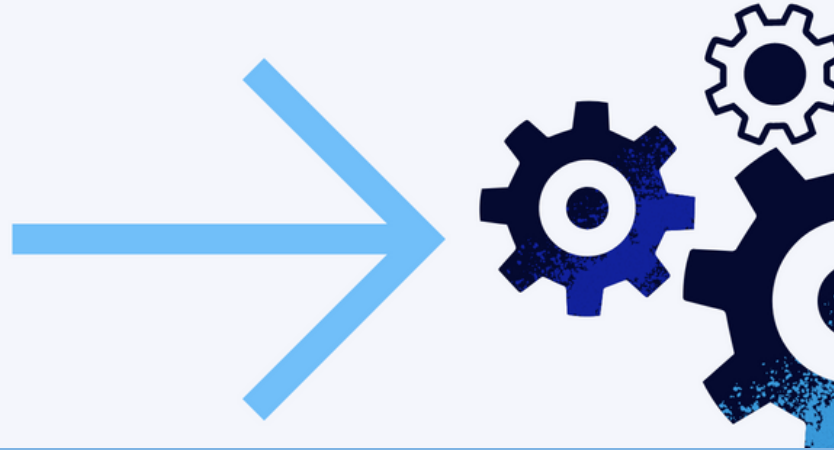




FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT ACTION

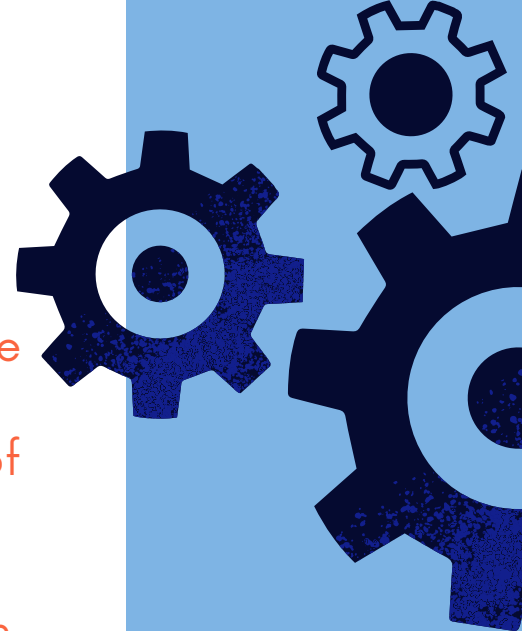
A new framework for joint action to strengthen collaboration with all regional mechanisms for the protection and promotion of civic space.



Strengthening cooperation between international and regional human rights mechanisms for the realization of the **rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.**



A joint initiative by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Focal Point on Reprisals of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, the Rapporteur of Human Rights Defenders and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).



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PRESENTATION

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are essential components of every democratic society. They provide avenues for people to freely express and share their ideas, engage in meaningful dialogue and work together towards the betterment of society. They empower people to hold their governments accountable, demand transparency, and ensure that their voices are heard.

Yet since the creation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and of Association in 2010, the threats facing these two rights have grown at alarming rates, affecting all world regions. Across the world, many Governments have been implementing laws and policies that restrict or suppress civic space, making it difficult for individuals and civil society organizations to advocate for their rights and participate in decision-making processes.

A week does not pass without my mandate receiving information about the stigmatization, harassment, imprisonment or killing of civil society actors. We are continually engaging with States regarding the adoption of laws related to national security, counter-terrorism and public order that severely limit the enjoyment of the rights to peaceful assembly and association, including placing undue barriers to civil society's access to funding. We regularly receive allegations of the indiscriminate and excessive use of force to counter or repress peaceful protests. We also witness an increased use of digital technology to silence, survey and harass political opposition, human rights defenders, trade union leaders, journalists and protesters, including internet shutdowns to suppress assemblies and associations, and to manipulate public opinion.

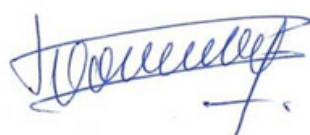
However, there is a powerful human rights movement working every day to counter these attacks and defend the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for all. This vibrant community of States, civil society organizations, international and regional bodies, academia, donors and even business corporations are pushing back against repressive measures and promoting good practices. The power of their efforts can be seen in streets across the world. Their presence felt in parliaments, courtrooms, councils and negotiation tables globally.

International and regional human rights mechanisms have ramped up their actions to respond to closing civic space trends. In 2022, the Human Rights Council voted to renew the mandate of the special rapporteur on the rights to peaceful assembly, reiterating the importance of these fundamental freedoms for the advancement of human rights democracy and sustainable development. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human rights and the OSCE Office on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights are routinely issuing important guidance to expand protections of these two freedoms, sharing best practices and supporting efforts to ensure international and regional human rights standards are met.

Since my appointment as Special Rapporteur in 2018, I have engaged with the IACHR, ACHPR and ODIHR and other regional human rights mechanisms, on multiple occasions, to better understand how they were addressing these common challenges and to further strengthen our collaboration. In 2020, we began issuing annual "joint declarations" where we promote a shared vision of the importance of assembly and association rights in promoting and protecting democracy, human rights, and sustainable development, and offer recommendations on how to strengthen their protection.

This Framework for Joint Action builds on this important work and outlines further actions and practical steps that we, as international and regional human rights mechanisms, can take together to safeguard and protect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. We aim to provide a framework for future actions, including joint statements, visits and events advancing the protection and expansion of civic space around the world, and for improved information-sharing, collaboration and synergies. The framework will serve as a roadmap in our commitment to support Governments to promote and protect these rights and to fight against any threats or restrictions affecting them.

The intention of the framework is also to serve as a call to action to unite in the defense of civic space. We hope the Framework for action can inspire others in the international community to take more forceful action to counter global trends of closing civic space repression and address the challenges impacting our democracies. Together, we can and must do more to ensure that assembly and association rights are respected, protected, and upheld for all.



Clément Nyaletsossi Voule
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful
assembly and of association



ACHPR - African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations

COE - Council of Europe

CSOs - Civil Society Organizations

FoAA - The Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

IACHR - Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

OAS - Organization of American States

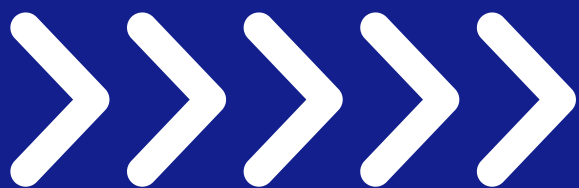
OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

ODIHR-OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

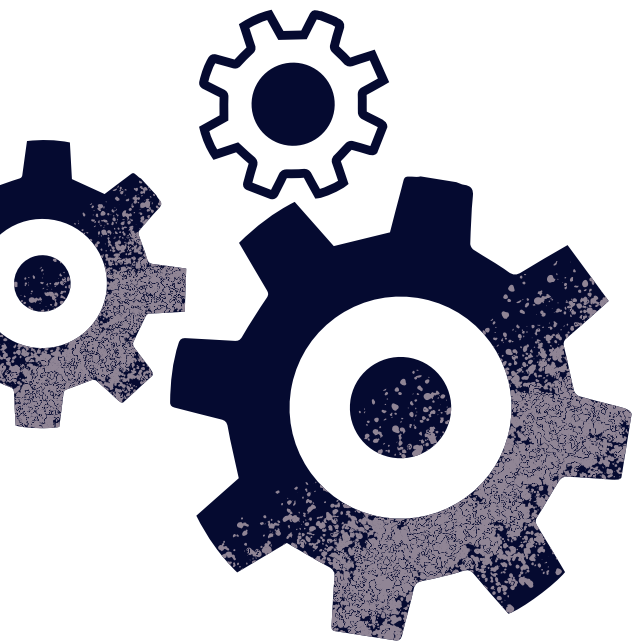
UN - United Nations

UNSR - United Nations Special Rapporteur

UNSR FoAA - United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association



ACRONYMS



The Framework for Joint Action establishes envisaged joint actions to enhance the mechanisms' responses to major existing and emerging trends undermining civic space in all regions of the world.

INTRODUCTION

This Framework for Joint Action is the outcome of a meeting held in Warsaw in November 2022, co-hosted by the OSCE/ODIHR, convened by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association (SR on FoAA), Clément N. Voule, which mobilized representatives of all regional mechanisms mandated with the protection of human rights and the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. The mechanisms, concerned with the serious threats and restrictions on these fundamental freedoms, affecting all world regions, discussed common challenges and committed to strengthen their collaboration and joint action for the promotion and protection of these fundamental rights.

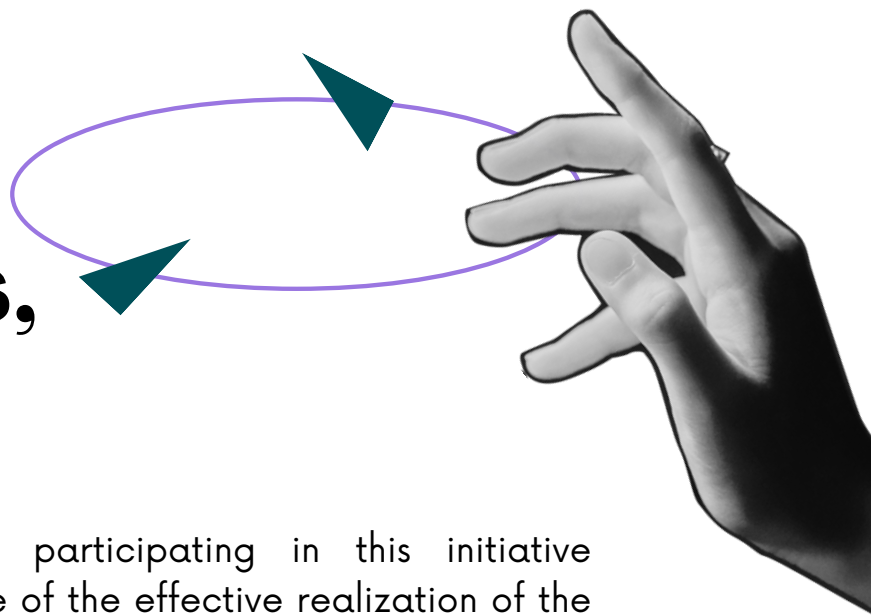
The Framework for Joint Action builds on the Statement launched at the Warsaw meeting and existing initiatives between the international and regional human rights mechanisms, such as the joint declarations, issued annually since 2020. It is also drawing on the roadmap adopted between the UN Special Procedures and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (the Addis Ababa Roadmap), and the roadmap between the UN Special Procedures and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Framework also endeavors to fulfil calls by the Human Rights Council and other intergovernmental bodies to encourage cooperation between international and regional human rights mechanisms with the common objective to promote and protect human rights.[1]

The Framework for Joint Action establishes envisaged joint actions to enhance the mechanisms' responses to major existing and emerging trends undermining civic space in all regions of the world.

With this Framework for Joint Action, the mechanisms seek to increase coordination, impact and visibility of their efforts to promote and protect the rights to peaceful assembly and association. It is intended to generate synergies among the mechanisms, and reinforce their work on assembly and association rights, while bearing in mind differences between the different mechanisms, including in mandate and geographic scope. The Framework was developed in consultation with civil society organizations working at the regional and at the global level.

[1] For instance, the Human Rights Council resolution 50/17 of 20 July 2022.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES, GLOBAL SOLUTIONS



The human rights mechanisms participating in this initiative recognize the critical importance of the effective realization of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for the existence of a democratic society and the advancement of other human rights. They recall States have the primary duty to respect, protect and fulfill these fundamental rights without discrimination. In particular, States have a positive obligation to create an enabling environment for freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, including by ensuring that laws and rules governing these freedoms comply with international human rights norms and standards, and by taking effective measures to prevent and account for human rights violations and abuses against those exercising these fundamental freedoms.

The human rights mechanisms participating in this initiative are deeply concerned about the trend of increased restrictions and attacks on freedoms to peaceful assembly and association across the world. Repressive laws have proliferated, imposing severe restrictions on these fundamental freedoms. For instance, each year, the list of countries enacting laws that restrict civil society's access to funding grows. Peaceful assemblies are often seen by States as a threat and met with unlawful and excessive force. Demonstrators, journalists, activists and human rights defenders have been killed and subjected to arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearance, torture and ill treatment, sexual violence, harassment and criminalization as reprisal for exercising these freedoms.

While recognizing that digital technologies have helped civil society and social movements to grow their networks and impact, they have also facilitated the arbitrary use of surveillance and censorship against human rights defenders, protesters and political opponents. The COVID-19 pandemic and other types of crises facing the world have propelled the unjustified and continued use of state of emergency measures to clampdown on civic space.

Impunity for these violations is all too common and promises of accountability remain largely unfulfilled in many countries worldwide, which fosters the repeated and growing repression of these rights.

The human rights mechanisms participating in this initiative understand that these are global and interconnected challenges that require global and coordinated responses. They endeavor to work together to use the full spectrum of the tools available to their respective mandates to counter these trends.

1

Seek and develop collaborated and coordinated actions

ENVISAGED JOINT ACTIONS

This includes for the mechanisms to consider participation in the following joint actions, where possible and in light of mandate and resources:

- a. Annual Joint Declaration addressing persistent or emerging global challenges to FoAA;
- b. Joint public statements and press releases;
- c. Involvement, as appropriate, in thematic work undertaken by the different mechanisms, including but not limited to, input to thematic reports through calls for submissions, questionnaires and other means, and provision of regional expertise at meetings and consultations convened prior to and/or as a follow-up to thematic reports;
- d. Identification of issues or thematic areas which the UNSR FoAA, and the regional mechanisms could address collaboratively, including emerging issues of common concern that would benefit from discussion between mechanisms;
- e. Collaboration in the development of guidelines or practical tools to promote FoAA;
- f. Joint review, collaboration or input in the analysis of legislation and public policies to promote compliance with human rights norms and standards relating to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association;
- g. Identification of cases pending before regional tribunals and bodies in which the UNSR FoAA and regional mechanisms could participate as amici curiae;
- h. Joint efforts, as appropriate, to promote effective compliance of judgments and decisions adopted by regional courts and bodies concerning FoAA;
- i. Follow-up of country-based recommendations relating to the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association formulated by the UNSR FoAA and the regional mechanisms throughout their respective activities, and
- j. When possible, joint country visits by the UNSR FoAA and the respective regional mechanisms.

ENVISAGED JOINT ACTIONS

2

Ensure systematic and timely information and knowledge sharing

This includes for the mechanisms to consider participation in the following joint actions, where possible in light of mandate and resources:

- a. Exchange of existing information tools, such as monthly bulletins and newsletters;
- b. Systematic sharing of statements and press releases pertaining to FoAA issued separately by the mechanisms;
- c. Exchange calendar and information about key planned events and activities, including country visits;
- d. Exchange information about upcoming research and knowledge products, including thematic reports;
- e. Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and learning, including participation at learning sessions of respective mechanisms, and exploration of exchange activities for staff; Exchange information about key decisions and rulings on FoAA adopted by regional mechanisms;
- f. Timely sharing of information needed to mobilize coordinated action aimed at prevention of serious violations of FoAA;
- g. Inclusion of information generated by regional mechanisms on countries' engagement, country-based recommendations and status of implementation, if available, in the background information provided to the UNSR FoAA prior to and during country visits and vice versa, and
- h. Keeping an up-to-date list of focal points responsible for supporting the mechanisms' work on FoAA and other contacts needed to facilitate desk-to-desk exchanges and coordination, including for the purposes of early warning and rapid response.

3

Build and strengthen collaboration for visibility and impact

ENVISAGED JOINT ACTIONS

This includes for the mechanisms to consider participation in the following joint actions, where possible in light of mandate and resources:

- a. Joint annual meeting and public events to highlight thematic areas of common concern, including to discuss or launch the annual Joint Declaration;
- b. Participation in other promotional events organized separately by the mechanisms;
- c. Identification of successful strategies, including innovative approaches and good practices, adopted by the different mechanisms to promote and protect FoAA;
- d. Coordination and, as appropriate, joint training and capacity building activities, including directed at public officials, and, upon invitation, participation in capacity building activities organized separately by the mechanisms, and
- e. Engagement and partnership with civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, and any other relevant partners of across regions to enhance the visibility and impact of the work of the mechanisms relating to FoAA.



IMPLEMENTATION

This Framework for Joint Action will be implemented by the UNSR FoAA and participating regional human rights mechanisms in accordance with their respective institutional mandates and functions, geographic scope and capacity. An annual coordination meeting will be held to set priorities and plan joint activities under this Framework, according to the institutional mandates and the situation in the respective regions. In the annual meeting the mechanisms will also review progress and obstacles in the implementation of this Framework.

The UNSR FoAA will promote and facilitate the implementation of this Framework. To this end, during 2023, a pilot phase will be conducted to strengthen synergies for joint action, exchange of information and mutual learning.

Dialogue and consultation with civil society and national human rights institutions is a key aspect of the implementation of this initiative. The UNSR and regional mechanisms will seek to engage with these actors to promote joint activities towards the effective implementation of the commitments established here. In particular, the UNSR and regional mechanisms will seek the participation and consultation of a broad sector of civil society in their annual meetings, public events and in the preparation of their annual joint declaration. The mechanisms will review progress and obstacles in the implementation of this Framework at every annual meeting.

The activities to be implemented under this Joint Framework for Action will be funded by the UNSR FoAA and each regional mechanism, as appropriate. The UNSR FoAA and the regional mechanisms may collaborate to mobilize funds when needed for a specific activity or project under this Framework.

FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT ACTION.

