

UN High Commissioner and UN Secretary-General references to caste in statements and reports

**HC Statement – Presentation of report on OHCHR activities March 2015**

Economic and social rights build strong societies. They are not an optional luxury for times of peace; they are rights in the full meaning of the word, and a tool for building peace and powering true development. Societies that are participatory can benefit from the skills of all - including girls, women, and minorities and castes that previously suffered discrimination. And when adequate services are provided, such as decent health, education and housing, there is massive economic benefit to all, and a dividend in stable peace.

[Statement](#), 5 March 2015

[Video](#), 5 March 2015

**HC Opening Statement of the 28th session of the Human Rights Council March 2015**

Mr. President, The overwhelming majority of victims of human rights abuses around the world share two characteristics: Deprivation, and discrimination - whether it is based on race or ethnicity, gender, beliefs, sexual orientation, caste or class. From hunger to massacres, sexual violence and slavery, human rights violations are rooted in these hidden, and sometimes not so hidden, factors. They are not spontaneously generated. Most violations of human rights result from policy choices, which limit freedom and participation, and create obstacles to the fair sharing of resources and opportunities.”

[Opening Statement](#), 2 March 2015

[Video](#), 2 March 2015

**HC Speech at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC during first official visit to the USA**

My children, and yours, and children everywhere, need to learn what bigotry and chauvinism are, and the terrible wrongs they can produce. They need to learn that blind obedience can be exploited by authority figures for wicked ends. They should also learn that they are not exceptional because of where they were born, how they look, what passport they carry, or the social class, **caste** or creed of their parents; they should learn that no-one is intrinsically superior to her or his fellow human beings.

[Full speech](#), 5 February 2015

[UN News Centre article](#), 5 February 2015

This exact statement was also made in a [speech](#) of the High Commissioner at the Conference on “Education for Peace” at Palais des Nations in Geneva 14 January 2015.

**Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon keynote address to the Indian Council of World Affairs January 12 2015**

Development models must reach all groups. Inclusive growth brings shared prosperity. India has already lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and it can bring the benefits of inclusive growth to millions more. Yesterday, I visited Mahatma Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat. I was deeply moved by how they are conserving and teaching Gandhi’s letters and other precious artefacts. And I reflected on our collective responsibility to conserve the spirit of Gandhi’s teachings. He confronted many forms of injustice, including against people who were then called “**untouchables**”. His struggle led to the historic resolution banning **discrimination based on caste**. Today India has laws that not only enshrine equality, but also take positive steps to address past discrimination. But millions of **Dalits**, Tribals and others still face discrimination, especially the women and girls. In too many communities, religious minorities also suffer. We must continue Gandhi’s battle for equality.

[UN press release](#), 12 January 2015

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Technical assistance to support inclusive and participatory development and poverty reduction at the national level January 2015**

III. National experiences of support for inclusive and participatory development and poverty eradication. B. Empowerment for free, informed and meaningful participation in public decision-making. Nepal: addressing the equality imperative: In order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue, the country analysis looked at specific groups of people, whose vulnerability was described on the basis of the experience and expertise of United Nations development actors. As a result, the following 19 groups were incorporated in the UNDAF design: (including) **Dalits**. The emphasis of the profiles was an analysis of the underlying causes of each group's vulnerability. An aggregate analysis was developed aimed at identifying, thematizing and categorizing the groups' characteristics and, perhaps most importantly, finding commonalities in the underlying causes of their vulnerabilities.

[A/HRC/28/42](#), January 2015

**Report of the Secretary-General - Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly**

F. Women and the Economy

1. Global Trends

Looking more specifically at the quality and conditions of employment, gender inequality continues to be an important source of stratification, along with other inequalities such as geography, ethnicity and race or **caste**, with which it intersects.

[Report of the Secretary-General](#)

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities December 2014**

OHCHR strives to ensure that the principles of the Declaration and other relevant human rights standards are used more effectively to support the participation of minorities in decision-making and to strengthen human rights protection at the national level. OHCHR is determined to combat exclusion, marginalization and abuse of people on the basis of their perceived race, their indigenous, ethnic or religious background, their colour, gender, **caste status**, disability, age, health status, or sexual orientation. As such, throughout the year, the High Commissioners have stressed in public statements the importance of advancing non-discrimination and protection of minorities.

IV. Human rights treaty bodies

B. General comments and general recommendations

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted, in November 2013, its general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, some provisions of which requested that States address the needs of women belonging to minorities. It was noted in the general recommendation that during and after conflict, specific groups of women and girls were at particular risk of violence, especially sexual violence, for example women of diverse **caste**, ethnic, national or religious identities, or of other minorities, who were often attacked as symbolic representatives of their community.

[A/HRC/28/27](#) December 2014

**HC Statement on Human Rights Day December 10 2014**

*"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"*: in perhaps the most resonant and beautiful words of any international agreement, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promises, to all, the economic, social, political, cultural and civil rights that underpin a life free from want and fear. These human rights are not country-specific. They are not a reward for good behaviour, or particular to a certain era or social group. They are the inalienable entitlements of all people, at all times and everywhere, 365 days a year. They are the rights of people of every colour, from every race and ethnic group; whether or not they have disabilities; citizens or migrants; no matter their sex, their class, their **caste**, their creed, their age or sexual orientation.

[OHCHR press release](#) and [Video statement](#), 10 December 2014

### **HC Statement at the 6<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition December 10 2014**

Human rights violations are not random, not accidents. They generally are the consequence of political, economic, social and cultural inequalities that create obstacles to the fair sharing of opportunities and resources, and which limit freedom and participation. The overwhelming majority of victims of human rights abuses around the world share two characteristics: deprivation, and discrimination – whether it is based on race or ethnicity, sex, beliefs, **caste** or class.

[OHCHR press release](#), December 10 2014

### **HC Opening Statement to the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council September 2014 (new HC, from 1 September 2014)**

“Another lesson for me, twenty years ago, was equally clear: there is no justification ever, for the degrading, the debasing or the exploitation of other human beings – on whatever basis: nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or **caste**” (September 8 2014)

[Opening Statement of Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein to the 27th session of the Human Rights Council](#)

### **HC Statement 28 August 2014 in interview with the UN News Centre**

UN News Centre: What are some of the highlights of your tenure? And is there anything you feel you would have done differently?

Navi Pillay: “Well, I would have done much more to help prevent conflicts if I could. I’ve visited many countries, like 50 to 60 countries. There was always some benefit in going personally, speaking to civil society in those countries, speaking to the head of State, head of government and the various ministers, and offering assistance which is really our expertise in addressing human rights violations, in helping to change laws, in training the judiciary and law enforcement officials to adopt a human rights-based approach”

“We could do much more on this because we saw the benefits of that kind of work. I am very proud that we’ve addressed all issues, all rights of all persons. We’ve addressed discrimination on all grounds, various grounds that had not been addressed before, such as minorities, migrants, LGBT people, **caste-based discrimination** and people with albinism”. (Navi Pillay tenure came to a close 31 August 2014)

[UN News Centre Interview with Navi Pillay 28 August 2014](#)

### **Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council July 2014**

In the non-discrimination and equality section of the UN HC Report to ECOSOC, [E/2014/86](#), offering a human rights analysis of land-related issues, the HC notes that, “the persistence of discrimination, in particular discrimination that has deep social roots, including in **caste-based distinctions** and sexism, has, however, led to a serious denial of access to and control over land. Certain human rights instruments specifically prohibit discrimination in relation to property and housing”

#### **HC Opening Statement to the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council June 2014**

“Is it because we address issues that some States prefer not to discuss? For one State, that might mean brutal anti-terror tactics. For another, inhumane treatment of minorities, or migrants. Or austerity policies that disproportionately weigh on the vulnerable. Or corruption, which misappropriates public goods. Certain States may feel that lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex people – or women; or persons with albinism; or people of certain **castes**, religion, race – somehow have less right than others to live a life of dignity. Effective human rights advocacy must necessarily open a Pandora’s box of hidden abuses. It does so to let in light and air, so that work may begin to ensure better governance and justice. All human rights violations are illegitimate, whether directed against dissenters and critics; migrants; minorities; indigenous peoples; or people of specific gender, religion, class, **caste** or race. **Dalit** or Brahmin, Peul or Pole, gay or heterosexual, tycoon or pauper, woman, child or man – regardless of our ethnicity; our age; our form of disability; our beliefs; or our economic might, all human beings are equal in dignity. And all, without discrimination, are entitled to the same rights. I urge this Council to continue to maintain the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, including the right to development.”  
[Opening statement of Navi Pillay to the 26th session of the Human Rights Council](#) and [UN Press release](#)

#### **OHCHR Strategic Management Plan 2014-17: HC Introduction**

In the [OHCHR Strategic Management Plan 2014-17](#), there are important [References to Caste-Based Discrimination](#). In Navi Pillay’s introduction, she notes that, “The exclusion, marginalization and abuse of people on the basis of their perceived race, their indigenous, ethnic or religious background, their colour, gender, **caste status**, disability, age, health status or sexual orientation, are scourges that the international community must combat”

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights March 2014**

In the HRC report [A/HRC/25/31](#) for the 25<sup>th</sup> session, the Secretary-General addresses the scope of and applicable standards relative to the right to access to justice and to an effective remedy for violations of economic, social and cultural rights. It is stressed that access to justice for violations of economic, social and cultural rights must be provided for all on the basis of equality without discrimination. Specifically, the Secretary-General calls for particular attention to be paid to direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of poverty, social marginalization, age, **caste**, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status

#### **HC Statement March 2014**

On the occasion of the presentation of her [annual report](#) to the 25th session of the Human Rights Council (3-28 March 2014) on March 6, 2014, the High Commissioner issued a [statement](#) highlighting discrimination on the basis of caste. The statement includes the following reference to caste in the section on discrimination, which is one of the six thematic priorities the office has pursued in 2013: “Excellencies,

discrimination is a severe attack on the universality of human rights. The exclusion, marginalization and abuse of people on the basis of their perceived race, their indigenous, ethnic or religious background, their colour, gender, caste status, disability, age, health status, or sexual orientation, are scourges that my Office is determined to combat.” [Navi Pillay’s statement to the 25th session of the Human Rights Council](#)

#### **HC Report March 2014**

The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, on the Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities [A/HRC/25/30](#)

#### **HR Report August 2014**

The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, on the situation of human rights in Yemen [A/HRC/27/44](#)