

P7_TA(2013)0055

22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

European Parliament resolution of 7 February 2013 on the 22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (2013/2533(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to UN human rights conventions and optional protocols thereto,
- having regard to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council (UNHRC),
- having regard to the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000 and to the UN General Assembly resolutions thereon,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights,
- having regard to the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, as adopted at the 3179th Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 25 June 2012,
- having regard to its recommendation to the Council of 13 June 2012 on the EU Special Representative for Human Rights¹,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), including Parliament's priorities in this context; having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 16 February 2012 on Parliament's position on the 19th session of the UN Human Rights Council²,
- having regard to the report of the delegation from its Subcommittee on Human Rights on its visit to the 19th session of the UNHRC, and to that of the joint delegation from its Committee on Foreign Affairs, its Subcommittee on Human Rights and its Subcommittee on Security and Defence which attended the 67th session of the UN General Assembly,
- having regard to its urgency resolutions on human rights issues,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the review of the EU's human rights strategy³,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2011 and the European Union's policy on the matter⁴,

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0250.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0058.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0504.

⁴ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0503.

- having regard to Articles 2, 3(5), 18, 21, 27 and 47 of the Treaty on European Union,
 - having regard to the forthcoming sessions of the UNHRC in 2013, in particular the 22nd regular session to be held from 25 February to 22 March 2013,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas respect for, and the promotion and safeguarding of, the universality of human rights is part of the European Union's ethical and legal *acquis* and one of the cornerstones of European unity and integrity¹;
 - B. whereas successful implementation of the EU's recent review of its human rights strategy should enhance the EU's credibility in the UNHRC by increasing consistency between its internal and external policies;
 - C. whereas the EU should strive to speak out against human rights violations in united common positions in order to achieve the best possible results and should in this context continue to strengthen cooperation and enhance organisational arrangements and coordination between the Member States;
 - D. whereas the Council of the European Union has adopted a Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and an Action Plan for its implementation, with the aim of achieving a more effective, visible and consistent EU policy in this field;
 - E. whereas an EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR) acting under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was appointed on 25 July 2012, whose role it is to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of EU human rights policy and contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy;
 - F. whereas a delegation from its Subcommittee on Human Rights will travel to Geneva during the 22nd session of the UNHRC, as has been the case for previous years' UNHRC sessions;
1. Takes note of the ongoing process of confirming EU priorities for the 22nd session of the UNHRC; welcomes the focus given by the EU to the situation in Syria, Burma/Myanmar, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Mali, as well as its support for the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran; also endorses the focus on thematic issues such as freedom of thought, religion and belief, the abolition of the death penalty, the rights of the child, business and human rights, violence against women and LGBTI rights;
 2. Welcomes the fact that the agenda for the 22nd regular session includes panel discussions on human rights mainstreaming, the negative impact of the financial and economic crisis and of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights, and the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, interactive debates, *inter alia* on the rights of persons with disabilities, and extensive meetings on various issues, such as children's right to enjoy the highest attainable standards of health; calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States actively to contribute to these debates and clearly to state that human rights are universal, indivisible

¹ Article 2, Article 3(5) and Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union.

and interdependent;

3. Welcomes the reports to be presented by the Special Rapporteurs on, *inter alia*, the human rights situations in Iran, Burma/Myanmar and the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, along with the written report to be presented by the High Commissioner on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Mali, particularly the northern part of the country, as well as on housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, on the right to non-discrimination in this context, on freedom of thought, religion or belief and on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism;

The work of the UN Human Rights Council

4. Notes that 18 new members were elected to the UNHRC in September 2012 and took up their membership on 1 January 2013, namely Argentina, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Ethiopia, Gabon, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Montenegro, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and notes that nine EU Member States are now UNHRC members;
5. Notes the election of a new President of the UNHRC, Remigiusz A. Henczel, from Poland, and of four Vice-Presidents for 2013, Cheikh Ahmed Ould Zahaf (Mauritania), Iruthisham Adam (Maldives), Luis Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) and Alexandre Fasel (Switzerland);
6. Stresses that elections to the UNHRC need to be competitive, and expresses its opposition to the arranging of uncontested elections by regional groups; reiterates the importance of standards for UNHRC membership as regards commitment and performance in the human rights field; emphasises that UNHRC members are required to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights; reiterates the importance of strong and transparent criteria for reinstating suspended members;
7. Considers it regrettable that the authorities of Kazakhstan, which is a newly elected member of the UNHRC, have so far refused to allow an independent international investigation into the events in Zhanaozen, in spite of the calls made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and by Parliament;
8. Remains concerned about the phenomenon of 'bloc politics' and its effect on the credibility of the UNHRC and the effectiveness of its work;
9. Welcomes the appointment by the UN General Assembly of Navanethem Pillay for a second term as High Commissioner for Human Rights; reiterates its strong support for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and for its independence and integrity;
10. Commends the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her efforts in the treaty body strengthening process and welcomes her report on this issue published on 22 June 2012; reaffirms the multi-stakeholder nature of the treaty bodies and emphasises that civil society needs to be continuously included in these processes; stresses, furthermore, that the independence and effectiveness of the treaty bodies must be preserved and enhanced; emphasises that sufficient funding needs to be secured in order to cover the treaty bodies'

increasing workload; calls for the EU to adopt a leadership role in ensuring the effective functioning of the treaty body system, including with regard to adequate funding;

Arab Spring countries

11. Condemns in the strongest terms the increasing and indiscriminate violence used by the Assad regime against the Syrian population, including the use of heavy artillery and shelling against populated areas, summary executions and enforced disappearances; condemns unequivocally the continued systematic human rights violations by the regime, which may amount to crimes against humanity; expresses grave concern about the continuously deteriorating situation for the civilian population; condemns, furthermore, human rights violations committed by opposition groups and forces; calls on all armed actors to put an immediate end to the violence in Syria; and reiterates its call for the Assad regime to step down immediately and for the initiation of a peaceful process of political transition; urges all parties to the conflict to ensure full and secure cross-border access for international humanitarian aid efforts;
12. Expresses its concern about the effects of the Syrian crisis on security and stability in the region; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide assistance to the countries in the region in their efforts to provide humanitarian relief for refugees from Syria;
13. Welcomes the continued attention given by the UNHRC to the dire human rights and humanitarian situation in Syria, as evidenced by the resolutions on the situation in that country adopted at the UNHRC's 19th, 20th and 21st sessions and at its Special Session on Syria held on 1 June 2012; urges the EEAS and the Member States to ensure that the situation in Syria continues to be treated with the highest priority within the UN framework, notably in the UNHCR; reiterates the importance of ensuring accountability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that have been committed during the conflict;
14. Expresses its full support for the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria and for the UNHRC's extension of its mandate; stresses the importance of the admissibility of digital evidence of crimes, violence and human rights violations; welcomes the appointment of Carla del Ponte and Vitit Muntarhorn as new members, and the appointment of Paolo Pinheiro as Special Rapporteur on Syria, who will start his work once the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry ends; welcomes the Commission's report exposing the atrocities carried out in Syria;
15. Considers it regrettable that agreement has not yet been reached on the adoption of a resolution in the UN Security Council (UNSC) on the situation in Syria and, in particular, that this is stifling the ability to exert effective pressure with a view to ending the violence in the country; calls on the UNSC members to bear in mind their responsibility towards the Syrian people; commends the diplomatic efforts of the VP/HR and the EU Member States in engaging China and Russia on this issue; calls on them to continue with these efforts; also reminds all UN member states of the 'responsibility to protect' principle embraced by the UN General Assembly; calls on all states to work on a UNSC referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC), and welcomes the Swiss-led initiative of a joint letter on behalf of 58 countries, including 26 EU Member States, in this direction; urges the EU High Representative personally to engage in building a large and inclusive international coalition to support such a referral;

16. Welcomes the final written report by the Independent Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Libya, presented during the UNHRC's 19th session, which highlighted human rights violations committed in that country; urges the UNHRC to express concern at ongoing violations, to continue to monitor the situation and to request that the High Commissioner report on the human rights situation in Libya;
17. Calls on the United Arab Emirates, as a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council and one of the 14 states to have their human rights records reviewed by the Universal Periodic Review Working Group session, to put an end to the current crackdown on peaceful human rights defenders and political activists and to honour its commitments to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights;
18. Expresses concern about the situation of human rights defenders and political opposition activists in Bahrain; reiterates its call for the EU Member States to work towards the adoption during the 22nd session of the UNHRC of a resolution on the human rights situation in Bahrain, which would include the establishment of an international mechanism in order to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, including those concerning human rights defenders;
19. Welcomes the resolution adopted by the UNHRC in October 2012 on technical assistance and capacity building for Yemen in the field of human rights and the establishment of an OHCHR Country Office in Yemen; urges the UNHRC to continue to monitor the situation in the country;
20. Expresses deep concern about the ongoing political instability and the current resurgence of violence in Egypt; fully supports a transition to a democratic society, based on the rule of law and a constitutional framework, which fully respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the freedom of expression, women's rights and respect for minorities; urges the Egyptian authorities to start a transparent investigation into the use of violence by security forces and the police against protesters and to ensure accountability for human rights violations; reiterates the EU's position against the death penalty and calls, in this connection, for a moratorium on the execution of death penalties in Egypt, including in the case of the 21 people recently sentenced to death for last year's Port Said football stadium disaster;
21. Expresses its concern at the continued violation of human rights in Western Sahara; calls for the protection of the fundamental rights of the people of Western Sahara, including freedom of association, freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate; demands the release of all Sahrawi political prisoners; welcomes the establishment of a Special Envoy for the Sahel and stresses the need for international monitoring of the human rights situation in Western Sahara; supports a fair and lasting settlement of the conflict on the basis of the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

Other issues

22. Welcomes the UNHRC's decision to appoint a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus, and takes note of the cross-regional support for the resolution establishing this mandate, which illustrates that the dire human rights situation in that country is being acknowledged by states all over the world;

23. Welcomes the extension of the mandates of the independent experts on Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and Somalia; urges the authorities of these countries to cooperate fully with the mandate-holders;
24. Calls for the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran;
25. Calls for the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) for another year; welcomes the fact that the resolution on the DPRK was adopted by consensus, which illustrates the strong level of support for the mandate; urges the Government of the DPRK to cooperate fully with the Rapporteur and facilitate his visits to the country; urges the UNHRC to act on the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an international commission of inquiry into serious crimes that have been taking place in the DPRK for decades;
26. Welcomes the resolution adopted by the UNHRC on Burma/Myanmar and calls for the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in that country; notes the steps taken by the Burmese Government since early 2011 to restore civil liberties in the country; expresses grave concern, however, about the heavy civilian casualties resulting from the military operations in Kashin State as well as the upsurge in communal violence in Rakhine State and the subsequent deaths and injuries, destruction of property and displacement of local populations; believes that the underlying cause of the situation lies in the long-standing discriminatory policies against the Rohingya and Kashin populations; stresses that greater efforts are needed in order to solve the root cause of the problem; urges the Government of Myanmar to accelerate the implementation of its commitment to establishing an OHCHR Country Office in Myanmar and stresses that continued reporting and monitoring by the Special Rapporteur should be maintained in the current context;
27. Welcomes also the resolution on Sri Lanka emphasising reconciliation and accountability in that country; reiterates its support for the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka, including the strict upholding of the independence of the judiciary with a view, *inter alia*, to the effective prosecution of past war crimes;
28. Welcomes the resolution adopted at the 20th session of the UNHCR establishing a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea; notes that this is the first time the UNHRC has addressed this issue and applauds the leadership shown by African countries on this matter;
29. Welcomes the fact that the situation in Mali is being kept under close scrutiny by the UNHRC and applauds the leadership shown by the African states that brought the issue to the attention of the UNHRC; urges the UNHRC to support the swift deployment of monitoring capacities in Mali and to request that the OHCHR continue to report on the situation in the country;
30. Welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but remains concerned about the human rights situation in that country, in particular in the North Kivu province in the east; strongly condemns the attacks by rebel forces in the east of the country, in particular by the M23 movement, on the civilian population, including

women and children; strongly condemns the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war; expresses deep concern about the ongoing use of children as soldiers and calls for their disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration; welcomes the efforts being made to find a peaceful political solution to the crisis by the member states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the UN; calls again for the re-establishment of a UN Independent Expert on the human rights situation in the DRC in order to provide a reliable mechanism focusing on improving the situation regarding the grave and long-standing human rights concerns in the country;

31. Expresses concern at the situation in the Central African Republic, where armed groups have attacked and occupied several towns in the north-east of the country; welcomes the agreements signed in Libreville on 11 January 2013, including the ceasefire agreement and the political agreement on the resolution of the crisis in the country; stresses the importance of the swift implementation of these agreements; welcomes the EU VP/HR's statement of 11 January 2013, calling for all signatories to uphold these agreements; urges the Member States to raise this matter in the UNHRC in order to keep the issue of the situation in the Central African Republic high on the international agenda;
32. Expresses its concern at the situation in Israel and Gaza following the escalation of the conflict at the end of 2012 and condemns all acts of violence; reiterates its call for the lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, while taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns, and calls for steps to be taken towards the reconstruction and economic recovery of the Gaza Strip; welcomes the international fact-finding mission on Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory established during the 19th UNHRC session, and looks forward to its reporting back during the 22nd UNHRC session; expresses its concern that Israel has suspended its cooperation with the UNHRC and the Universal Periodic Review; strongly encourages all efforts towards a two-state solution;
33. Welcomes the UN General Assembly's adoption on 29 November 2012 of the resolution making Palestine a UN non-member observer state; reiterates its support for this endeavour; notes the support expressed by the EU for Palestine to become a full member of the UN as part of a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; reaffirms that the EU will not accept any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties;
34. Welcomes the importance placed by the UNHRC on the right to housing and calls on the Union and the Member States to promote access to adequate housing as a fundamental right;
35. Condemns the recent mass executions that have been carried out in Iran; reaffirms its strong stance against the death penalty in all cases and under all circumstances;
36. Deplores the executions carried out in Japan in 2012 following the moratorium on this practice during 2011, the six executions carried out in Taiwan in December 2012 and the continued use of capital punishment in Saudi Arabia throughout 2012; considers deeply regrettable the breach of the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty observed by India since 2004, through the execution of a convict in November 2012, which also goes against the global trend towards abolition; urges all countries which still maintain the death penalty to abolish it or at least to implement a moratorium on executions;
37. Recalls the critical importance attached by the EU to the fight against torture and other

forms of ill-treatment; urges the Commission and the Member States to demonstrate their common commitment to eradicating the scourge of torture and to supporting victims, notably by contributing to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the Special Fund established by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture;

38. Notes with satisfaction the adoption of the UNHRC resolution on freedom of religion or belief; stresses the emphasis which the EU places on this issue; calls on the Member States to continue working on the issue, and looks forward to the new EU guidelines which are expected early this year; commends the work done by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; stresses the importance of renewing this mandate during the 22nd session of the UNHRC; stresses the continued need to address fully the problem of discrimination against religious minorities around the world; reiterates that freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change or abandon one's religion or belief, is a fundamental human right;
39. Welcomes the ongoing process of follow-up to the report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity; encourages further follow-up, including through regional meetings, and the active participation of EU Member States, the Council and the EEAS; absolutely deplores, in this regard, the handing down of the death penalty, prison terms or criminal convictions on grounds of sexual orientation in some countries, and calls for its immediate end; welcomes the leadership of the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding this issue, both inside and outside the UNHRC; considers regrettable the ongoing attempts to undermine the universality and indivisibility of human rights, in particular through a resolution on 'traditional values';
40. Notes the first annual Forum on Business and Human Rights held in Geneva from 4 to 6 December 2012, which brought together a broad range of stakeholders to discuss the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles in this area; supports the Forum's initial consultations on how governments and business can be made to adopt regulatory, policy and implementation frameworks to counter business-related human rights abuses;
41. Welcomes the work of the open-ended intergovernmental working group on private military and security companies (PMSCs), which has a mandate to consider the possibility of an international regulatory framework; recognises the detailed attention given to the option of elaborating a legally binding instrument on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of PMSCs and expresses its support for such a legally binding regulatory framework; insists on a strong accountability component and invites PMSCs that have not yet signed the Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) to adhere to it; looks forward to the presentation of the working group's report; calls for the continuation of this working group's mandate;
42. Emphasises the significance of the universal nature of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) exercise, and reaffirms the importance of the UPR with a view to arriving at a full understanding of the human rights situation on the ground in all UN member states;
43. Welcomes the commencement of the UPR's second cycle and the adoption of the first outcomes thereof; reiterates the importance of the second cycle focusing on the implementation of the recommendations accepted during the first cycle; calls again, however, for the recommendations that were not accepted by states during the first cycle to

be reconsidered in the continuation of the UPR process;

44. Believes that implementation is a key aspect in realising the potential of the UPR process; reiterates, therefore, the importance of the Commission and the Member States providing technical assistance in order to help the states under review to implement the recommendations; encourages states, furthermore, to present mid-term updates in order to help improve implementation;
45. Calls on EU Member States participating in the UPR interactive dialogues to put forward recommendations that are specific and measurable, in order to improve the quality of the follow-up to, and implementation of, accepted recommendations;
46. Recommends including the UPR recommendations systematically in the EU's human rights dialogues and consultations and in EU human rights country strategies, to ensure that UPR outcomes are followed up; recommends, similarly, that Parliament raise these recommendations during its own delegation visits to third countries;
47. Welcomes steps that allow the full participation in the UPR process of a wide range of stakeholders; welcomes, in this connection, the changes to the speakers' list, which gives all states that wish to speak during the UPR process a chance to do so; reiterates its appreciation of the stronger role gained by national human rights institutions, in line with the Paris Principles; welcomes the enhanced participation from the field thanks to the increased use of videoconferencing;
48. Believes that more can be done to involve civil society in the UPR process, including in the implementation of the outcomes thereof, and more generally in the work of the UNHRC;

Special Procedures

49. Reaffirms the crucial role which the Special Procedures play in the credibility and effectiveness of the work of the UNHRC and their core position in the UN human rights machinery; reiterates its strong support for the Special Procedures and stresses the fundamental importance of the independence of these mandates;
50. Urges states to cooperate fully with the Special Procedures, including by receiving mandate-holders for country visits without delay, replying to their urgent actions and allegations of violations and ensuring proper follow-up to the recommendations made by the mandate-holders; urges UNHRC members to lead by example on these issues;
51. Welcomes the action taken by the EU jointly to extend a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures on human rights, thereby leading by example on this issue; encourages other UN member states to do the same;
52. Condemns all forms of reprisal against persons who cooperate with the UPR process and the Special Procedures; stresses that such action undermines the whole UN human rights system; urges all states to provide adequate protection against such acts of intimidation;

EU involvement

53. Reiterates in the strongest possible terms the importance of the EU participating actively in the UN human rights mechanisms, including the UNHRC; encourages the Member States to

do so by co-sponsoring resolutions, by actively participating in debates and interactive dialogues, and by issuing statements; strongly supports the increasing recourse by the EU to cross-regional initiatives;

54. Stresses the importance of integrating the work being done in Geneva in the context of the UNHRC into the relevant internal and external activities of the EU, including those of Parliament;
55. Underlines the importance of the establishment of the position of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR); encourages the EUSR to enhance the effectiveness, coherence and visibility of the EU's human rights policy in the context of the UNHRC and to develop close cooperation with the OHCHR and the Special Procedures;
56. Encourages the VP/HR and the EUSR to be present at the High Level Segment of the UNHRC;
57. Reiterates the potential effectiveness of EU action when the Union and its Member States harness their collective weight; stresses the importance of continuing to enhance the coordination and cooperation between the Member States in this regard in order to reach common ground on human rights issues; calls again for bolder and more ambitious action and concrete commitments instead of resorting to accepting the lowest common denominator; encourages, in this connection, the EEAS, in particular through the EU delegations in Geneva and New York, to increase its coherence by means of timely and substantive consultation;
58. Stresses the significance of the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first occasion on which the EU ratified a UN convention as a legal entity; and calls on the EU to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
59. Reiterates once more the importance of the EU Member States working towards the fulfilment of the indivisibility and universality of human rights and supporting the work of the UNHRC in this respect, in particular by ratifying all the international human rights instruments that this body has established; reiterates its regret that no EU Member State has ratified the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; reiterates, too, its regret that several Member States have not yet adopted and/or ratified the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance or the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and that only two Member States have ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; reiterates its call for all the Member States to ratify these conventions and protocols, and encourages them to sign and ratify the recent Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which was opened for signature in Geneva, Switzerland, on 28 February 2012; stresses the importance of the Member States submitting their periodic reports to the UN monitoring bodies in a timely manner;
60. Reiterates how important it is for the EU to defend the independence of the OHCHR and to ensure that it can continue to exercise its tasks in an impartial manner; and recalls the importance of ensuring that sufficient funding is provided to keep the OHCHR regional offices open;

61. Notes that the protection of human rights defenders is a key priority within the EU's human rights policy; emphasises that reprisals and intimidation against human rights defenders (HRDs) who cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms threatens to undermine this system; appreciates, therefore, the practical and financial support allocated to the urgent protection of and support for HRDs under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR);
62. Welcomes the establishment in 2012 of the Brussels-based Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM); acknowledges the efforts of the COHOM to improve the preparation and coordination of EU positions for the UNHRC sessions, including the organisation of COHOM meetings in Geneva; reiterates its expectations that the COHOM will be instrumental in addressing the issue of consistency between the EU's external and internal human rights policy;
63. Expects the development of EU human rights country strategies to be duly coordinated with EU action in the UN forums; reiterates its recommendation that EU country strategies on human rights be communicated to the European Parliament and be made public where possible in order to give visibility to the EU's commitment to human rights in third countries and for those struggling for human rights to find support in these documents;
64. Stresses the importance of highlighting in the UNHRC the worrisome issue of the shrinking NGO space in a number of countries around the world; encourages the EEAS and the Member States to make concerted efforts to raise this issue;
65. Calls again, in the light of new reports of EU companies being complicit in human rights abuses in third countries, on the VP/HR to draw attention to this issue; calls on the Commission to develop a more ambitious policy on corporate social responsibility; urges the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to take effective measures to ensure corporate accountability for human rights violations; reiterates in this context the importance of making internal and external policies more consistent and of full respect for human rights in internal policies in order to avoid double standards;
66. Mandates its delegation to the 22nd session of the UNHRC to voice the concerns and views expressed in this resolution; calls on the delegation to report to the Subcommittee on Human Rights regarding its visit; considers it indispensable to continue the practice of sending a Parliament delegation to relevant UNHRC and UN General Assembly sessions;

o

o o

67. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative on Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, the President of the 67th UN General Assembly, the President of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EU-UN Working Group established by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.