



Digital
Security
Lab

Civil Society Engagement with International Institutions

Advocacy toolkit

Civil Society Engagement with International Institutions: Advocacy Toolkit -

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Digital Security Lab Ukraine, Kyiv, 2023.

This advocacy toolkit aimed to serve as a comprehensive guide for civil society on the instruments of advocacy directed at international and regional (European) human rights institutions and tech giants. It provides samples of successful interventions to international courts, as well as outlines the venues for other types of meaningful participation, exemplifies the forms and challenges that can be faced throughout the process. The toolkit also advises on the structure of contributions, prioritization, and collaboration with the relevant partners to achieve the goal sought within the advocacy efforts.

Digital Security Lab Ukraine is a non-government organization based in Kyiv, Ukraine. DSLU's mission is to support the implementation of human rights on the Internet by building the capacity of CSOs and independent media to have their digital security concerns addressed and by impacting the government and corporate policies in the field of digital rights.

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INTRODUCTION

Contributing to the development of international legal and policy approaches should be an important area of civil society efforts. International organizations, judicial and quasi-judicial bodies experience a growing need to get acquainted with the local and regional contexts “from the first hand” in order to propose adequate solutions to global challenges.

What is the purpose of the advocacy efforts? First and foremost, to build a sustainable legal and policy framework in a particular field. For example, the [UNICEF advocacy guide](#) in the sphere of education directly stresses the need to collect diverse experiences and signalize about local issues, which cannot be neglected in decision-making processes while taking both individualized and all-encompassing decisions.

What form shall the advocacy efforts take? Advocacy can be targeted or general. For example, it can be directed at a specific body with decision-making capacities, such as UNESCO, the General Assembly, the European Court on Human Rights, etc. It also can take the form of open letters or public statements, which amount rather to the proclamation of one's position than specific changes to a particular document or practice of an international tribunal. In any event, advocacy efforts shall aim at achieving a defined goal and outcomes.

What outcomes shall the advocates expect? The submissions shall necessarily pursue the goal of defending or bringing to the table the public interest, providing the overview of the outstanding issue, and proposing the solution to a legal or policy problem faced. It may include the rights of vulnerable or marginalized groups, public order and security, respect towards cultural and social diversity, or protection of any other legitimate value. Generally, advocacy tools are [considered](#) useful and successful if they fulfil four criteria:

- raise awareness on the public view on the issues reviewed by international organization or international tribunal;
- increase the legitimacy of international bodies by diversifying their pool of opinions, sources, and data available;
- increase transparency of international adjudication and decision-making;
- secure the coherence and integrity of the international legal and policy order.

With this in mind, experts willing to contribute to the decision-making process on the international arena shall design their interventions to bring the local contexts and draw attention to the legal and policy implications, resulting from the position undertaken by the international body. Akin to the general rules, there are procedures and requirements depending on the nature, powers, and specialization of the international bodies, which can receive interventions from third parties.

This toolkit provides guidance on civil society engagement with regional institutions (Council of Europe bodies, European Court of Human Rights), UN bodies, international courts, and Meta Supervisory Board as a new instrument to impact the policies of big tech corporations.

1. ECtHR INTERVENTIONS

Interventions serve as a helpful tool for the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter - the ECtHR) and its “*interest of the proper administration of justice*” to decide on a particular legal issue. Since the Third Party is not involved in the official proceedings, its objective views help the Court in reaching its decision. Interventions are especially important when the particular case has an influence on the subsequent practice or concerns the establishment of new standards.

Who can participate as an intervener? The possibility to make contributions to the work of the Court is provided by para 2 of Article 36 of the Convention, which is drafted as follows:

The President of the Court may, in the interest of the proper administration of justice, invite any High Contracting Party which is not a party to the proceedings or any person concerned who is not the applicant to submit written comments or take part in hearings.

Accordingly, this rule covers both legal entities and persons, who have expertise in a given issue and who might be impacted by the outcome of the case or advisory opinion delivered by the Court. Basically, no limitations as to the nature of the intervener are established, except for expertise. The final decision as to the suitability and relevance of the interveners’ experience, however, is made by the Court itself.

Where to find cases to submit the intervention for? To identify the case most suitable for the intervention, the Court’s official website [HUDOC](#) and the section “Communicated Cases” have to be monitored regularly. If there is a need for a specific case, another section “Filters” allows filtering the search bar by narrowing it to a particular concerned State or Article involved, as well as the stage of the case review (Chamber or Grand Chamber).



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CASE OF GAIÐUKEVICH v. GEORGIA

38650/18 | Available only in [English](#) | Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction) | Court (Fifth Section)

Preliminary objection joined to merits and dismissed (Art. 34) Individual applications (Art. 34) Victim \

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| LANGUAGE ? | IMPORTANCE ? |
| English (20762) | 3 (33181) |
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| Turkish (3662) | Key cases (9813) |
| Russian (2934) | 1 (5477) |
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| Türkiye (10884) | 41 (34935) |
| Italy (5983) | 6 (32961) |
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| 3 (3043) | 3 (8295) |
| 8 (2947) | 5 (7595) |
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AFFAIRE FANOUNI c. FRANCE

31185/18 | Available only in [French](#) | Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction) | Court (General Council)

Non-violation de l'article 2 du Protocole n° 4 - Liberté de circulation-[général] (Article 2)

[Case Details](#) [Press Release](#) [Related](#)

AFFAIRE GAIÐUKEVICH c. GÉORGIE

38650/18 | Available only in [English](#) | Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction) | Court (Fifth Section)

Exception préliminaire jointe au fond et rejetée (Art. 34) Recours individuel (Art. 34)

[Case Details](#) [Press Release](#) [Related](#)

CASE OF KHOKHLOV v. CYPRUS

53114/20 | Available only in [English](#) | Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction) | Court (Fifth Section)

Violation of Article 5 - Right to liberty and security (Article 5-4 - Speediness of review)

[Case Details](#) [Press Release](#) [Related](#)

CASE OF BADALYAN v. ARMENIA

28215/11 | Available only in [English](#) | Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction) | Court (Fifth Section)

Preliminary objections joined to merits and dismissed (Art. 35) Admissibility criteria (Art. 35)

[Case Details](#) [Press Release](#) [Related](#)

CASE OF SPERISEN v. SWITZERLAND

22060/20 | Available only in [French](#) | Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction) | Court (Fifth Section)

Remainder inadmissible (Art. 35) Admissibility criteria (Art. 35-1) Exhaustion of domi

How to request a leave for intervention? The Third Party has to notify the Registry of the Court with the permission to intervene. The intervention can be submitted only based on the Registry's approval of the intervention leave.

The request to leave must be written in English or French (the official languages of the Court) and shall include:

- introduction of the Third Party;
- main goals, activities, and expertise of the Third Party;
- reasons for intervention;
- issues proposed to be addressed by the Third Party;
- contributions to the Court Third Party can make;
- contact details of the Third Party.

It will be an asset if the Third Party has already made similar interventions to the Court or has dealt directly with the issues raised before the Court in its domestic and international practice. The request for the intervention by Digital Security Lab Ukraine in the case *Pătrașcu v Romania* is an example of how the leave can be drafted to receive approval from the Registry.

What is the time frame for submitting an intervention? According to Rule 44-2(3)(b) of the Rules of the Court, “*requests for leave for this purpose must be duly reasoned and submitted ... not later than twelve weeks after the publication on the Court’s case-law database, HUDOC, of the information that notice of the application has been given to the respondent Contracting Party*”. In practice, such a time limit is even shorter due to the late publication of cases on the official website of the Court.

Rules do not contain specific time limits for submitting an intervention after approval of the intervention leave. The specific time frame is provided by the Registry in the letter of approval of the request. For example, they may approve intervention, but postpone it until the end of the friendly settlement. However, practice demonstrates that a Third Party usually has 3 weeks to submit an official intervention to the case, which happens during periods of friendly settlements and exchange of observations for the Court to get all necessary information at once from all parties.

It is also good to have a structure of the intervention and research around the issues planned to be raised in advance. Particularly, the letters from the Registry approving the intervention leave can be delayed due to mailing services operation troubles and the organization will have less time than three weeks to draft the substance of the document.

What is the form for an intervention? The intervention has two sets of requirements - the formatting and the structural ones. Each of those requirements has to be fulfilled for the Court to accept the intervention and consider the recommendations.

Formatting requirements:

- language: English or French (can be a language of one of the Contracting Party if the prior notice is given)
- size (in pages): maximum 10 pages
- formal language (avoid using “don’t” rather than “do not”)
- reference to sources used
- unified formatting throughout the text

Outline of what the intervention shall include by its form:

- cover page
- introduction
- summary of the case
- raised legal issues
- conclusions

What the intervention shall and shall not include in substance?

	Shall include	Shall not include
Legal issues	General recommendations on interpretation of the rule of law	Elaboration on how the particular case shall be decided
Arguments of the parties	Information that goes beyond what was already presented	Repetition of the arguments of the parties (summary is provided on the Court's website)
ECtHR jurisprudence	Standards developed by the Court, (ir-)relevance of previously developed standards	Opinion on the Court's decisions if they do not relate to the discussed issue
Perspective	External point of view	Personification: usage of “we think” or “we consider”
Language	Neutral and objective	Expressive, abusive, or subjective

Examples of properly structured interventions can be found below:

1. Written [comments](#) in the case *Hurbain v Belgium* by Digital Security Lab Ukraine, ARTICLE 19, Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law and 13 others.
2. Written [comments](#) in the case *Patrascu v Romania* by Digital Security Lab Ukraine and ARTICLE 19.
3. Written [comments](#) in the case *M v France* by ULB Equality Law Clinic and Human Rights Center.
4. Written [comments](#) in the case *M.A. and Z.R. v Cyprus* by Human Rights Center and the European Law Institute at Ghent University.

How to submit an intervention? Third Party interventions are advised to be submitted both by fax and by post to the Registry of Court. The contact details of the Court's registry usually remain the same, however, it is advised to always refer to the Court's [website](#) to track any changes in the communication. As of now, the contacts are following:

European Court of Human Rights
Council of Europe
67075 Strasbourg Cedex
FRANCE

Tel : +33 (0)3 88 41 20 18
Fax : +33 (0)3 88 41 27 30
+33 (0)3 90 21 43 10

It is essential to mention the contact details of the Third Party such as an address, phone number, and email so that the registry could provide the Third Party with the further answer. Accordingly, interventions serve as an important instrument through which the protection of the standards can be guaranteed. They can significantly affect the Court's stance on a particular situation or case and it is important not to miss an opportunity to deliver the regional and local perspectives.

2. COUNCIL OF EUROPE BODIES

Communication with regard to the execution of judgments of the ECtHR

Who can submit a communication? According to Rule 9 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments and of the terms of friendly settlements, a communication can be submitted by:

- non-governmental organizations;
- national institutions;
- international intergovernmental organizations (its bodies, agencies).

What is the time frame for submitting a communication? Communication may be submitted at any time during the execution process. The execution process lasts until the Department for Execution of Judgements recognizes the procedure for execution as completed.

What is the content of the communication? Communication may be submitted in any case. Yet, since the organizations have to provide the reasoning for their interest in the execution of a particular judgment, the local organizations are reasonably more inclined to submit communications regarding the cases against their State. It shall be written in the following format:

<p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary of the case • aim of the communication 	
<p>Measures imposed (choose one):</p>	
<p>Individual measures:</p> <p>Include updated information on the measures (if present)</p> <p>Address the adequacy and effectiveness of the measures</p> <p>Require the prior adoption of general measures (if relevant)</p>	<p>General measures:</p> <p>Indicate whether the measures were already taken</p> <p>Present alternatives to general measures</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p> <p>contact details</p>	

How to submit a communication? Submissions should be addressed directly to the Head of the Department to the general mailbox, which as of now looks as following:

Council of Europe
DGI - Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law
Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECHR
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
FRANCE

tel: +33 (0)3 90 21 55 54
fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 93

Participatory status of INGOs

What are the advantages of participatory status? This status grants the opportunity to attend discussions on the draft laws as well as the Conference of independent non-governmental organisations (INGOs). The participation in such conferences of INGOs includes both formal and informal gatherings of civil society and representatives of the Member States for discussion of recent legislative procedures and policy. The status is granted once a year.

Who can apply for participatory status? The eligibility criteria are satisfied if the organization:

- respects and defends the values and principles of the Council of Europe;
- is able, to support the achievement of closer unity;
- is created on the basis of a constitutive act adopted according to democratic principles;

- has a democratic structure and governance;
- is particularly representative in the field(s) of their competence, fields of action shared by the Council of Europe;
- is represented at the European level, that is to say, which has members in at least five member States of the Council of Europe;
- was created and has implemented activities at least two years before the moment of applying for participatory status;
- already has working relations with the Council of Europe;
- is capable of contributing to and participating actively in Council of Europe deliberations and activities;
- is able to make known the work of the Council of Europe to society.

What is the content of the request? To receive the “Participatory status” the INGO has to send a request with the following information:

- (1) INGO's statute;
- (2) a list of its member organisations;
- (3) an activity and a financial report covering the previous two years;
- (4) a declaration of accepting the principles and values of the Council of Europe;
- (5) the official application [form](#).

How to submit a request? The information is advised to be sent to the Secretariat both in English and French languages to NGO-Unit@coe.int.

3. ICJ INTERVENTIONS

International Court of Justice (hereinafter - ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the UN and its primary role is to resolve disputes between the States. The ICJ recognizes the value of expert input from various stakeholders but overall access to non-state actors, in general, is pretty restrictive.

The ICJ **has no procedure** that would allow for any organization or expert to act upon their initiative to share their expertise. Practically, this process is driven by the Court or the States. The latter are expected to support the interests of their nationals and their submissions could form part of the written and/or oral submissions of the parties.

Does the ICJ have a special mechanism for *amicus curiae*? No. Unsolicited opinions are accepted publicly in exceptional circumstances, like in [South West Africa](#) (*Liberia v South Africa*), where the Court allowed the International League for the Rights of Man to file a submission on legal issues within the scope of the case (the organization ultimately failed to submit observations in the form and within the time limit established by the Court).

[Direction XII](#) adopted in 2004 provides that documents submitted do not become part of the case and “*shall be treated as publications readily available and may accordingly be referred to by States and intergovernmental organizations presenting written and oral statements in the case in the same manner as publications in the public domain*”. Thus, any contribution by civil society or individual experts is placed in the designated place in the Peace Palace and parties of the proceedings are informed about the availability of such materials.

If the organization nevertheless deems it important to submit its opinion to the Court, it may look for [pending cases](#) on the ICJ website. The [contacts](#) for communication are also available:

Peace Palace
Carnegieplein 2
2517 KJ The Hague, the Netherlands
Tel.: +31 70 302 23 23

information@icj-cij.org

What are the forms for the potential engagement with the ICJ? Teachings of the most highly qualified publicists are accepted as subsidiary means for the determination of the rule of law. It means the judges rely on it to develop their analysis of applicable law, for instance:

- Demonstrating widespread State practice;
- Interpreting a treaty provision (including authorised and non-authorized commentaries);
- Demonstrating an existence of a general principle of law;
- Explaining the practice of the Court itself;
- Providing general context for a specific point or case (mostly historical backgrounds);
- Directly demonstrate the existence of a rule of law.

The wider the expertise in international law, the higher the chances that the ICJ judges might **rely on a certain research**. Specialists in a particular domain are highly appreciated, but the chance to contribute to certain proceedings is lower since it depends primarily on the focus of the case reviewed by the ICJ. Sometimes judges refer to the scholar's research to push for evolutionary interpretation of the international law rules, presenting their thoughts in Separate or Dissenting Opinions. This role is rather passive and not always reflected in the body of decisions.

Works of the UN bodies like the International Law Commission, the Special Rapporteurs and other institutions are often considered by the ICJ. Expert institutions are also often relied on, for instance, the International Committee of Red Cross,

Institute de droit international, the International Law Association and the American Law Institute. Participation in their work might eventually contribute to the ICJ work.

Expert status forms a separate way to join the proceedings. Experts could represent one side of the dispute by acting as counsel before the Court or may be appointed independently. They can include legal scholars, practitioners, and other experts in relevant fields. In the latter case, Parties may conduct cross-examination with these experts.

Lastly, the ICJ may entrust any individual, body, bureau, commission, or other organization that it may select, with the task of carrying out an enquiry or giving an expert opinion. Yet, this mechanism has rarely been used.

Another option is **pushing governments towards requesting advisory opinions**. The UN General Assembly and Security Council may request advisory opinions on “*any legal question*”. Other UN organs and specialised agencies which have been authorised to seek advisory opinions can only do so with respect to “*legal questions arising within the scope of their activities*”. Such opinions, unlike the Court’s judgments, are not binding. The requesting organ, agency or organization remains free to give effect to the opinion as it sees fit, or not to do so at all.

Participation of actors other than states and public international organizations is also restricted for these proceedings. However, this instrument was and remains popular to advocate for certain interests. Involvement in the ICJ proceedings may result from the public campaigns targeting the national governments – for instance, the future advisory opinion on climate change has started as a [students’ initiative](#) and was supported by Vanuatu’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Historically, advisory opinions targeted certain categories of issues like:

- closely connected with the UN functions ([Certain Expenses](#) case);
- practically – dispute between states, but based on general international law issues or specific cases requiring international law interpretation ([Wall, Kosovo, Chagos](#) cases);
- no real dispute between states but a more abstract issue of law, pressing international problem ([Nuclear Weapons](#) case).

The Court has the right to refuse if, in fact, an application constitutes a bilateral dispute (the contentious claim is raised), but in practice, it never did so.

How to formulate the question for the advisory opinion? Approach the issue of forming the legal question seriously, as careless wording may lead to disappointing if not catastrophic results. To exemplify, the *Nuclear Weapons* case is considered an infamous example, as the Court gave a vague answer to those expecting a definite position on the illegality of nuclear weapons. The ICJ not only preserved the lawfulness

of their possession but also assumed that they could be used if there are issues of statehood at stake and the principles of human rights and humanitarian law are respected. In practice, such nebulous conclusions may lead to nuclear blackmailing and political pressure, as now happens with Russia threatening to resort to nuclear power if losing the war against Ukraine.

1. The issue shall be formulated precisely, concisely and clearly, leaving no room for a vague interpretation of the question presented;
2. The communication strategy shall be developed to advocate it among the State authorities and encourage them to approach the ICJ;
3. The positions and legal background of sitting judges shall be carefully studied to predict their vision of the question presented and to properly coordinate the advocacy campaign.

Lastly, the contributions to the ICJ's advisory opinions are highly dependent on other advocacy efforts and cooperation with relevant stakeholders. Thus, to be meaningfully engaged in such processes, the organisation needs to actively promote the ideas and concepts, which have to be addressed by the States on an international level.

4. ICC INTERVENTIONS

NGOs have a serious influence on starting investigation before the International Criminal Court (hereinafter - ICC) proceedings upon the initiative of the Prosecutor. They may provide information on crimes committed falling under the Court's jurisdiction. This data is called "communication" and in more than 20 years, the Prosecutor's office received about 15000 of them. More than 700 were considered as "warranting further analysis".

If the Prosecutor concludes that there is a reasonable basis to conduct an investigation, permission is obtained from the Pre-Trial Chamber judges. The Prosecutor may also decide to decline to initiate an investigation; continue to collect information on crimes and relevant national proceedings in order to make a determination.

How to submit a communication? The ICC dedicated a separate channel for communications that may be addressed to:

Information and Evidence Unit
Office of the Prosecutor
Post Office Box 19519
2500 CM The Hague
The Netherlands

It also can be sent by email to otp.informationdesk@icc-cpi.int or by facsimile to +31 70 515 8555. For the situations already under the review of the Prosecution, the Office made available the [contact](#) with the investigator to get in touch and provide the details on the crimes committed.

How shall the communications look like? Generally, the communication shall address factual information on the potential crimes, which might be committed and fall within the jurisdiction of the ICC. The ICC regularly publishes the reports on preliminary examinations since 2011, with the [latest available report](#) dating back to 2019. This report serves as a good guidance as to which factors shall be considered when submitting communications.

What to take into account when submitting communications? To ensure the success of the communication, numerous structural and legal factors shall be considered, including the relevance of the issues, the competence of the Court and formatting requirements.

The submission shall fit the **jurisdiction** of the ICC (most communications fail at this stage by being manifestly outside the Court's competence), which includes the following criteria:

- a. temporal – if the crimes were committed after 1 July 2002, the date of the entry into force of the Rome Statute;
 - b. either territorial or personal – if the crimes took place in the territory of a State Party or were committed by a national of a State Party;
 - c. material – if they amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.
1. Make sure the crimes are not investigated locally or there are strong indications that a state at issue is unwilling or unable to investigate such crimes;
 2. Beware that the factor of gravity of the crime may be an issue for the Prosecutor – assess the scale, nature, manner of commission of the crimes, and their impact, bearing in mind the potential cases that would likely arise from an investigation of the situation;
 3. Interests of justice (taking into account the gravity of the crime and the interests of victims, there are nonetheless substantial reasons to believe that an investigation would not serve the interests of justice – for instance, in [Al Bashir case](#) most African countries considered that the arrest warrant against him damaged the peace process in the country – that may be considered as part of “*interest of justice*” criterion).
 4. Submit the communication preferably in the language of the Court: English, French or other official UN language: Arabic, Chinese, Russian or Spanish.

The Prosecutor objectively prioritises the referrals from the UN Security Council and States, whereas the Court has limited capacity to process all the atrocities all over the world. Thus, the Prosecutor often serves as a regulator of the Court's overload with cases. If the communication does not lead to an opening of the investigation, the Prosecutor informs those who submitted it. New facts and evidence may be submitted, reversing the decision not to open the investigation.

What are the examples of submitted or publically available communications?

There are a couple of communications, which have led to the opening of the investigation. Others demonstrate the data, which is usually included in such types of documents.

1. Communication on [Cambodia](#);
2. Communication on [Libya](#);
3. Interactive [platforms](#) supporting the Communications (Brazil-Amazon situations);
4. The [situation in the Philippines](#) and the inclusion of the various communications as the basis for the process (para 33).

Other Possible Venues for Engagement with the ICC

Amicus curiae. NGOs can also participate in the Court proceedings by submitting *amicus curiae*. At any stage of the proceedings, a Chamber may invite or grant leave to organisation or person to submit, in writing or orally, any observation on any issue that the Chamber deems appropriate.

A large number of *amicus* briefs submitted to the ICC had been rejected. For example, in [Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), Amnesty International and the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice was not granted leave to file *amicus curiae* briefs (mostly because in other similar cases lots of scientific and legal contributions have already been made). In contrast, the successful submission can be found in [Decision on the admissibility of the case against Siaf al-Islam Gaddafi](#).

The principal characteristic of *amicus briefs* is the **impartiality** of the intervening person (which includes absence of the stance on which party shall win the case, who is guilty and which sentence). Additional criteria for the successful *amicus curiae* include:

- lack of the Court's own expertise and/or contextual knowledge, which makes a contribution desirable for the proper determination of the case (meaning that contributions on the modern rather than traditional issues are [invited](#));
- direct relation to the legal issues in the case;
- contribution to the clarification of a new and complex legal issue.

Where to look for the pending cases? The cases before the ICC can be on different stages, each having a separate section on the ICC website, which are:

- [preliminary examinations](#);
- [investigations](#);
- [defendants](#);
- [cases](#).

Acting as investigators. Representatives of civil society may be engaged on the ground if they possess the necessary skills. In order to be included in the List of Professional Investigators one shall meet the following criteria:

- established competence in international or criminal law and procedure;
- at least ten years of relevant experience in investigative work in criminal proceedings at the national or international level;
- excellent knowledge of and fluency in at least one of the working languages of the ICC (English or French). Subject to exceptional circumstances, he or she shall speak at least one of the languages of the country in which the investigation is being conducted.

How to submit an application for investigators status? The documents required for submitting an application can be found via the [link](#). After filling the form on the website and gathering all necessary documents, the documents shall be sent to the Registry of the ICC:

Counsel Support Section (Ref: List of Professional Investigators)
PO Box 19519
2500 CM The Hague
The Netherlands

Acting as experts. A proper review of the cases by the Court requires very specific expertise too. In this context, the Court introduced the [List of the experts](#) in selected fields of expertise to assist the Court. Such experts should possess a minimum of 9 years of relevant experience with a first level university degree, or 7 years with an advanced university degree, be fluent in either English or French and have general or specific expertise with regard to:

- ballistics;
- finance (to work on financial investigations/freezing assets);
- forensic medicine;
- graphology;
- psychology (to work with victims, refugees, war zones or post-conflict societies, etc);
- reparations;

- expertise relating to the situations before the ICC: history, judicial systems, military science, policing, politics and geopolitics, linguistics.

How to submit an application for expert status? The documents required for submitting an application can be found via the [link](#). After filling the form on the website and gathering all necessary documents, all the documents shall be submitted to the Division of Judicial Services of the ICC:

P.O. Box 19519
2500 CM The Hague
The Netherlands

Being a victim and assisting the victims. The ICC Statute allows NGOs to appear before the Court as victims. At the same time, NGOs are often close to the victims and witnesses by:

- accompanying victims and witnesses throughout the process of providing evidence to the Office of the Prosecutor;
- informing victims and witnesses about procedures at the Court;
- preparing their work with the Court (including informing them about security risks, helping them to take action collectively, and putting their information into a form most easily used by the Office of the Prosecutor).

For all situations, examinations and cases of the Court, there are both [online and offline venues](#) for victims to submit their information to the Court.

5. THE UN INTERVENTIONS

The UN human rights bodies provide the NGOs, academics and independent experts with a variety of tools for engagement, e.g. contributions for development of the narrative documents, possibility to signalise about the violations, comments on the drafts of soft law and other types of input. In particular, the contributions can be made within the Covenant mechanisms (cooperation with the Human Rights Council), within the special mechanisms developed to extend the capacities of the UN (Special Rapporteur, *ad hoc* working groups etc.), and the separate treaties (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women etc.).

Some of these venues are open for engagement with civil society on a permanent basis, others depend on the types of ongoing activities. The information on the types of work launched under the UN human rights auspices can be found in the respective [section](#) of their website with the description of the mandates and responsibilities of each organ.

The UN Human Rights Council submissions

The Human Rights Council (hereinafter - HRC) has a wide range of mechanisms and tools, where engagement of civil society is possible on one or another stage of drafting the documents, discussing the issues on the agenda or collecting feedback on existing initiatives. The priority is usually given to the communications, addressing the [acts of intimidation and reprisals](#) against those, who seek to cooperate with international human rights protection bodies. They can be addressed via the mail - ohchr-upreprisals@un.org.

The HRC Advisory Committee. The HRC [Advisory Committee](#) is composed of 18 experts, working as a think-tank for the Council within the area of its direction. The Committee holds its meetings [twice a year](#). The Committee is implementation-oriented and the scope of its advice is limited to thematic issues pertaining to the mandate of the Council. It cannot adopt resolutions or decisions. Nevertheless, the competences of the Advisory Committee include:

- providing expertise to the Council (mainly focuses on studies and research-based advice);
- proposing for the Council's consideration and approval, suggestions for research proposals.

How can civil society participate? There is a possibility for NGOs to be [involved](#) in the process of discussions and research. The main requirement, in this respect, is the accreditation, which can be obtained via the online portal. For example, the [online system](#) for the 28th session is now open for NGOs registrations. The processing of applications usually takes up to three days.

What is the structure of the submissions? The NGOs, which obtained a consultative statement, may submit their comments and contributions to the Advisory Committee. This can be done via email - ohchr-hrcngo@un.org. The requirements to the document include: Ms Word format, Times New Roman, 10 font, no bold, underline or italics.

Written contributions shall generally be formatted in accordance with the Secretariat's guidelines for the [submission form](#). The size of the submissions is limited depending on the status of the NGO:

- 2,000 words for NGOs in general consultative status;
- 1,500 words for NGOs in special consultative status and on the roster.

The HRC Consultative Group. The Consultative Group is another [opportunity](#) for civil society and independent experts to be involved in the processes of development of the international standards, review of the violations and providing guidance on the

operation of the HRC itself. This is directly an opportunity to apply for the positions of the Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts.

Where to find a call for submissions? The calls are [announced](#) publicly on the website of the HRC, declaring the existence of the free mandates for the qualified experts to be appointed. The Secretariat Note contains all the relevant information regarding the free positions. For example, according to the [call](#) open until 14th July 2023, the positions of the [Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity](#), the [Special Rapporteur on minority issues](#), the [Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants](#), and the [Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism](#) are free for application. The positions, which will be open in the next call are as well [announced](#) in advance.

How to submit the application? To apply for the mandates, the expert shall complete the [survey](#) and submit the application form in the Word document. The requirements towards the format of the application are provided in the attachments available in the respective announcement of the free position. In case of technical difficulties, any questions or concerns, the Secretariat may be contacted by email at ohchr-hrcspecialprocedures@un.org.

What are the requirements towards the candidates? There are general standards to be followed by all the candidates willing to apply and the special requirements announced for every specific position depending on the sphere of expertise and the scope of activities covered by the mandate.

General requirements towards the applicants:

- expertise;
- experience in the field of the mandate;
- independence;
- impartiality;
- personal integrity;
- objectivity.

The relevant information is also provided in the section of "[frequently asked questions](#)", where most of the procedural and substantive issues are addressed.

Complaints Procedure. The consistent, reliably attested and gross violations, patterns in breach of human rights can be addressed by the civil society, NGOs, individuals and groups and individuals via the [complaints procedure](#). The procedure itself is confidential and aimed at enhancing the cooperation with the State to correct the situation with human rights.

What are the substantial requirements for communication? For a communication to be accepted, it shall be properly structured and formatted. Otherwise, it most probably will not pass the admissibility stage and, respectively, the situation will not be reviewed.

A communication related to a breach of human rights and fundamental freedoms is **admissible**, provided that:

- it is not manifestly politically motivated and its object is consistent with the Charter of the UN, the UDHR and other applicable instruments in the field of human rights law;
- it gives a factual description of the alleged violations;
- it is drafted in the non-abusive language;
- It is submitted by those claiming to be the victims of violations of human rights and acting in good faith in accordance with the principles of human rights;
- it is not exclusively based on reports disseminated by mass media;
- the case has not yet being dealt with by a special procedure, a treaty body or other UN or similar regional complaints procedure;
- domestic remedies have been exhausted, unless it appears that such remedies would be ineffective or unreasonably prolonged.

How to submit a complaint? The form for submitting a complaint is unified and publicly [available](#). The complaint procedure can be invoked by the civil society, NGOs and independent experts by submitting the relevant information to such emails:

Complaint Procedure Unit
Human Rights Council Branch
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Office at Geneva
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Fax: (41 22) 917 90 11
E-mail: ohchr-cp@un.org

There is a special section with the [frequently asked questions](#) on procedural and substantive issues being addressed to avoid the typical mistakes.

Session participation. The NGOs and national human rights organisations can likewise [participate in the sessions](#) of the HRC either physically or virtually depending on the format, which was chosen for a particular session. The documentation for each session is available on a separate page. For example, the [52nd session](#) of the HRC provides for the following documentation.

To join the session any NGO or national organisation shall gain accreditation. For organisations there are two types of statuses to be potentially obtained - the "A" status for national organisations and the consultative status for NGOs.

"A" status national human rights organisations	Consultative status NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make an oral statement under all substantive agenda items of the HRC; participate through video messages in the HRC plenary debates, including during the adoption of the outcome of the UPR of the country by the Council, the interactive dialogue following the presentation of a country mission report by a special procedures mandate holder and panels or annual discussions; submit documents, which will be issued with UN document symbol; take separate seating in all sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend and observe all proceedings of the HRC with the exception of the Council deliberations under the Complaints Procedure; submit written statements to the HRC; make oral interventions to the HRC; participate in debates, interactive dialogues, panel discussions and informal meetings; organise "parallel events" on issues relevant to the work of the HRC.

How can NGOs participate in the sessions of the HRC? Only NGOs in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (hereinafter - ECOSOC) can be accredited to participate in the HRC's sessions as Observers. The status of the particular organisation can be checked in a [database](#). The application to the ECOSOC for a consultative status can be done via the special [algorithm](#).

An NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC planning to attend a session of the HRC must send a letter of request for accreditation to the Secretariat. The letter should be sent well in advance of the relevant session and at least two weeks in advance if visa attestations are required. The contact details for communication are:

Fax: +41 22 917 05 83

E-mail: unogeneva.ngoliasion@unog.ch

How can national human rights organisations participate in the sessions of the HRC? The national human rights organisations, having the "A" status, are entitled

to intervene immediately after the country concerned during the interactive dialogue, following the presentation of a country mission report by a special procedure mandate holder and also immediately after the State under review at the adoption of the UPR report in plenary.

The accreditation for online participation can be done via the [online registration form](#). After the registration the official letter with the relevant information on organisation and names of attendees has to be uploaded on the platform following the established [algorithm](#).

The details for application to participate in the sessions, particularities of oral presentations during the sessions, and reservation of the seats are provided in a separate [Guideline](#). There is also another [Guideline](#) on the use of the online registration system for Oral Statements. Finally, a separate [Guide](#) has been developed for the video statements during the sessions. Otherwise, all relevant materials are published before each session with the details on the interventions.

Universal Periodic Review. This [mechanism](#) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. It is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the HRC, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

The periodic review mechanism enables the [contributions](#) from the side of civil society, NGOs and national human rights organisations. Particularly, the written submissions can be made, while the accredited stakeholders can attend the meetings and engage in the discussions. The relevant issues, around which the debate is built, are usually outlined on the website of the periodic [review mechanism](#). There is also a separate [Guideline](#) for the CSOs' involvement in the operation of the universal periodic review.

How to structure a submission? One organisation can submit one joint and one individual submission per review, and can contribute to more joint submissions. Stakeholders may consider forming thematic coalitions with other CSOs. The substantive [requirements](#) are as following:

- Length: individual submissions are limited by a maximum of 2815 words. Joint submissions shall not exceed 5630 words;
- Language: one of the UN official languages;
- Credible and reliable information should be given priority (something more than merely media reports);
- Recommendations should be structured based on S.M.A.R.T. criteria – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Result-Oriented and Time-Bound.

How to submit a contribution? The contributions shall be submitted via the [On-line UPR submissions registration system](#), which can be done following the [Guidelines](#) for its use. The issues regarding the technical problems can be communicated via the official mail to the Helpdesk ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org. The deadlines are established for each circle of submissions. For instance, the calendar of tentative deadlines for stakeholders' submissions for the 4th cycle can be found at the following [link](#).

The Human Rights Committee submissions

The Human Rights Committee, apart from a general mechanism for [submitting complaints](#), which is available to all individuals and groups of persons, whose States ratified the ICCPR, can resort to a [special mechanism of cooperation](#) developed for civil society.

Where to find the calls for submissions? Civil society organisations can make submissions for each session, depending on its topic and focus. The list of upcoming [sessions](#) is available on the UN Human Rights Committee website. The scope of submissions and their value is regulated by the separate documents adopted by the Committee regarding the [civil society organisations](#) and [national human rights institutions](#).

What are the requirements for the submission? The submission shall be drafted in English, French or Spanish. The size is [indicated](#) in information notes from the Secretariat, potentially varying from one type of submissions to another. As regards the information on States that are going to be considered under the followup procedures, the document is usually limited by 3,500 words. While submitting information with respect to States upon which list of Issues will be adopted, the organisations are limited by a maximum of 10,000 words (approximately 15 pages).

There are no strict structural requirements, however, the Human Rights Committee [recommends](#) to follow such substantive rules to make a submission more useful for its work:

- make written submissions as specific, reliable, and objective as possible;
- use non-abusive formal language;
- highlight priority concerns and suggest possible country-specific recommendations;
- submissions by coalitions of organisations are more welcome.

How to submit the intervention? The deadline is indicated in the "Information note for victims, civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions" published before each [session](#). Also, the deadline for submissions is available in the descriptions of the sessions.

General Documentation

Document type	Symbol	Title	Download
Information from secretariat		States parties to be considered under the Follow-up procedure : BELGIUM, CZECH REPUBLIC, MAURITANIA and NIGERIA (Deadline: 17 July 2023)	
Information from secretariat		Deadline for NGO/NHRI written contribution for adoption of list of issues (LOIs): 14 August 2023	
Information from secretariat		Deadline for NGO/NHRI written contribution for States parties under review: 11 September 2023	

The interventions can be submitted via the mail indicated in the given information note for NGOs. For example, for the 138th session, the Secretariat provided the mail of ohchr-ccpr@un.org. If the civil society organisations have any questions or concerns regarding this session, they can contact the Secretariat via gabriella.habtom@un.org or cherry.balmaceda@un.org.

How to join the meetings of the Committee? The Human Rights Committee also holds formal and informal briefings before and in the process of the public consultation process. For the mentioned 138th session, the mail to register for the formal briefing is cherry.balmaceda@un.org, whereas the mail for attending informal meetings is info@ccprcentre.org. The CSOs have to be attentive since the contact mails can vary from session to session, so it shall be double-checked in the Information Note every time before making a submission.

Contributions to the work of the UN Special Rapporteurs

The UN Special Rapporteurs are usually divided by the sphere of their competences, provided in the respective [mandates](#). Their specialisation depends on the sphere of law they are working on, e.g. freedom of expression, prohibition of tortures, prevention of global hunger, protection of human rights defenders etc. All Special Rapporteurs have separate pages on the UN website addressing their competences, providing their previous reports and elaborating on the upcoming activities. For example, the [Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights](#) has recently developed the principles on protection of cultural rights and delivered some country reports in this area.

Where to find the calls for submissions? The calls for submissions are usually announced on the page of the Special Rapporteur, where a brief description of the topic is provided. As well, the respective announcement contains the deadline for submissions.

Calls for Input

Call for input to the report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders to the Human Rights Council on the positive change achieved by human rights defenders

Deadline:20 October 2022

Call for Inputs – Greece UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor 13-22

June 2022

Deadline:01 June 2022

[See all](#)

Calls for Input

Call for Inputs: Report to the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly - Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Deadline:08 March 2023

Call for Inputs for the country visit to Canada

Deadline:01 February 2023

[See all](#)

Who can submit the contributions? The contributions can be made by the States, regional and local governments, international organisations, CSOs, academics and individuals. Sometimes the Special Rapporteur [indicates](#) that it likewise requests contributions from other actors, such as business entities or certain types of organisations (for example, humanitarian organisations, where relevant to the topic).

How to structure the submission? The submissions shall address all or some of the issues, which are raised by the Special Rapporteur in the call for input. For example, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association often prepares separate [questionnaires](#). The submissions to the Special Rapporteurs shall follow the general requirements of being limited in size, formal by style and focused on the issues, which are presented in a respective call for input.

The examples of previous submissions can be found in the [closed calls for input](#) on the pages of the respective Special Rapporteurs. Most of the submissions are made public except for the cases, where an intervener explicitly indicates a desire to remain anonymous.

How to submit the contributions? The submissions to the Special Rapporteurs are communicated via mail, which is provided at the end of the call for input. It also contains the requirements to the format of the document, the language of the submissions (usually it is English, French or Spanish), the maximum size (usually 10 pages) and possibility to add annexes and supplementary materials.

Next Steps

Please email your written submissions to hrc-sr-indigenous@un.org by **8 March 2023** in English, French or Spanish in accessible format (Word document or PDF).

Kindly indicate in the subject of your email "Submission to 78th General Assembly Report".

Respondents are requested to limit their inputs to a maximum of 10 pages. Additional supporting materials, such as reports, academic studies, and other background materials may be annexed to the submission.

Submissions will be published as received on the OHCHR mandate webpage. Kindly indicate in your email if you DO NOT wish your submission to be made public.

If the interveners have certain questions regarding the procedures or are willing to communicate with the Special Rapporteurs *ad hoc*, beyond the calls for submissions, there is a possibility to contact them via mail, which is published on their official page.

Contact Information

Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Fax: + 41 22 917 9006

Email: hrc-sr-freeassembly@un.org

[Personal Twitter page of the Special Rapporteur](#)

The UN working groups, *ad hoc* fact finding missions and investigations

Working groups. Apart from the permanent mechanisms, there is also a line of *ad hoc* initiatives, which address the specific challenges or ideas under the auspices of the UN human rights mechanism. Many of them are operating in the form of working groups, such as those established under the HRC with a list being available on the HRC [website](#).

WG on OP to CRC

[IGWG on draft UN declaration on HR education and training](#)

[IGWG on private military and security companies](#)

[IGWG on private military and security companies \(new\)](#)

[IGWG on draft UN declaration on right to peace](#)

[IGWG on UN declaration on rights of peasants](#)

[IGWG on TNCs](#)

A more detailed description is provided in the [section](#), where mandates of the working groups are described.

How to collaborate with a working group? Even if your organisation did not become part of the working group after its establishment by the UN bodies, the working groups may announce the calls for input. Those calls are usually published on the respective page of the working group.

Calls for Input

Call for comments and textual suggestions: Second revised text of the draft convention on the right to development

Deadline: 12 May 2023

[See all](#)

Calls for Input

Call for contributions in preparation for the visit of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to Honduras

Deadline: 28 February 2023

Call for inputs for a thematic study by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on "new technologies and enforced disappearances"

Closed - see submissions

[See all](#)

The requirements to formatting of the submissions may differ from one working group to another, so it is necessary to follow the guidelines provided in the announced calls. As well, the substantive issues to be addressed, the mailing details and contact data of the secretariat are different for each working group. Accordingly, this information shall be verified before preparing the submission.

Other instruments

Finally, within the UN human rights system there are many more instruments to be invoked by civil society. Most calls for input are announced in the [separate section](#) on the UN website. Some of them are country-specific, requiring the expertise from the local experts, but others address more general issues, which might be of a particular interest to any organisation working in a particular sphere. The calls directly have the topic and the deadline for submission of the contributions.

SPECIAL PROCEDURES

14 APRIL 2023

Call for input on The use of technology in facilitating and preventing contemporary forms of slavery

TREATY BODIES

05 APRIL 2023

Call for comments on the draft general comment of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) on the article 4 of the OPCAT (optional protocol to the convention against torture)

HRC SUBSIDIARY BODY

17 MARCH 2023

Call for Inputs: Report on “Establishing monitoring mechanisms at the national and regional level for implementation of the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples”

Also, the calls be targetedly announced by such bodies, as the UNESCO, when they are developing some strategic documents. For example, quite recently there was a call for input to the draft [Guidelines for regulating digital platforms](#), expecting the input from various stakeholders to make the document inclusive, operational and human-rights-oriented.

Finally, there are [fact-finding missions, investigations and ad hoc committees](#), where civil society and independent experts can participate. The fact-finding missions, commissions on inquiry and committees can be found via a special [Research Guide](#) developed by the UN. Some ad hoc bodies have separate pages on the UN website, such as the [Ad Hoc Committee of the Human Rights Council on the Elaboration](#)

[of Complementary Standards](#). The number and specialisation of such bodies, as well as mode of their operation significantly depends on their mandate and the situation in the regions, for which they have been established. Accordingly, all the relevant information for civil society involvement varies from mechanism to mechanism and can be found on the relevant pages of the commissions, missions and committees.

6. META OVERSIGHT BOARD

What is an Oversight Board and why is it necessary to engage? Meta was the first social media to make the supervisory body, which deals with the policy and legal issues of content governance independently from the company. Apart from the positive connotations accompanying the review of the social media work, it also enabled the contributions to forming the policy of the company.

Oversight Board - an independent body that people can appeal to if they disagree with decisions a company made about content on Facebook or Instagram, addressing the most outstanding issues and providing the advice for change of the company policies.

Oversight Board provides [decisions](#), which are compulsory for Meta, and [recommendations](#), which are aimed at correcting the company's approach, but usually are highly dependent on the technical capacities. If the publication of the NGO, academic or activist has been removed, they can apply to the Meta Oversight Board following this [guideline](#). The selection of cases for the review is based on their relevance and novelty (have not been addressed [earlier](#)), as well as the widespread nature of the problem reflected in the particular case.

Where to find cases? The release of new cases for consideration by the Oversight Board is done via their website, which can be found in the “[news](#)” section. Each [case](#) has a brief summary and the button for submitting comments. Also, pending cases are announced if an expert [subscribes](#) for updates of the Oversight Board activities via email.

Who can submit an intervention? The intervention can be submitted by NGOs, academics, individual experts and professionals and even ordinary users, thus making the mechanism of providing advice very diverse and multistakeholder. The intervener can mark the background and affiliation, while filling the form for intervention or prefer staying anonymous, which is also an option within Meta's Oversight Board public comments portal.

✓ --select an item--

Civil Society

Think tank

Private Business

Academia

Government

Media

Other

How to submit an intervention? The intervention can be submitted via the form available at the page of the summary of the case or in the relevant email (if updates are received via email). The intervention is submitted within two weeks after the case was opened for third-party submissions.

The case that we are announcing today is:

Sri Lanka pharmaceuticals (2022-014-FB-MR)

Case referred by Meta

Submit public comments [here](#).

What shall the intervener address? The issues, which the Oversight Board considers to be important are usually outlined within the [summary](#) of the case. However, the interveners may also address other aspects, which they deem important for the outcome of the case and development of Meta policies. Some formal requirements shall be likewise met:

- Formal style (no abusive or disrespectful language);
- English or other language identified by the Board for a particular case;
- References to sources are welcome;
- Concise and precise (not more than 5 pages in Times New Roman 12pt);
- Addressing the issues outlined by the Board;
- Not elaborating on how the case should be resolved.

The examples of the interventions to the decided cases can be found in the summary of the [case](#) provided by the Oversight Council. Although many of them are not of the professional quality, interventions by the INGOs can be taken as a sample of good contributions to development of Meta's policies and legal qualifications. The

Oversight Board will make the comment publicly available if the contributor does not object.

7. FREE FORM INTERVENTIONS

Sometimes no public calls for submitting *amicus curiae* or any other kind of contributions are announced by the international bodies, which, however, are dealing with the crucial issues of international law and policy. As a result, advocacy campaigns may take a different form: public statements, open letters, targeted communication via official channels. What shall the advocacy organisations and experts take into account?

Key stakeholders. Before the advocacy campaign starts, the organisation shall define the key groups of stakeholders to be involved in the advocacy process. Importantly, not only those with decision-making capacities shall be outlined, but also the partners, who can contribute to sharing the necessary narratives and can turn the campaign into a massive movement. Thus, stakeholders can be grouped in the following manner:

- **Partners** - other NGOs and activists, who share the same values and ideas, support the approach towards the advocated issue;
- **Decision makers** - international inter-governmental organisations, State authorities, INGOs, business entities and other relevant stakeholders, who have direct impact on resolution of the issue at stake;
- **Directly affected parties** - stakeholders, who having no direct impact on decision-making process, are influenced by the outcomes of the advocacy campaign and might experience significant change in regulation, status or any other field;
- **Objects of criticism** (if relevant) - individuals or organisations, whose activity is subjected to criticism and is required to be changed as a result of the advocacy campaign;
- **Indirectly affected parties** (if relevant) - stakeholders, whose activities are not directly in the focus of the campaign, however, might be changed as a collateral effect of the campaign;
- **Media** (if relevant) - if an advocacy campaign goes public, support of the media is necessary to expand the potential audience and draw attention to the problem.

Key messages. Ideally, each audience (each group of stakeholders mentioned) shall be addressed with a targeted message, which communicates the risks, concerns and benefits of the advocated position. If the letter is public, it is vital to indicate the implications of a particular decision for the directly affected stakeholders, as well as the amount of effort expected from the decision-makers.

Channels for communication. The means for delivering a message differ significantly depending on the public/private nature of the campaign. For instance, the State authorities can be addressed via mails if the organisation has confidence in the message being delivered to a proper addressee. Also, where the advocacy campaign becomes public and resorts to spreading the ideas via media outlets, the reliability of media outlets is advised to be checked (to avoid loss of reputation and devaluation of the messages expressed).

If there are several partners involved in the advocacy campaign, the public statements are advised to be published on the website of those with the broadest coverage. If a message is communicated to the decision-makers via a private letter, it is advised to be communicated by the partners, who have the closest cooperation ties with a given stakeholder.

Akin to that, it is important to conduct **regular impact assessments** and, if necessary, change the strategies for delivering the messages, the channels for communication, and expand the circle of partners involved in advocacy.

CONCLUSIONS

The NGOs, civil society, human rights defenders, academics and independent experts have a broad range of tools to meaningfully engage with international organisations, judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. Particularly, they can use official mechanisms to targetedly address the legal issues, which are of an interest for the relevant international bodies, as well as work on development of the open letters and public statements, collecting, extracting and crystallising the public opinions on the matter.

While preparing any type of intervention, however, the intervener shall always bear in mind some common standards and requirements to be followed for a contribution to be duly perceived by the respective stakeholder and further implemented in practice, while developing guidelines, hard law regulations or recommendations:

- **Purpose.** A contribution to the work of the international bodies shall be done, where an organisation or experts observe a need to change an established narrative, understanding or interpretation of the standards, propose a new standard based on a changed social reality or in other manner bring a novel vision of approaching the problem. If no novelty can be brought up, it is worth considering whether intervention is necessary for the organisation or an expert.
- **Status of the actor, who can engage.** International organisations, judicial and quasi-judicial bodies usually have various forms of engagement available to those willing to make expert contributions. It is important to discover what type of contribution can be made on what stage of the process/proceedings,

as well as what actors can be involved. For example, some organs are open to contributions from NGOs, but do not accept ones made by individual experts. Accordingly, the rules have to be checked prior to making a submission,

- **Deadlines.** While developing the advocacy strategies, organisations shall consider the deadlines established for preparing submissions. Particularly, at least two stages are faced by those dealing with international tribunals - indicating the will to contribute to certain issues (preparing and submitting the intervention leave), and preparing the substantial intervention. For both activities the deadlines established by the relevant body shall be respected and duly followed.
- **Size.** The contributions are not the matter of how many pages of text is prepared, but about the substantial input, which is done to the development of the standards, policies or regulation. Hence, exceeding the limits for the scope of intervention is not recommended since the international bodies sometimes do not consider the submissions, which do not strictly fall under the requirements provided for contributors to follow.
- **Neutrality.** In most cases, the interventions are expected to be neutral towards the outcome of the case (especially, if they concern the judicial proceedings). Accordingly, the interveners shall abstain from subjective evaluation of the behaviour of the individuals concerned or non-legal/non-policy issues. The contribution shall be primarily focused on development of the framework approach rather than deciding a particular situation.
- **Formal style.** Subjective expressions shall likewise be omitted as a matter of style. The document shall be well-structured, concise and precise, operating by a clear terminology and with the references being properly formatted.

The contributions to the work of the international organisations constitute an important part of the advocacy process, also ensuring the consistency, diversity and coherence of the legal and policy processes on the international arena. Conclusively, DSLU highly encourages NGOs, civil society organisations, academics and independent experts to join the common effort of promoting the values of human rights, democracy and rule of law.



Civil Society Engagement with International Institutions
Advocacy toolkit

Digital Security Lab Ukraine
2023