services for all children, including the children of migrants (Sri Lanka);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

116.142 Continue its national policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty levels and ensuring that citizens in rural areas have access to education and medical treatment services (Sudan);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.143 Continue taking necessary measures to reduce the illiteracy rate among people living in urban as well as rural areas (United Republic of Tanzania);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.144 Intensify efforts to promote the enrolment and retention of girls in school, with a special focus on those residing in remote areas (Viet Nam);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.145 Ensure safe access to education, including vocational training, for children and adolescents in areas where children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups (Austria);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.146 Invest significantly in renewable energy, and rapidly reduce dependence on fossil fuels and fossil fuel subsidies, to combat the negative impact of climate change on human rights (Costa Rica);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.147 Protect human rights defenders, particularly those involved in environmental issues, and fight against impunity for violence committed against them (France);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.148 Strengthen measures for environmental protection and sustainable development, particularly in regions where environmental resources are at risk, and involve local communities in related decision-making processes (Bahamas);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.149 Promote economic, social and cultural rights (Cameroon);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

<p>116.150 Continue to promote sustainable economic and social development by implementing the national development plan (China);</p>	<p>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</p>
<p>116.151 Continue the full implementation of the peace agreement and in particular chapter 1 on comprehensive rural reform in order to address the old causes of the conflict (France);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.152 Continue efforts to draw the international community's attention to the need for financial and technical support in areas considered strategic for Colombia in the search for peace, in particularly the reparation for victims of human rights violations (State of Palestine);</p>	<p>Capacity-building and Technical Cooperation</p>
<p>116.153 Strengthen the protection of women and children (Cameroon);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.154 Ensure that victims of gender-based violence, especially Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, girls and adolescents, have access to justice, medical treatment and mental health care and strengthen the legislative framework on gender-based violence (Finland);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.155 Continue efforts to improve access to justice and the provision of support for victims of gender-based violence, especially women and children (Indonesia);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.156 Update the normative framework to combat gender-based violence in order to address cases of violence against women and girls, including femicide,</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>

and create an entity to coordinate measures to prevent violence and provide care for victims (Luxembourg);	
116.157 Ensure further opportunities to increase and enable the participation of women in the peace process (New Zealand);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.158 Ensure that all human rights violations and abuses, including gender- based violence against women and girls, are investigated and perpetrators are held to account (Republic of Korea);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.159 Include gender and ethnic indicators to assess progress on all measures envisaged under the Framework Plan for Implementation of the Peace Agreement (South Africa);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.160 Step up efforts to strengthen protection of the most vulnerable groups, including women and children affected by violence, and implement a victim- centred approach (Ukraine);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.161 Ensure that the governance structure and monitoring and evaluation framework of the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325/2000 focus on implementation and impact, and include oversight and strategic input from both government and diverse women’s civil society organizations (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);	Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.162 Strengthen supportive mechanisms for women and girls who have been victims of trafficking (Viet Nam);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups

<p>116.163 Continue promoting women’s participation in peacebuilding, including the allocation of resources to reduce gender gaps (Plurinational State of Bolivia);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.164 Take measures to ensure care and effective comprehensive reparations for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (Chile);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.165 Increase measures to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination against women, girls and adolescents (Costa Rica);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.166 Intensify efforts to ensure that victims of gender-based violence have access to justice, and medical and psychosocial services (Cyprus);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.167 Update the legislative framework for the right to a life free of violence against women by including and broadening invisible forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and accompanying the transitional justice mechanisms to develop tailored investigation and prosecution protocols to deal with sexual and gender-based violence crimes committed within the armed conflict (Denmark);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.168 Review the national regulatory and legal framework on gender-based violence to improve the mechanism of prevention and protection of victims (Estonia);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.169 Continue efforts on equality between women and men, and the fight against discrimination, violence against women and trafficking (France);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>

116.170 Amplify measures to eradicate gender-based violence, ensuring the safety and dignity of all individuals, especially women and girls (Gambia);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.171 Intensify efforts to prevent and address femicide and take all necessary steps to provide justice to the victims (Ghana);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.172 Intensify efforts to ensure that victims of gender-based violence have access to justice, medical and psychosocial services, specialized shelters and comprehensive gender-sensitive reparation measures (Liechtenstein);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.173 Continue active efforts to combat all forms of violence, primarily domestic and gender-based violence (Lithuania);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.174 Step up efforts in developing a coordinating mechanism to manage the cross-sectoral response of entities responsible for ensuring the prevention of violence against women, as well as support and access to justice using information systems for victims (Malaysia);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.175 Intensify efforts to ensure that victims of gender-based violence have access to justice and other specialized services (Maldives);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.176 Scale-up efforts towards preventing gender-based violence and providing support to the victims (Nepal);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.177 Increase awareness of and provide training on the guidelines for the criminal prosecution of domestic violence, and the approach to be adopted in cases of	Capacity-building and Technical Cooperation

femicides and offences of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (South Africa);	
116.178 Take measures to tackle impunity by prosecuting those responsible for violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence (Sweden);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.179 Redouble efforts to guarantee victims of gender-based violence access to justice, medical and psychosocial services, as well as specialized shelters and comprehensive reparation measures (Uruguay);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.180 Continue its efforts to combat all forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence (Algeria);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.181 Take effective measures to improve investigation, prosecution and prevention of sexual, gender-based and domestic violence against women (Austria);	Access to Justice and Impunity
116.182 Intensify efforts to strengthen the judicial mechanisms to combat impunity related to gender-based violence, while ensuring that victims have access to justice, medical psychosocial services and shelters, as well as comprehensive reparation measures (Belgium);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.183 Strengthen efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups, including by addressing the issue early in the new peace negotiations (Canada);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.184 Implement additional measures to eradicate child labour and prevent recruitment and use of children and adolescents by armed groups (Ecuador);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups



<p>116.185 Urgently strengthen measures to prevent the forced recruitment and exploitation of, and sexual violence against, children and adolescents by armed groups (Finland);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.186 Strengthen the fight against the recruitment of children and adolescents by armed groups (France);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.187 Enhance prevention and protection mechanisms against forced recruitment of minors (Germany);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.188 Step up efforts to protect the civilian population in the territories most affected by violence and to prevent the grave violations against children, including their recruitment and exploitation by non-State armed groups and criminal organizations (Italy);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.189 Take additional steps to prevent the recruitment of children by armed groups and also to address violence and threats against human rights defenders (Japan);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.190 Continue to implement steps to prevent the recruitment and exploitation of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups, including by strengthening local capacities for countering, reducing and eliminating risk factors and the threat of recruitment (Malaysia);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.191 Redouble efforts to guarantee the promotion and protection of the right of children and adolescents to live in a family, promoting models of family care alternative to institutionalization (Paraguay);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>

116.192 Step up efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed groups (Philippines);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.193 Strengthen efforts to prevent the recruitment of children by non-State armed groups and criminal organizations (Poland);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.194 Strengthen the work of the intersectoral commission for preventing the recruitment and exploitation of, and sexual violence against, children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups, as well as the work of the National Reintegration Council (Thailand);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.195 Continue to strengthen efforts aimed at preventing the recruitment and exploitation of children and providing them with all forms of support, care and assistance (Algeria);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.196 Strengthen mechanisms to prevent the recruitment, utilization and use of, and sexual violence against, girls, boys and adolescents by armed and criminal groups (Argentina);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.197 Take the necessary preventive measures to counter the phenomenon of the use and recruitment of children by the various armed groups, and set the age of 18 years as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces (Belgium);	Security and Peace Agreement Implementation
116.198 Continue to reinforce mechanisms to safeguard women's and children's rights (Pakistan);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups

116.199 Take further measures to increase access by persons with disabilities to health care, the education system and the labour market (Indonesia);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.200 Redouble its efforts to eliminate structural violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, especially in terms of access to primary and secondary education and access to the labour market (Poland);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.201 Continue to take measures to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (Pakistan);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.202 Promote meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and Afro- Colombians in decision-making processes related to security, resource management, land rights and projects that affect them and their communities (Canada);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities
116.203 Maintain measures for the protection of Afro-Colombians and Indigenous Peoples and the promotion of their ethnocultural heritage and wealth (Cuba);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities
116.204 Increase efforts to prevent attacks against human rights defenders and community leaders, inter alia by implementing Decree No. 660 of 2018 and by strengthening self-protection mechanisms of Indigenous and other ethnic communities (Germany);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.205 Adopt sufficient measures to guarantee the right to consultation and free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, including measures for the formalization and protection of ancestral territories (Honduras);	Institutional & Legal Reforms

116.206 Ensure effective protection of human rights defenders as well as of persons belonging to minorities and Indigenous Peoples (Italy);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities
116.207 Guarantee the right to free, prior and informed consultation for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians (Mexico);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities
116.208 Provide security guarantees to enable the representation of Indigenous communities in the peace process (New Zealand);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities
116.209 Take the necessary measures to adapt existing procedures and guarantee the right to consultation and free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples (Paraguay);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities
116.210 Strengthen existing procedures, in line with international standards, with a view to guaranteeing the right to consultation and to free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities (Peru);	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties
116.211 Take measures to allow Indigenous Peoples to have access to social infrastructure, the education system and health services (Russian Federation);	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
116.212 Ensure the protection of the most vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous communities and defenders of the environment and territory and women's rights, as well as their participation in the construction of effective	Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities

<p>peace and peace dialogues, ensuring they can act without fear of reprisals, criminalization or stigmatization (Spain);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.213 Review and strengthen mechanisms for effective participation in State decision-making, especially for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities (Switzerland);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.214 Promote the operation of the National Cross-Sectoral Commission for Historical Reparation to overcome the effects of racism, racial discrimination and colonialism on Indigenous Peoples (Plurinational State of Bolivia);</p>	<p>Protection and Participation for Indigenous Communities Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.215 Introduce into Colombian legislation a definition of racial discrimination, as set out in article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Madagascar);</p>	<p>Ratification and Implementation of International Treaties</p>
<p>116.216 Take additional measures to prevent and combat hate speech, incitement to racial discrimination and expressions of racism and ensure the necessary accountability mechanisms for racially motivated violence (Romania);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.217 Strengthen implementation of the 2016 peace accord through clear indicators, expanded funding, and meaningful inclusion of ethnic communities with a focus on the Ethnic and Gender chapters of the accord (United States of America);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>

116.218 Take effective measures to prevent and combat hate speech, incitement to racial discrimination and expressions of racism (Viet Nam);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.219 Maintain and intensify efforts to combat discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons and ban conversion therapies (Chile);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.220 Guarantee gender-affirming care and the human rights of trans and non-binary persons, including the right to health (Iceland);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.221 Ban so-called “conversion therapies” (Iceland);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.222 Adopt a legislative framework to further address gender-based violence and violence against LGBTI+ persons, focusing on ensuring the proper investigation and prosecution of these crimes (Ireland);	Institutional & Legal Reforms
116.223 Take measures to address gender-based violence and discrimination, especially against women belonging to vulnerable groups, such as lesbian, bisexual and transgender women (Montenegro);	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
116.224 Increase efforts to protect human rights defenders, environmental defenders, labour union leaders and members of communities for peace. Expand measures to protect members of marginalized racial, ethnic and Indigenous communities, including Afro-Colombian communities, women, LGBTQI+ persons and migrants. This should include greater accountability for those responsible for attacks against these communities, including through transitional justice mechanisms (United States of America);	Access to Justice and Impunity Security and Peace Agreement Implementation

<p>116.225 Continue efforts for the effective implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement, particularly those aimed at protecting and guaranteeing the human rights of ethnic peoples, women and LGBTIQ persons (Argentina);</p>	<p>Security and Peace Agreement Implementation</p>
<p>116.226 Adopt necessary measures to prevent, investigate and punish violence and discrimination based on gender identity perpetrated by State and non-State agents and provide reparation to victims (Argentina);</p>	<p>Access to Justice and Impunity</p>
<p>116.227 Implement safeguards for migrants, particularly to protect them and prevent sexual and labour exploitation against them (Gambia);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.228 Redouble efforts in protecting the rights of migrants, especially Indigenous people and communities of African descent (Ghana);</p>	<p>Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups</p>
<p>116.229 Effectively implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by adopting robust measures to prevent the smuggling of migrants across its borders, end impunity for smuggling networks, and strengthen cooperation and information-sharing, while protecting the human rights of migrants (Panama);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>
<p>116.230 Provide defined protocols of support and response to the specific care needs of refugee and migrant women victims of gender-based violence, and adopt social and community integration programmes at the local level that stimulate and strengthen support networks (Spain);</p>	<p>Institutional &amp; Legal Reforms</p>

116.231 Continue efforts to strengthen access to the asylum system and prioritize processing applications from victims of sexual violence, regardless of their nationality (Uruguay).	Social Inclusion and Protection of Vulnerable Groups
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## 8.2 Recommendations Received by Sudan during its 3rd UPR Cycle

Recommendation	« Solution »
137.1 Ratify the international human rights conventions that it has not yet ratified (Ukraine);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.2 Ratify the remaining key international human rights instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Czechia);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.3 Ratify the international human rights conventions that it has not yet ratified, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol (Zambia);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.4 Ratify core human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol (Liechtenstein);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.5 Expedite the process of ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Bangladesh);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.6 Expedite the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against	Ratification and International Cooperation

Women, and effectively implement a national gender equality action plan (Thailand);	
137.7 Consider ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights , aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Chile);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.8 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Lithuania);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.9 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights , aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Sierra Leone);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.10 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Paraguay);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.11 Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights , aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Paraguay);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.12 Continue to accede to additional international human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to continue to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms (State of Palestine);	Ratification and International Cooperation

137.13 Consider ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (India);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.14 Consider ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Nepal);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.15 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Lithuania);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.16 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Latvia);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.17 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Togo);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.18 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Marshall Islands);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.19 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Malaysia);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.20 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Angola);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.21 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Armenia);	Ratification and International Cooperation

137.22 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Denmark);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.23 Complete the efforts to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Iraq);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.24 Intensify efforts towards ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Fiji);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.25 Ratify without reservations the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (Spain);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.26 Ratify all articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations (Canada);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.27 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations to articles 2 and 16 (Iceland);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.28 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without any reservations contrary to the objective and purpose of the Convention (Sweden);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.29 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women (Ireland);	Ratification and International Cooperation

<p>137.30 Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and enhance efforts to combat discrimination and violence against women (Italy);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.31 Reaffirm its commitment to the full protection of the human rights of women and girls, including by accelerating efforts towards the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Uruguay);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.32 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Namibia);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.33 Ensure the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (New Zealand);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.34 Step up efforts towards acceding to and effectively implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ensuring that women’s and girls’ rights are at the core of the democratic transition process (Romania);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.35 Accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Armenia);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.36 Sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Morocco);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>

<p>137.37 Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Niger);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.38 Proceed with the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Togo);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.39 Ratify and fully align its national legislation with all the obligations under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as previously recommended (Latvia);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.40 Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and cooperate with the Court, including on the warrants for the arrest of the former President, Omer Hassan Ahmed alBashir, and other officials (Liechtenstein);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.41 Ratify the Rome Statute and incorporate all relevant provisions into domestic law, including the obligation to cooperate promptly and fully with the International Criminal Court, and the definitions of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes covered by the Statute (Malta);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.42 Step up the parliamentary process under way aimed at the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Uruguay);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.43 Consider ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and provide unconditional cooperation and access to areas of concern for International Criminal Court investigators (Belgium);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>

<p>137.44 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (Denmark) (Lebanon);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.45 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Namibia) (Slovenia) (Armenia);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.46 Consider ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Nepal);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.47 Ratify the Optional Protocol and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, and ensure these measures are enshrined in Sudanese law (Canada);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.48 Establish a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its eventual abolition and consider ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Latvia); Abolish the death penalty, ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and introduce an immediate moratorium on executions (Iceland); Adopt a de jure moratorium on capital executions and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Italy);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>
<p>137.49 Ratify the Convention against Torture (Cote d'Ivoire);</p>	<p>Ratification and International Cooperation</p>

137.50 Ratify the Convention against Torture (Armenia);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.51 Continue the cooperation with the International Criminal Court, ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and ensure effective prosecution of and accountability for serious crimes under international law (Sweden);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.52 Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Togo);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.53 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (Togo);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.54 Strengthen awareness campaigns on the death penalty and public debates on the subject, with a view to its abolition as soon as possible, and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, as soon as possible (Uruguay);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.55 Take measures to prevent all forms of torture, including by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, and to prevent enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and extrajudicial executions, and ensure accountability for all violations and abuses (Italy);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.56 Consider taking the necessary steps to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the Second Optional Protocol to the International	Ratification and International Cooperation



Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Argentina);	
137.57 Continue constructive cooperation with international human rights mechanisms (Bangladesh);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.58 Cooperate fully with the mechanisms of the United Nations system, especially with the Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Sudan, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the special procedures (Argentina);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.59 Cooperate fully with United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particular the expert on human rights in the Sudan and the Office of the High Commissioner (Luxembourg);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.60 Continue to cooperate with OHCHR and other United Nations bodies (Somalia);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.61 Cooperate fully with human rights mechanisms, including by issuing a standing invitation to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council (Norway);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.62 Interact and enhance cooperation with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, as an expression of the openness and strong will of the Sudan regarding the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country (Morocco);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.63 Consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, as previously recommended (Latvia);	Ratification and International Cooperation

137.64 Consider issuing an open and standing invitation to all human rights mechanisms (Paraguay);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.65 Strengthen cooperation with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the newly designated Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan (Republic of Korea);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.66 Continue to cooperate with the United Nations for the benefit of the brotherly Sudanese people (Jordan);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.67 Strengthen the work of the national human rights mechanism, follow up on its recommendations and set plans to follow up on their implementation (Jordan);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.68 Strengthen the mechanism for implementation, reporting and followup regarding recommendations on human rights, considering the possibility of receiving cooperation for this purpose (Paraguay);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.69 Continue implementing the recommendations arising from the universal periodic review and the international human rights obligations of the Sudan with a view to strengthening the relevant legal and institutional frameworks (Romania);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.70 Provide international support to improve the Sudanese economy (Kuwait);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.71 Restore immediately a civilianled transition to democracy with United Nations facilitation, lift the state of emergency, and ensure the protection of peaceful protesters (United States of America);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution

137.72 Continue efforts towards peace and national reconciliation to improve the human rights situation in the country (Somalia);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.73 Find a political solution, form a civilianled Government and complete the transitional process successfully (Austria);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.74 Make efforts to promote peace and security in order to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights by its people (Viet Nam);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.75 Redouble efforts to engage in negotiations with civil bodies with a view to transitioning to civilian authority (South Sudan);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.76 Advocate the reconstruction of the dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, in order to walk towards democracy and peace (Paraguay);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.77 Unify national efforts to contribute to laying the foundations for reconciliation and stability in the Sudan (Algeria);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.78 Implement the Juba Peace Agreement fully (South Sudan);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.79 Implement the Juba Peace Agreement, carry out securitysector reform, and conduct free and fair elections (United States of America);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.80 Sustain efforts towards promoting dialogue on achieving sustainable peace (Pakistan);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.81 Continue efforts to build lasting peace in the Darfur region (Oman);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution

137.82 Adopt the necessary reforms to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and the establishment of democratic rule of law (Spain);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.83 Restore civilian rule and take measures on the basis of the 2019 Constitutional Document allowing the country to return to its commitments towards democratic transition and the path of progress on institutional and legal reforms (Romania);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.84 Take steps to align domestic laws with international human rights instruments that the country has ratified (Malawi);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.85 Continue working to harmonize national legislation with the Sudan’s international and regional commitments (Oman);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.86 Continue to take targeted steps to improve national legislation in terms of respect for human rights and freedoms (Russian Federation);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.87 Enact further law reforms to ensure the country’s conformity with international human rights standards (Ukraine);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.88 Repeal article 148 of its Criminal Code (Uruguay);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.89 Strengthen relevant legislative policies and take further administrative measures to combat hate speech, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance (Armenia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.90 Intensify efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks that address crosssectoral environmental challenges, including	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening

climate change and disaster risk reduction frameworks (Fiji);	
137.91 Continue institutional and legislative reform efforts in line with its international obligations on human rights (Iraq);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.92 Continue undertaking comprehensive reforms in the field of human rights (Kyrgyzstan);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.93 Take all measures necessary to ensure human rights protection (Ukraine);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.94 Continue its efforts to ensure the implementation of all its national plans (State of Palestine);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.95 Speed up the process of drafting the country's human rights strategy (Azerbaijan);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.96 Pursue efforts to formulate a national strategy for human rights (Egypt);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.97 Create an independent national human rights commission and designate sufficient resources for it to operate and to obtain accreditation under the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) (Zambia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening

137.98 Establish an independent national human rights commission as per the Paris Principles (Sierra Leone);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.99 Adopt the law establishing a national human rights commission in compliance with the Paris Principles (Mali);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.100 Pursue efforts to complete the process of setting up the national human rights commission (Senegal);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.101 Issue the law related to the establishment of the national human rights commission (Lebanon);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.102 Continue steps to establish a national human rights commission (Pakistan);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.103 Step up efforts for to strengthen the national human rights mechanism and operationalize it in line with the Paris Principles (Nepal);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.104 Adopt legislation to guarantee protection against all forms of discrimination (Mexico);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.105 Prohibit discrimination, illtreatment and criminal offences committed by members of the law enforcement agencies against civilians (Malaysia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.106 Adopt a comprehensive antidiscrimination and equalities law, banning discrimination on such grounds as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening

opinion, national or social origin, age or disability (Afghanistan);	
137.107 Pursue efforts to move towards the decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations between adults (Spain);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.108 Make the necessary efforts to promote the elimination of discriminatory provisions that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and put an end to the criminalization of sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex (Chile);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.109 Decriminalize consensual adult same-sex relations (Italy);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.110 Decriminalize sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex (Iceland);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.111 Consider imposing a moratorium on the death sentence with a view to abolishing the death penalty (Georgia);	Civil and political rights
137.112 Progress towards the abolition of the death penalty by adopting a moratorium on the use of capital punishment (Spain); Establish a formal moratorium on the use of the death penalty (Australia); Impose a moratorium on the death penalty, as a first step towards its abolition (Portugal);	Civil and political rights
137.113 Establish a de jure moratorium on the death penalty and commute all death sentences to alternative sentences (Switzerland);	Civil and political rights
137.114 Take effective steps towards abolishing the death penalty (Liechtenstein);	Civil and political rights

137.115 Abolish the death penalty for all crimes without exception (Marshall Islands); Abolish the death penalty (Estonia);	Civil and political rights
137.116 Abolish the death penalty for all crimes (Côte d'Ivoire);	Civil and political rights
137.117 Ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and humanitarian facilities (Paraguay);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.118 Refrain from any violence or use of force targeting peaceful protesters and immediately release those unlawfully detained (Germany);	Civil and political rights
137.119 Immediately halt unnecessary and disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters and conduct investigations into the violence against protesters, including genderbased violence, alleged to have been committed by the Sudanese Armed Forces (Japan);	Civil and political rights
137.120 Cease the use of arbitrary detention and release all civilians detained as a result of the military takeover on 25 October 2021, and related protests (Australia);	Civil and political rights
137.121 Effectively protect the right to peaceful assembly by immediately ceasing the excessive use of force by security actors against peaceful protesters, journalists, medical staff and facilities, by preventing arbitrary detention and torture, and by repealing emergency order No. 4 (Netherlands);	Civil and political rights
137.122 Increase measures to avoid the excessive and/or lethal use of force by security, law enforcement and/or military agents in the context of peaceful demonstrations by the civilian population (Argentina);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening



137.123 Abolish all forms of torture, in particular flogging as a form of punishment (Switzerland);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.124 Comply with international humanitarian and human rights law obligations, putting an end to indiscriminate attacks against civilians, protecting vulnerable social groups in particular (Paraguay);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.125 Revoke the state of emergency, abstain from arbitrary detention, and release all political prisoners (Norway);	Civil and political rights
137.126 Release from prison all persons whose conviction resulted from the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms (Luxembourg);	Civil and political rights
137.127 Ensure the protection of civilians, especially in conflictaffected areas such as Darfur and Southern Kordofan (Lithuania);	Peace, Security and Conflcit resolution
137.128 Resolve the existing conflict through dialogue between the components of Sudanese society in order to preserve its unity and integrity (Yemen);	Peace, Security and Conflcit resolution
137.129 Implement fully Human Rights Council resolution S32/1, adopted at its thirtysecond special session, including with regard to an independent mechanism to support the Sudanese people’s aspiration for democracy and the rule of law (Brazil);	Peace, Security and Conflcit resolution
137.130 Take all necessary steps to safeguard democratic principles based on good governance and respect for human rights (Indonesia);	Civil and political rights

137.131 Ensure thorough investigation of all grave violations of human rights (Ukraine);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.132 Investigate all cases of enforced disappearance and ensure that those responsible are prosecuted and punished commensurately with the gravity of their crimes (Montenegro);	Civil and political rights
137.133 Investigate and prosecute violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by the armed forces (Zambia);	peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.134 Address impunity for human rights violations, including through enhanced cooperation with the International Criminal Court, and adoption of effective transitional justice measures (Ireland);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.135 Ensure accountability for grave violations of human rights by bringing the perpetrators to justice and providing remedies for victims (Montenegro);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.136 Safeguard the rule of law by upholding the independence of judges (Marshall Islands);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.137 Initiate prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of crimes under international law and bring suspects to justice (Lithuania);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.138 Fight against impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations and create a transitional justice mechanism (France);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening

137.139 Cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court (Switzerland);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.140 Establish human rights and accountabilitybased reconciliation mechanisms to prevent and resolve intercommunal conflicts (Sierra Leone);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.141 Continue to take measures aimed at improving the situation in the judicial and penitentiary systems (Russian Federation);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.142 Take concrete steps to fulfil the promise of the 2019 Constitutional Document and respect the rights of demonstrators (Canada);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.143 Modify legislation to ensure freedom of expression and press (Estonia);	Civil and political rights
137.144 Fully protect the exercise of civil and political rights, including freedom of expression, assembly and association (Luxembourg);	Civil and political rights
137.145 Uphold its international obligations to protect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, take further action to reestablish a national human rights commission and adopt domestic legislation to ensure full compliance with its international obligations under the Convention against Torture (New Zealand);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.146 Protect freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association by respecting the freedom of the media and avoiding all disproportionate use of force or the use of arbitrary arrest and detention (Switzerland);	Civil and political rights

137.147 Investigate the physical and digital attacks against and harassment of journalists, media workers and human rights defenders, and ensure freedom of expression (Lithuania);	Civil and political rights
137.148 Respect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, including by allowing peaceful protests, and by ensuring accountability for perpetrators of violence against protesters (Norway);	Civil and political rights
137.149 Continue to enhance the promotion of interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance (Indonesia);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.150 Fully respect the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and refrain from excessive use of force against peaceful protesters (Republic of Korea);	Civil and political rights
137.151 Guarantee a safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers, and ensure the right of access to information (Republic of Korea);	Civil and political rights
137.152 Ensure fully the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, including for protestors, as well as strict compliance by security forces with their obligations under international human rights law (Spain);	Civil and political rights
137.153 Ensure equal and full participation in political and public affairs, freedom of expression, press freedom and the safety of journalists (Japan);	Civil and political rights
137.154 Ensure a safe environment that is conducive to the legitimate work of human rights defenders and journalists (Spain);	Civil and political rights
137.155 Take measures to foster a safe, respectful and enabling environment for civil society and human rights defenders, especially women human rights defenders,	Civil and political rights

free from persecution, intimidation and harassment (Latvia);	
137.156 Immediately open civic space and defend freedom of expression and assembly for all Sudanese, including civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);	Civil and political rights
137.157 Respect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, ensure a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into all human rights violations, and hold those responsible to account (Finland);	Civil and political rights
137.158 Take steps to strengthen respect for the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and to ensure accountability for all violations against peaceful protesters (Brazil);	Civil and political rights
137.159 Guarantee respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, essential to the preparation of free and transparent elections in July 2023, and respect the rights of Sudanese people to peacefully express their opinions without fear of violence or reprisals (France);	Civil and political rights
137.160 Refrain from prosecuting demonstrators and organizers of meetings for exercising their right of peaceful assembly (Czechia);	Civil and political rights
137.161 Immediately initiate measures to ensure the protection of civilians, to respect people’s freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly (Germany);	Civil and political rights

137.162 Immediately revoke the state of emergency and protect the rights to freedom of information, expression, opinion and peaceful assembly (Ireland);	Civil and political rights
137.163 Create a safer and enabling environment to increase levels of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and ensure accountability (Italy);	Civil and political rights
137.164 Regarding all Sudanese parties, engage fully and in good faith with the United Nations facilitated talks to reach a solution that leads to the restoration of a civilian led Government, and free and fair elections (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.165 Build legislative, judicial and electoral bodies, and announce dates for the Sovereignty Council chair handover and for elections (United States of America);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.166 Ensure the organization of free and inclusive elections in order to allow a return to a civilian Government as soon as possible (Luxembourg);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.167 Organize free and fair elections (Lithuania);	Civil and political rights
137.168 Work with all stakeholders to address the current political impasse and develop a path towards democracy and peace (Australia);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.169 Stop the excessive and disproportionate use of force against civilian protesters and uphold the rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly and association, including ensuring a free and safe environment for journalists to operate (Australia);	Civil and political rights
137.170 Recommit to the country's democratic transition, including by engaging in an inclusive dialogue involving a	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution

broad range of civilian stakeholders that can lead to free and fair elections (Denmark);	
137.171 Exert international efforts to address the political issue (Kuwait);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.172 Take all necessary measures to combat human trafficking and to support and protect victims (Libya);	protection of vulnerable groups
137.173 Implement all objectives of the national plan to combat human trafficking (Liechtenstein);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.174 Intensify capacitybuilding efforts for duty bearers in the field of combating trafficking in persons (Philippines);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.175 Continue its efforts to promote and protect the rights of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons and to combat human trafficking (Viet Nam);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.176 Strengthen cooperation with international and national mechanisms to combat trafficking in persons (Bahrain);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.177 Intensify efforts to provide productive and decent employment to its people (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);	Economic and Social rights
137.178 Maintain peace and stability, overcome existing difficulties and promote sustainable economic and social development (China);	Economic and Social rights

137.179 Continue its efforts to implement the economic reform plans (Saudi Arabia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.180 Redouble efforts to improve economic conditions and raise the standard of living of the Sudanese people (Qatar);	Economic and Social rights
137.181 Continue its efforts to eliminate poverty and improve living standards (Kyrgyzstan);	Economic and Social rights
137.182 Continue efforts to combat poverty under the comprehensive social welfare programme (Tunisia);	Economic and Social rights
137.183 Strengthen the strategy to combat multidimensional poverty (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);	Economic and Social rights
137.184 Increase the financial appropriations allocated to antipoverty programmes, and develop operational programmes aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of the most vulnerable population (Mauritania);	Economic and Social rights
137.185 Continue steps aimed at the effective implementation of the national strategy for the eradication of poverty, as well as national programme for sustainable development (Pakistan);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.186 Strive to implement the national poverty reduction strategy even more effectively in order to eliminate the root causes of poverty (Serbia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.187 Adopt a comprehensive national poverty reduction strategy, using a human rightsbased approach (TimorLeste);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening



137.188 Strengthen programmes and policies related to social development and poverty reduction (Somalia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.189 Enhance ongoing efforts to combat poverty through national programmes on social welfare and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (Sri Lanka);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.190 Consider creating an integrated social protection system to protect persons in a vulnerable situation, including those engaged in the informal sector (TimorLeste);	Economic and Social rights
137.191 Strengthen the social protection system to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups (China);	Economic and Social rights
137.192 Increase efforts to find funding to train persons working in State agencies, particularly law enforcement agencies (United Republic of Tanzania);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.193 Increase investment in the health sector, including human rights training for health personnel, and take measures to eliminate all forms of barriers, stigmatization and discrimination, creating a safe and enabling environment in health settings for all, including for persons affected by HIV and key populations (Portugal);	Economic and Social rights
137.194 Continue efforts to promote the health sector and ensure universal access to health services (Tunisia);	Economic and Social rights
137.195 Exert more efforts to ensure access to quality health services and strengthen the universal health coverage system (Qatar);	Economic and Social rights

137.196 Strengthen measures to guarantee universal access to basic health services (Senegal);	Economic and Social rights
137.197 Continue measures towards ensuring equal access to healthcare services, including through the strategic plan for the period 2021&ndash;2024 (Sri Lanka);	Economic and Social rights
137.198 Continue to apply all measures necessary to protect the life and health of its citizens, and consider fully realizing universal health coverage (Thailand);	Economic and Social rights
137.199 Continue efforts to provide universal and nondiscriminatory access to health services (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);	Economic and Social rights
137.200 Reduce direct and preventable maternal mortality by providing maternal and reproductive health services (Burkina Faso);	Economic and Social rights
137.201 Do more work to implement the malaria control plan (Oman);	Economic and Social rights
137.202 Take concrete measures to ensure access for all to a primary health package, the appropriate training of medical personnel and the provision of a sufficient number of personnel and healthcare facilities (India);	Economic and Social rights
137.203 Seek the support of the international community to ensure access to COVID19 vaccines for all people (Bangladesh);	Economic and Social rights
137.204 Continue to apply national strategies to achieve its objectives, especially in the areas of education, health and poverty alleviation (Jordan);	Economic and Social rights

137.205 Support efforts to reform and develop the education sector to include all segments of society (Libya);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.206 Continue efforts to improve access to quality education and to achieve the goal of education for all without discrimination (Qatar);	Economic and Social rights
137.207 Continue efforts to advance the education sector, and ensure access to free basic education for all in accordance with the education strategy and the national education plan (Tunisia);	Economic and Social rights
137.208 Continue the efforts deployed in the education sector, particularly with regard to securing free education for primary stages (Saudi Arabia);	Economic and Social rights
137.209 Advance further universal access to education, with a special focus on vulnerable groups and by increasing the level of education among girls (Sri Lanka);	Economic and Social rights
137.210 Continue efforts to ensure access to education for all, especially girls and forcibly displaced persons (Lebanon);	Economic and Social rights
137.211 Continue measures aimed at reducing disparities in the quality of education and intensify the implementation of education support projects (Azerbaijan);	Economic and Social rights
137.212 Continue efforts to ensure universal access to education and reduce gender disparity in school enrolment (Bangladesh);	Economic and Social rights
137.213 Increase input in education and increase the enrolment rate of children (China);	Economic and Social rights

137.214 Redouble efforts to strengthen the right to quality education for all, in particular by implementing measures to promote increased access for girls to school (Djibouti);	Economic and Social rights
137.215 Continue promoting human rights, including by incorporating it in to the national educational curricula (Ethiopia);	Economic and Social rights
137.216 Raise community awareness on the dangers and consequences of early marriage and female genital mutilation (Ethiopia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.217 Make further efforts to improve respect for human rights through education and training programmes on human rights for the State apparatus, involving possible bilateral and international cooperation (Indonesia);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.218 Increase education, training and capacitybuilding programmes in the field of human rights (Algeria);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.219 Step up efforts to combat all forms of discrimination against women (Serbia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.220 Accelerate the formation of the commission for women and gender equality and the commission for legal reform (Estonia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.221 Accelerate the creation of the commission for women and gender equality and adopt a law on violence against women, including provisions that criminalize domestic violence (Mexico);	gender equality and women's empowerment

137.222 Ensure the promotion of women's rights (Ukraine);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.223 Ensure full access to justice for women (Cote d'Ivoire);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.224 Continue to promote the rights of women and girls, combat all forms of discrimination against them and implement the national action plan for the implementation of the Security Council resolution on women and peace and security (Luxembourg);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.225 Continue its exceptional efforts to strengthen the participation and empowerment of women in political and public life and their enjoyment of more civil and political rights (Jordan);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.226 Ensure a return to democratic transition and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the mediation processes, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), leading to the formation of a legitimate civilianled Government (Netherlands);	Peace, Security and Conflict resolution
137.227 Respect the Sudanese national plan of action for women, peace and security, and implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Norway);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.228 Proceed with steps aimed at the elimination of discrimination and of abuses against women and girls (Georgia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.229 Investigate all cases of human rights violations and abuse, foremost genderbased violence, and hold perpetrators to account (Slovenia);	gender equality and women's empowerment

<p>137.230 Integrate women’s issues in to all sectors, and support women to carry out their functions and to develop their capacities and skills (United Arab Emirates);</p>	<p>gender equality and women's empowerment</p>
<p>137.231 Increasing public awareness about women’s issues and rights and assist in establishing prowomen commissions, entities and community initiatives (United Arab Emirates);</p>	<p>gender equality and women's empowerment</p>
<p>137.232 Halt violence permanently and allow for mediation efforts (Austria);</p>	<p>Peace, Security and Conflict resolution</p>
<p>137.233 Strengthen measures to enable women to enjoy more civil and political rights and ensure equal rights (Bahrain);</p>	<p>gender equality and women's empowerment</p>
<p>137.234 Ensure continued consultation with women’s rights groups and include a gender perspective throughout the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, including in security and militarysector reform (Belgium);</p>	<p>gender equality and women's empowerment</p>
<p>137.235 Consider amending the Nationality Act and regulations to uphold the independent right of Sudanese citizens to confer their nationality without discrimination based on gender or marital status (Chile);</p>	<p>Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening</p>
<p>137.236 Strengthen efforts to eliminate discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, actual or perceived, in compliance with its human rights obligations (Fiji);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.237 Promote the full participation of women, youth and civil society in the Sudanese transition, including</p>	<p>gender equality and women's empowerment</p>

respecting commitments to quotas for women in representative institutions (France);	
137.238 Ensure that the yettobecreated permanent constitution is based on human rights and the rule of law and that the ongoing discussions on the content include the perspective of women and young people (Germany);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.239 Repeal articles in the Sudanese Criminal Code and provisions of the Personal Status Act that violate basic personal freedoms and the rights of women and girls (Iceland);	legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.240 Carry out impartial investigations into all allegations of illtreatment, persecution and extrajudicial killings based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Iceland);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.241 Make further efforts towards reducing poverty and improve the living conditions of rural women, including by reinforcing the provision of financial credit and loans (India);	Economic and Social rights
137.242 Consider strengthening data collection and management related to gender equality and women&rsquo;s human rights (Philippines);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.243 Take all necessary measures, both in law and in practice, to combat violence against women and girls and domestic violence (Latvia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.244 Reform laws and State legislation that legalize any form of violence or discrimination against women and girls such as provisions regarding male guardianship and wife obedience proclaimed in the Personal Status Law (Liechtenstein);	gender equality and women's empowerment

137.245 Prioritize the protection of women from violence by reforming or repealing State legislation (Estonia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.246 Adopt measures for the protection and prevention of sexual and genderbased violence, in addition to mechanisms for accountability, in conflictaffected and displacement settings (Malta);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.247 Continue measures to combat genderbased violence and harmful traditional practices (Nepal);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.248 Eradicate violence and discrimination against women, including by repealing all discriminatory legislation and by ensuring women's participation in decisionmaking, including in the ongoing peace process (Portugal);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.249 Continue to strengthen measures in combating violence against women and girls and provide legal protection for victims of sexual and genderbased violence (South Africa);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.250 Approve and implement the proposed violence against women law, including provisions which clearly criminalize domestic violence with strict punishments (Australia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.251 Implement the national action plan on women, peace and security and the framework of cooperation with the United Nations on the prevention and response to sexual violence against women and girls during conflict (Sweden);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.252 Take measures to ensure justice for the families and survivors of the 3 June 2019 crackdown on peaceful protestors and those killed and injured since 25 October	Civil and political rights



2021, including survivors of sexual and genderbased violence (Canada);	
137.253 Further strengthen measures to address violence against women, including efforts to combat female genital mutilation through effective prosecution of people who encourage, facilitate or perform the surgery, as the prevalence of female genital mutilation remains extremely high (Czechia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.254 Pursue efforts to combat violence against women (Egypt);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.255 Strengthen measures aimed at eradicating female genital mutilation through a more repressive legal arsenal against its perpetrators, and through the implementation of existing laws and policies that prohibit such practices in all their forms (Djibouti);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.256 Continue legal reforms pursued by the transitional Government under Prime Minister Hamdok, including the criminalization of female genital mutilation, and ensure their full implementation (Finland);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.257 Take further steps to fight against harmful practices against women, in particular female genital mutilation (Somalia);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.258 Enforce the prohibition of female genital mutilation through an effective prosecution mechanism (Ukraine);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.259 Uphold the prohibition of female genital mutilation by effectively prosecuting those who encourage, facilitate or practice it (Burkina Faso);	gender equality and women's empowerment

137.260 Step up efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation, including intensifying awareness campaigns on the health and psychological risks associated with this phenomenon (Mauritania);	gender equality and women's empowerment
137.261 Continue with measures to protect children's rights (Georgia);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.262 Take all necessary steps to protect children from all forms of violence, neglect, injury, harm and exploitation (Malawi);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.263 Enhance efforts to guarantee the rights of the children and protect them from violence, abuse and involvement in armed conflict (Italy);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.264 Align national legislation with commitments to international human rights mechanisms, including by prohibiting corporal punishment, which is present in legislation and in the penal system (Austria);	Ratification and International Cooperation
137.265 Take action to protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation, including corporal punishment, forced labour, early marriage and military recruitment (Portugal);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.266 Outlaw corporal punishment (Italy);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.267 Adopt legislation expressly prohibiting corporal punishment of children in all settings and repeal all legal provisions that justify the use of corporal punishment as an educational method (Chad);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.268 Modify legislation to set the legal minimum age for marriage at 18 years (Mexico);	Protection of vulnerable groups

137.269 Consider amending its legislation to set the minimum age for marriage at 18 years (Sierra Leone);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.270 Ensure the protection of children from grave violations and the provision of adequate support for their reintegration and rehabilitation (Philippines);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.271 Increase efforts towards ensuring accountability for grave violations against children by bringing perpetrators to justice and by providing remedies to victims (Belgium);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.272 Maintain social policies that support the family in line with social values (Algeria);	Legal and institutional reforms and strengthening
137.273 Ensure that the rights of vulnerable groups, in particular women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and ethnic minorities, are protected in law and in practice (Russian Federation);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.274 Implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it ratified at the same time as acceding to the Optional Protocol thereto in April 2009 (South Sudan);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.275 Take the necessary measures to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and restructure public institutions to take into account the situation of women with disabilities (Chad);	Protection of vulnerable groups
137.276 Adopt a national disability awareness strategy based on a human rights approach (Angola);	Protection of vulnerable groups

<p>137.277 Continue the efforts made in relation to the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, including their rehabilitation and 2n and the provision of necessary health care (Libya);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.278 Empower and promote the economic inclusion of all persons, irrespective of their disability status (Malaysia);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.279 Review article 3 of the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2017 to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and to ensure that denial of reasonable accommodation is recognized as a form of disabilitybased discrimination; and include those provisions in the forthcoming draft constitution, so as to provide the highest legal protection against the disabilitybased discrimination and multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination faced by persons with disabilities (South Africa);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.280 Redouble efforts in capacitybuilding aimed at empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring equal access to decent work, without discrimination (Burundi);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.281 Ensure the proper treatment of refugees and asylum seekers through the application of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Asylum Regulations Act (Afghanistan);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.282 Intensify efforts to prevent further displacement and advance in the search for solutions to the internal displacement of persons (Mexico);</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>
<p>137.283 Take legislative and administrative measures to combat statelessness (Angola).</p>	<p>Protection of vulnerable groups</p>