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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 6 July 2026

62/11. Freedom of opinion and expression

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling all resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council relevant to the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in particular Council resolutions 50/15 of 8 July 2022, 52/9 of 3 April 2023, 56/7 of 10 July 2024 and 61/14 of 30 March 2026,

Welcoming the work of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and taking note of her reports,[1]

Taking note of the relevant work of the treaty bodies, notably the Human Rights Committee and its general comment No. 34 (2011) on the right to freedom of opinion and expression provided under article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Welcoming initiatives taken by States, media organizations, national human rights institutions, academic institutions, civil society organizations and human rights defenders relevant to the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and noting in this regard the Freedom Online Coalition, the International Partnership for Information and Democracy and the Media Freedom Coalition,

Reaffirming that the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media, is a human right guaranteed to all, in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and recognizing the primary responsibility of States, as the main duty bearers, to promote and protect human rights online and offline, and recognizing also that the right to freedom of opinion and expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of democratic societies and for sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that it is critical to combating corruption and addressing disinformation, misinformation, and other threats to

[1] A/80/341 and A/HRC/62/67.

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information integrity, strengthening democracy, the rule of law and good governance, and ensuring transparency and accountability,

Recognizing that the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, both online and offline, through any media and regardless of frontiers is one of the central components of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as reflected in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that obstacles to access to information can undermine the enjoyment of civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights,

Recognizing also that the full and equal enjoyment and effective exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression is an important indicator of the level of protection of other human rights and freedoms, bearing in mind that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, both online and offline, and affirming that the same rights that individuals have offline must also be protected online,

Acknowledging that the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media, is an enabler for the enjoyment of all human rights and for sustainable development, and that the exercise of this right facilitates the realization of a range of other human rights,

Underlining the mutually reinforcing nature of democracy, the rule of law and the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which is integral to media freedom and academic freedom, and recognizing that the right constitutes one of the essential foundations of democratic societies, as it enables the public to seek and receive information and ideas, make well-informed choices and decisions, and to hold opinions without interference, in all areas of life in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres, participate in public affairs, and make a positive contribution to the well-being of society,

Recognizing the potential of online communication tools to promote freedom of expression and expand political participation, and to empower persons who belong to underrepresented groups and those who are marginalized, and urging States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe, enabling and inclusive environment for journalists and other media workers, human rights defenders and other civil society actors, online and offline, to perform their work independently and without undue interference,

Deeply concerned that violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression continue to occur, often with impunity, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, persecution and harassment, threats and acts of violence and of discrimination, including gender-based violence and discrimination, and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, online and offline, increased abuse of legal provisions on defamation and criminal libel as well as on surveillance, search and seizure, and censorship against persons who exercise, seek to promote or defend these rights, and are facilitated and aggravated by the abuse of states of emergency,

Gravely concerned that, in many countries, including in situations of armed conflict and occupation, persons and organizations engaged in promoting and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms frequently face stigmatization, smear campaigns, threats, harassment, discrimination, attacks and unlawful or arbitrary surveillance, both online and offline, as well as gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, thereby creating a climate of insecurity as a result of those activities, including through restrictions on freedom of association or expression or the right to peaceful assembly, arbitrary arrests and detention, abuse of criminal or civil proceedings, and deplorable acts of intimidation and reprisal intended to hinder and prevent cooperation with the United Nations and other international and regional bodies in the field of human rights, and strongly condemning all such violations and abuses,

Stressing that the strengthening of women's and girls' voices, agency and leadership by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights, inter alia, their right to freedom of opinion and expression, are among the key factors in breaking the cycle of gender inequality, in eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and poverty, and that the empowerment

of women and girls requires their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in decision-making processes at all levels and as agents of change in their own lives and communities,

Expressing concern about the increased exposure of women and girls to all forms of discrimination and violence in the digital environment, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, the emergence and rise of harmful behaviours, such as hate speech, and disinformation campaigns, including those enabled or amplified by artificial intelligence and synthetic media, that undermine and discredit women's and girls' right to freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline, forcing women and girls to self-censor, and contributing to broader chilling effects on the exercise of the rights of freedom of opinion or expression, close their digital accounts or reduce their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in online and offline spaces, and noting with concern that women's unequal access to and use of the Internet further exacerbates these risks, which could render them both more vulnerable to disinformation and technology-facilitated violence and less equipped to prevent and respond to such harms, and expressing concern that the misuse of artificial intelligence can have far-reaching implications and cause disproportionate negative impacts on women and girls, especially through new and emerging digital technologies that create new forms of violence, such as deepfakes, and risks reinforcing existing gender inequalities, discrimination and stereotypes,

Expressing grave concern about States, or actors under their effective control, conducting repressive activities abroad, to harm, silence, coerce, harass and intimidate dissent through digital, physical or other means, including through the arbitrary or unlawful use of surveillance and surveillance software, including commercial intrusion capabilities, doxing and sexualized smear campaigns, legal and administrative restrictions such as investigation, prosecution and punishment in absentia, where inconsistent with international human rights law, as well as extradition on unsubstantiated criminal charges, and the targeting of family members, representatives and associates,

Emphasizing that repressive activities conducted abroad by States, or actors under their effective control, undermine the realization of human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, with severe and multifaceted effects on persons targeted, including psychological harm characterized by fear, anxiety and prolonged stress, leading many victims to self-censor and withdraw from public life, thereby undermining their ability to participate freely and meaningfully in society, while also fostering mistrust, fragmentation and insecurity within affected communities, weakening social cohesion and limiting civic space, and contributing to broader risks, and could lead to longer-term social and economic harms,

Acknowledging the essential role of, inter alia, journalists and other media workers, members of academic communities, human rights defenders and other civil society actors in the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and in this context expressing alarm at the continued and increasing violations and abuses of the right to freedom of opinion and expression facing them, including increased attacks directed against and killings of journalists and other media workers, including women journalists and journalists reporting on conflict situations, occupation, environmental and climate issues, as well as scholars, academics, students, artists and human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders and environmental human rights defenders,

Taking into account that journalists and other media workers may face specific risks in relation to their work owing to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and remaining deeply concerned about acts of violence particularly directed against journalists and other media workers in situations of armed conflict and occupation, recognizing the increasing role of collaborative investigative journalism, including cross-border reporting initiatives that contribute to strengthening public dialogue, exposing wrongdoing, promoting transparency and accountability and fostering cooperation across communities in contexts characterized by division and polarization, and reaffirming that journalists and other media workers should be allowed access to conflict-affected areas and when as civilians also being assured protection in accordance with international humanitarian law, and noting that direct attacks on journalists as such could be a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions,

Emphasizing that uncensored and unhindered news media and the ability of journalists to work safely and without fear are not only integral to the right to freedom of opinion and expression but also key to addressing misinformation and disinformation, including in a situation of crisis, armed conflict, or occupation,

Emphasizing also the importance of digital connectivity, including telecommunications networks and infrastructure, to ensure the continuation of critical services, particularly in a situation of crisis, armed conflict or occupation, and underlining the importance of access to a free, open, interoperable, reliable, safe and secure Internet,

Deeply concerned about all attempts to silence journalists, other media workers, human rights defenders, members of academic communities, and other civil society actors, including by legislation that can be used to criminalize expression and by the misuse of overbroad or vague laws to repress freedom of expression, including defamation and libel laws, laws on misinformation and disinformation, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism legislation, cybercrime legislation, foreign agent laws, measures to protect democratic institutions from covert political interference, and laws criminalizing or otherwise limiting legitimate academic inquiry and teaching, when not in conformity with international human rights law and relevant human rights standards,

Expressing serious concern at the rise of strategic lawsuits against public participation, including those brought by business entities, to exercise pressure, intimidate or exhaust the resources and morale of journalists, other media workers, civil society organizations and human rights defenders, and thereby impede them in the performance of their work, including on matters of public interest,

Recognizing the importance of free, independent, plural and diverse media, online as well as offline, in building and supporting the functioning of inclusive societies and democracies, an informed citizenry, the rule of law and participation in public affairs and in holding public institutions and officials accountable, including during democratic processes, and at all stages of elections, and by exposing corruption,

Reaffirming the importance for States to strengthen the resilience of societies against the negative impact of disinformation and misinformation at all levels, in particular through digital, media and information literacy education, and inclusion, intercultural understanding, fact-checking and transparent and accountable technological solutions,

Underlining that digital contexts provide opportunities and challenges for exercising the right to freedom of opinion and expression, regardless of frontiers, and emphasizing that, in the digital age, technical solutions to secure and protect the confidentiality of digital communications, including measures for encryption, pseudonymization and anonymity, as well as efforts to promote access to information and communications technology, digital, media and information literacy, civic participation and online safety, are important to bridge digital divides and ensure digital inclusion and the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression,

Recognizing that new and emerging digital technologies, including artificial intelligence systems, provided that adequate human rights safeguards are in place, can support the promotion and protection of human rights, including the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, such as by enhancing access to diverse, reliable and independent sources of information, facilitating the creation and dissemination of content, supporting media pluralism, and enabling the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in public life, including for persons in vulnerable situations,

Recognizing also that new and emerging digital technologies, including artificial intelligence systems, when designed, developed, deployed and regulated without adequate safeguards and including when used for identification, tracking, profiling, facial recognition, the generation of synthetic photorealistic images, behavioural prediction or the scoring of individuals, can entail serious risks for the protection, promotion and enjoyment of human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to privacy, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, in particular by embedding and exacerbating bias, which potentially results in discrimination and inequality, and by intensifying threats from misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, which may

undermine the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and may lead to violence, including political violence, and stressing that certain applications of artificial intelligence present an unacceptable risk to human rights, and stressing also that artificial intelligence applications that cannot be operated in compliance with international human rights law should not be used or developed,

Stressing the importance of a human rights-based, gender-responsive and safety-by-design approach to the design, development and deployment of new and emerging digital technologies, and the importance of analysing them in a holistic, inclusive and comprehensive manner in order to leverage the full potential of new and emerging digital technologies to support human progress and development for all, and to ensuring appropriate safeguards, human oversight and accountability mechanisms across the life cycle of new and emerging digital technologies, including through technical standard-setting, and of respecting and promoting human rights in national, regional and international regulatory frameworks and legislation, and on the conception, design, use, development, further deployment and impact assessments and technical standard-setting of new and emerging digital technologies, while ensuring the meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, the media and civil society, and of promoting the transparency, openness and inclusivity of such processes and bodies,

Emphasizing that disinformation is a threat to democracy that can undermine democratic institutions and processes, including electoral processes, thereby suppressing political engagement, hindering the realization of informed participation in political and public affairs and undermining trust in democracy's core institutions,

Reaffirming that access to relevant, reliable and accurate information and knowledge is essential for an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space, and expressing concern at the spread of misinformation and disinformation, including data-driven political microtargeting, synthetic media and other content generated or manipulated through artificial intelligence, such as deepfakes and voice cloning, which can be designed and implemented so as to spread hatred, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization and incite discrimination, hostility or violence, as well as to mislead, violate and abuse human rights, including the right to privacy, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, and the freedom of individuals to seek, receive and impart information, and stressing the importance of information integrity as a means to promote and protect the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to respond to the spread of disinformation and misinformation, and that responses to the spread of disinformation and misinformation must be grounded in international human rights law, including the principles of lawfulness, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality, and underlining the importance of free, independent, plural and diverse media and of providing and promoting access to independent, fact-based information to counter disinformation and misinformation, and to promote informational integrity,

Unequivocally condemning the use of Internet shutdowns and restrictions to intentionally and unlawfully prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information online, including the blocking of access to communication platforms and throttling and filtering measures, and stressing the importance of a free, open, interoperable, reliable and secure Internet,

Expressing concern that many forms of digital divide remain between and within countries and regions, which have a negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and underlining the need for digital, media and information literacy as well as the need to address prevailing challenges to bridge digital divides, including through partnerships, international cooperation and education, striving to ensure that individuals, especially all women and girls, children and youth, and individuals in vulnerable situations and/or belonging to marginalized groups, are able to connect to and access the Internet in a safe, secure and meaningful way so as to enable their full cultural, economic, political and social participation and to promote the enjoyment of their right to freedom of opinion and expression in an inclusive information society,

Recognizing that the gender digital divide, which includes significant gender disparities in terms of access to and the use of information and communications technology,

undermines women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression,

Reaffirming the fundamental role of the right to freedom of opinion and expression as an enabler for all women and girls to interact with society at large on equal terms and without discrimination, particularly in the realms of cultural, economic, political and social participation, and reaffirming also that the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women and girls is critical to achieving gender equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy,

Recognizing the essential contribution that civil society organizations and human rights defenders make to the United Nations and other regional and international organizations, and urging States to refrain from practices that restrict the ability of civil society members and human rights defenders to exercise their freedom of opinion or expression and hinder and prevent their meaningful, safe and inclusive participation,

Acknowledging the important role of business enterprises, including technology and social media companies, in the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and in enabling access to information, and recalling that all business enterprises have a responsibility to respect human rights, as set out in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework, both online and offline, including by implementing human rights due diligence policies and participating in good faith in domestic judicial and non-judicial processes, and that the obligation and the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms lie with the State,

Condemning the use of hate speech, both online and offline, to provoke stigmatization and violence, including political violence, and which might constitute an attempt to restrict the meaningful, inclusive and safe participation of persons, including women and children, and those vulnerable to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in public affairs, in particular in relation to decision-making processes, and recognizing the importance of freedom of expression and the fundamental role of education and other active policies in the promotion of tolerance and respect for others and in the construction of pluralistic and inclusive societies and, in this regard, taking note of the Rabat Plan of Action,

Recalling that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities, in accordance with article 19 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Stressing the need to ensure that measures for the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security, including counter-terrorism, public order and public health measures, are in full compliance with international human rights obligations, including the principles of lawfulness, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality, and stressing also the need to protect human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to privacy, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, and safeguarding personal data,

1. *Reaffirms* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and also reaffirms that States shall respect, protect and fulfil the rights contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression, online and offline, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media of one's choice, and the intrinsically linked rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, peaceful assembly and association and the right to vote and take part in the conduct of public affairs;

2. *Stresses* that a democratic society depends on respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and calls upon States to refrain from imposing undue restrictions on the freedom to seek, receive and impart information that undermine democracy and the rule of law by preventing efforts aimed at informing citizens, including during democratic processes and at all stages of elections, and holding public authorities accountable and exposing corruption, and also stresses the importance of promoting a safe and diverse information environment that produces accurate, trustworthy

and reliable information, meaning that people can rely on the accuracy of the information they access while being exposed to a variety of ideas;

3. *Expresses its continuing concern* that violations and abuses of the right to freedom of opinion and expression continue, often with impunity, and calls upon States to prevent and address such violations and abuses, including those that are facilitated and aggravated by the abuse of states of emergency, the misuse of overbroad or vague laws to repress freedom of expression, and unlawful or arbitrary surveillance and/or interception of communications, including through digital surveillance technologies, and to ensure victims-survivors of violations and abuses have access to an effective remedy and that those responsible are brought to justice;

4. *Strongly condemns* the threats, reprisals, harassment and violence against, both online and offline, including through repressive activities conducted abroad by States, or actors under their effective control, and the targeting, criminalization, intimidation, arbitrary detention, torture, disappearance and killing of any individual, including journalists and other media workers, academic communities, artists and cultural workers, human rights defenders, including environmental human rights defenders, all women and girls, and individuals in vulnerable situations and/or belonging to marginalized groups, including persons belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic and religious or belief minorities, for exercising and advocating for their human rights and fundamental freedoms, for reporting and seeking information on human rights violations and abuses or for cooperating with national, regional and international mechanisms, including in relation to economic, social and cultural rights, which have increased and are not adequately punished, in particular where public authorities are involved in committing such acts, and including when such acts are committed in situations of crisis or armed conflict;

5. *Expresses its deep concern* at all forms of discrimination, intimidation, harassment and violence, both online and offline, that prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the right to privacy, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, that hinder their full, equal, safe and meaningful participation in economic, social, cultural and political affairs and are an impediment to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls;

6. *Underlines* that connectivity, access to information and communications technology and the promotion of open and secure digital access and digital inclusion, including through digital, media and information literacy, are critical for the enjoyment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to bridge the digital divides, and encourages diverse and human rights-respecting technological solutions to advance connectivity, including by creating an enabling, inclusive and effective regulatory environment for small, non-profit and community Internet operators;

7. *Calls upon* all States:

(a) To promote, protect, respect and ensure the full enjoyment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline, and to take all measures necessary to put an end to and to prevent violations and abuses of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including by ensuring that relevant national legislation complies with their international human rights obligations and is effectively implemented;

(b) To refrain from committing, co-opting or condoning repressive acts abroad, online or offline, and ensure that all such acts on their territory are investigated and prosecuted promptly, fully and effectively, including, where applicable, reviewing, revising or adopting national laws to allow for the prosecution of the perpetrators and facilitators of repression abroad;

(c) To promote, protect, respect and ensure all women's and girls' full enjoyment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline, without distinction or discrimination of any kind, to counter all violence or threats of violence faced while exercising this right, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, while enhancing their efforts to ensure women have meaningful, free, open, interoperable, reliable

and secure access to the Internet, in line with commitments made under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to take appropriate measures as part of their national development plans to eliminate gender stereotypes, negative social norms and discriminatory attitudes through legislative measures, social policies and educational programmes;

(d) To strengthen measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equitable basis and through all forms of communication of their choice, including through the provision of accessible and affordable formats and technologies;

(e) To enable everyone, including journalists and other media workers, members of academic and artistic communities, human rights defenders, and other civil society actors, to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, including by taking effective measures, such as prevention and protection mechanisms, to ensure their safety both online and offline, and to protect in law and in practice the confidentiality of journalists' sources, including whistle-blowers, in acknowledgement of the essential role of journalists and those who provide them with information in fostering government accountability and an inclusive, democratic and peaceful society;

(f) To respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the media, in particular editorial independence, to promote a pluralistic approach to information and multiple points of view, inter alia by encouraging a diversity of ownership of media and of sources of information, including mass media, and by promoting the economic sustainability of media, to promote diverse, resilient and sustainable information ecosystems, including by strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers, and to refrain from the use of imprisonment or the imposition of fines for offences relating to the media where such measures are disproportionate to the gravity of the offence, and to take note of the Windhoek+30 Declaration;

(g) To develop, adopt and implement, in consultation with civil society and journalists' organizations, national action plans based on human rights obligations and tailored to online as well as offline issues, to advance the freedom, independence and pluralism of the media; to set up prevention and protection mechanisms for the safety of journalists, and to promote awareness about human rights law and human rights standards and best practices;

(h) To refrain from creating or disseminating false or misleading information, which can be designed and spread so as to violate or abuse human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to privacy, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, and to take appropriate and proportionate measures to mitigate risks arising from disinformation, including by preventing its spread and amplification and addressing information manipulation, in a manner consistent with international human rights law, noting such risks may impact the integrity of democratic processes and the broader information integrity ecosystem, while stressing that responses to the spread of disinformation must be compliant with international human rights law;

(i) To support relevant efforts promoting the right to freedom of opinion and expression that strengthen the resilience of societies against the impact of disinformation and misinformation at all levels, including through digital, media and information literacy, education and inclusion;

(j) To facilitate an environment supportive of addressing disinformation through multidimensional and multi-stakeholder responses that are in compliance with international human rights law, including through enhanced cooperation with international organizations, civil society, the media, the private sector and other stakeholders;

(k) To encourage business enterprises, including social media companies and developers, providers and deployers of artificial intelligence systems, to address disinformation while respecting human rights, including through the review of business models, in particular the role of algorithms and ranking systems, recommender systems, targeted advertising and artificial intelligence-enabled content moderation, curation and generation in amplifying disinformation, enhancing transparency, enabling independent

research, providing accessible information to users about content governance policies and automated decision-making systems, ensuring notice and meaningful appeal mechanisms for content governance decisions, enforcing all applicable legal protections for users and encouraging human rights due diligence in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

(l) To take measures to prevent human rights violations and abuses enabled by artificial intelligence systems and to refrain from or cease the use of artificial intelligence applications that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights, including artificial intelligence applications that generate synthetic media, unless and until the adequate safeguards to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms are in place;

(m) To adopt and implement laws and policies to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to information held by public entities, including online, via both enabling requests for information and encouraging the proactive disclosure of information, including on grave violations and abuses of human rights, while ensuring that the grounds for refusing access to this information are narrowly defined;

(n) To take appropriate steps to bridge the digital divide and to ensure genuine access by all to communications and digital technologies;

(o) To ensure that measures for the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security, including counter terrorism, public order and public health are in full compliance with international human rights obligations, including the principles of lawfulness, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality, and also stress the need to protect human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to privacy, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, and safeguarding personal data;

(p) To refrain from imposing new restrictions, and to lift existing ones, on the free flow of information and ideas that are inconsistent with international human rights law, including through practices such as the use of Internet shutdowns and restrictions, including the blocking of access to communication platforms and throttling and filtering measures, and other forms of online censorship, to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information online, the banning or closing of publications or other media and the abuse of administrative measures, criminalization and censorship, and the restriction on access to or use of information and communications technology, inter alia, radio, television and the Internet;

(q) To ensure that defamation and libel laws are not misused, in particular through criminal sanctions, to censor journalists, media outlets and human rights defenders, among others, and interfere with their mission of informing the public, and where necessary to revise and repeal such laws, in compliance with States' obligations under international human rights law;

(r) To adopt and implement measures that protect journalists, media outlets and human rights defenders, among others, from strategic lawsuits against public participation, such as laws and policies that prevent or alleviate these cases, including by allowing early dismissal, upholding the protection and defence of public interest and ending so-called forum shopping, and providing legal support for victims;

(s) To ensure that targeted surveillance technologies are only used in accordance with the human rights principles of lawfulness, necessity and proportionality, and that legal mechanisms of redress and effective remedies are available for all individuals, particularly victims of surveillance-related violations and abuses;

(t) To ensure that biometric identification and recognition technologies, including facial recognition technologies, are not used by public and private actors for mass surveillance, and are used only when consistent with international human rights law and the principles of lawfulness, necessity and proportionality, and also to ensure access to remedies for human rights violations and abuses arising from biometric identification and recognition technologies;

(u) To adopt, implement and, where necessary, reform laws, regulations, policies and other measures concerning personal data and privacy protection online in order to prevent, mitigate and remedy the arbitrary or unlawful collection, retention, processing, use or disclosure of personal data on the Internet that could violate human rights and deter individuals from the full exercise of their right to freedom of opinion and expression;

8. *Encourages* all business enterprises, including technological intermediaries and social media platforms, to meet their responsibility to respect all human rights as stated in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and in other applicable standards, including by actively contributing to initiatives aimed at fostering respect for the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including through avenues for remedy and legal protection for users, and by ensuring the greatest possible transparency in their policies, standards and actions that have an impact on the freedom of opinion and expression, privacy and data protection;

9. *Also encourages* business enterprises, including communications service providers, to work towards enabling solutions to secure and protect the confidentiality of digital communications and transactions, including measures for encryption, pseudonymization and anonymity, and to ensure the implementation of human rights-compliant safeguards, and calls upon States not to interfere with the use of such technical solutions, with any restrictions thereon complying with States' obligations under international human rights law, and to enact policies that protect the privacy of individuals' digital communications;

10. *Calls upon* business enterprises to conduct human rights due diligence, including regular, comprehensive human rights impact assessments of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, throughout their entire life cycle, in order to prevent and mitigate their adverse human rights impacts, and ensure effective remedies as well as human oversight, accountability and legal responsibility;

11. *Also calls upon* all business enterprises, including surveillance technology companies, to publicly affirm and fulfil their responsibility to respect human rights in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to conduct and publicly disclose robust human rights due diligence for all proposed transfers of surveillance technology and refrain from exporting surveillance technology if there is a significant risk that it will be used to commit human rights violations and abuses, and to ensure their policies, including content curation and moderation policies, are fully aligned with international human rights law and standards, inter alia the right to freedom of opinion and expression;

12. *Reaffirms* that article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law;

13. *Stresses* the importance of prohibiting, in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law, all intentional acts of incitement to discrimination, hatred, hostility or violence, and further combating such acts by promoting understanding, education and dialogue;

14. *Recognizes* that the open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels, can be among the best protections against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating national, racial or religious hatred;

15. *Invites* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the working groups, representatives and special procedures of the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies to pay attention, within the framework of their mandates, to the situation of persons whose right to freedom of opinion and expression has been violated;

16. *Encourages* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to enhance investigative expertise, in accordance with its mandate, to strengthen efforts to address impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law against journalists, including by coordinating the collection, preservation and analysis of evidence to maximize the possibility of its admissibility in legal proceedings and/or to

facilitate judicial cooperation, and to do so in consultation with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression;

17. *Requests* the Office of the High Commissioner, in consultation with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as other relevant United Nations bodies and experts, to conduct open, transparent and inclusive online consultations, including with States, national human rights institutions, civil society and business enterprises, among other relevant stakeholders, and, drawing on international human rights law and relevant human rights standards, prepare a comprehensive study on emerging and transnational threats to the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including challenges arising from the misuse of new and emerging digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, as well as from the impact of legislative measures adopted in response to these threats, and to present the study to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-seventh session;

18. *Reminds* States of the possibility of seeking technical assistance upon their request if needed, including from the Office of the High Commissioner, to better promote and protect the right to freedom of opinion and expression;

19. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the issue of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in accordance with its programme of work.

32nd meeting
6 July 2026

[Adopted without a vote.]