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Human rights and democracy in the world and the EU's policy on the matter — annual report 2019

European Parliament resolution of 20 January 2021 on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter — annual report 2019 (2020/2208(INI))

(2021/C 456/09)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other UN human rights treaties and instruments,

— having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,

— having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (hereinafter 'Charter of Fundamental Rights'),

— having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights, and, in particular, to principles 2, 3, 11 and 17 thereof,

— having regard to Articles 2, 3, 8, 21 and 23 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),

— having regard to Articles 17 and 207 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

— having regard to the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, presented on 28 June 2016,

— having regard to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the General Comments of the UN Human Rights Committee,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the General Comments of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

— having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the General Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,

— having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 20 November 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto adopted on 25 May 2000,

— having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 30 March 2007,

— having regard to the UN General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, adopted on 8 June 2016,

— having regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted on 18 December 1992,

— having regard to the UN General Assembly resolution of 22 December 2018 on a global call for concrete action for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action,

— having regard to the decision of the UN General Assembly designating 22 August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, adopted on 28 May 2019,

— having regard to UN Security Council resolution 2467 of 29 April 2019 on conflict-related sexual violence,

— having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and to the EU strategic approach to women, peace and security 2019-2024 (WPS),

— having regard to the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls,

— having regard to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the outcomes of their review conferences,

— having regard to International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 190 of 21 June 2019 on Violence and Harassment,

— having regard to the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work of 21 June 2019,

— having regard to the Memorandum of Understanding of 16 August 2019 concerning cooperation between the UN Environment Programme and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

— having regard to the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, adopted on 5 November 1992,

— having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter 'the Istanbul Convention') of 11 May 2011, which has not been ratified by all Member States,

— having regard to the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019 — 'Keeping human rights at the heart of the agenda' of 28 April 2015 (JOIN(2015)0016), adopted by the Council on 20 July 2015, and to its Mid-Term Review of June 2017 (SWD(2017)0254),

— having regard to the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, adopted by the Council on 17 November 2020,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 February 2019 on EU priorities in UN Human Rights Fora in 2019,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 June 2019 on EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 July 2019 on the EU's priorities at the UN and at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 14 October 2019 on democracy,

— having regard to the EU Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, adopted on 24 June 2013,

— having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion and belief, adopted on 24 June 2013,

— having regard to the EU Guidelines on the death penalty, updated by the Council on 12 April 2013, on freedom of expression online and offline, adopted by the Council on 12 May 2014, and on human rights defenders, adopted by the Council on 14 June 2004,

— having regard to the EU Human Rights Guidelines on non-discrimination in external action, adopted by the Council on 18 March 2019,

— having regard to the EU Human Rights Guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation, adopted by the Council on 17 June 2019,

— having regard to the 2019 Revision of the Guidelines on EU Policy Towards Third Countries on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the Council on 16 September 2019,

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— having regard to the Commission communication of 6 October 2020 entitled '2020 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2020)0660), and to the geopolitical agenda of the 2019-2024 EU legislative term,

— having regard to the Commission's report of June 2020 entitled 'Legal gender recognition in the EU — The journey of trans people towards full equality',

— having regard to the Commission joint communication of 25 November 2020 entitled 'EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) — An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action' (JOIN(2020)0017), and to the conclusions of the Presidency of the Council of 16 December 2020 on GAP III,

— having regard to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) EU LGBTI Survey II, of 14 May 2020 entitled 'A long way to go for LGBTI equality',

— having regard to the Decision of the EU Ombudsman of 30 July 2020 on the role of the EU's Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU,

— having regard to the reports from the EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU and to the reports from the European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance,

— having regard to the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2019,

— having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2017 on corruption and human rights in third countries ([1]),

— having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2018 on violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the world, including land grabbing ([2]),

— having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2019 on EU Guidelines and the mandate of the EU Special Envoy on the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU ([3]),

— having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter — annual report 2018 ([4]), and to its previous resolutions on earlier annual reports,

— having regard to all its resolutions adopted in 2019 on breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (known as urgency resolutions) in accordance with Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to its Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which in 2019 was awarded to Ilham Tohti, an Uyghur human rights defender, economics professor, advocate of the rights of China's Uyghur minority and political prisoner held in China,

— having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0259/2020),

A. whereas the celebration in 2019 of the 10th anniversary of the Charter of Fundamental Rights has reminded the Union of its stated commitment and Treaty-based obligation to resolutely pursue actions to protect, promote and fulfil human rights, both inside and outside its borders; whereas on this occasion, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to remain an influential player on the world stage and to keep playing a leading role as a global defender of democracy and human rights;

([1]) OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 82.
([2]) OJ C 118, 8.4.2020, p. 15.
([3]) OJ C 411, 27.11.2020, p. 30.
([4]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0007.

B. whereas gender equality is a core value of the EU and the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination is a fundamental right enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and whereas gender mainstreaming should therefore be implemented and integrated as a horizontal principle in all EU activities and policies;

C. whereas Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world, constituting 80 % of all persecuted religious believers; whereas such persecution ranges from routine discrimination when it comes to education, employment and social life, through to limitations on all forms of expression and even physical attacks against Christian communities, which come close to meeting the international definition of genocide that has been adopted by the UN;

D. whereas the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has for 25 years now highlighted the importance of equal rights and opportunities for women, as well as their equal participation in decision-making and in the democratic process for the consolidation of democracy;

E. whereas the lack of women involved in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) increases the risk of bias; whereas scientific education is important for obtaining skills, decent work and the jobs of the future, as well as for breaking with the gender stereotypes that regard these as typically masculine fields, in order to allow women the full enjoyment of their human rights;

F. whereas throughout the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC in November 2019, the EU stressed its commitment to developing a comprehensive strategy on children's rights and parental rights and placing them at the heart of EU policies; whereas Parliament hosted a dedicated conference on 20 November 2019, which addressed a range of issues, including challenges to the protection of the rights of the child in an ever-changing digital world, particularly with regard to banning access to child pornography and combating harassment and violence, overcoming barriers to the full enjoyment of children's rights and tackling the changing nature of armed conflicts and their impact on children's futures, including the impact of these conflicts on their development, education and later life, while taking into account the statements made by children in the discussion;

G. whereas the crisis triggered by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the ways in which states have responded to it, the deepening of inequalities and the hardship it has caused, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, as well as women, and its impact on international relations, the rules-based international order and conflicts, all of which have long-term implications on all matters involving respect for human rights;

H. whereas, by way of illustration, the crisis caused by the pandemic has led most countries to adopt emergency measures, curtailing the freedoms to enjoy many human rights, foremost among which are the freedoms of movement and of assembly, or to establish new means of surveillance in order to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus; whereas those measures have legitimately raised questions as to their necessity, legality, proportionality, non-discriminatory nature, duration and implications, in the spirit of safeguarding fundamental freedoms in the short and longer terms; whereas the pandemic has also been accompanied by further negative trends undermining democracy and shrinking civil society space in some countries;

I. whereas the global recession caused by the pandemic may lead governments to prioritise stimulating economic activity and attracting investments; highlights that this should not happen at the expense of their ambition in terms of political objectives and standards for some other areas, such as the protection of human rights, climate action and the fight against poverty, especially that of children and their families;

J. whereas the global rise in authoritarianism and populism poses a threat to the values and principles on which the Union is founded;

K. whereas illiberal regimes are increasingly moving away from the path of mature democracies and Western democratic standards, entrenching themselves in positions that give rise to continuous and deliberate violations of human rights; whereas these illiberal regimes are restricting fundamental rights and freedoms, thereby creating a false impression of electoral legitimacy in elections that cannot be considered as free, fair or transparent;

L. whereas environmental emergencies, including climate change and deforestation, are the result of human actions and give rise to human rights violations not only against the people directly affected, but also against humanity as a whole; whereas it is important to recognise the link between human rights and environmental protection; whereas ensuring access to water is vital when it comes to preventing tensions in certain regions;

M. whereas increased coherence between the EU's internal and external policies, as well as between the EU's external policies, represents an indispensable requirement for a successful and effective EU human rights policy; whereas policies in support of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the fight against impunity should be mainstreamed across all other EU policies with an external dimension, such as development, migration, security, counter-terrorism, women's rights and gender equality, enlargement and trade; whereas greater consistency should enable the EU to respond more quickly during the early stages of human rights violations and to be a more active and credible human rights actor at global level;

N. whereas full respect for human rights and European standards among the EU's partners and neighbours, including in the management of the refugee crisis and in addressing migration, is one of the European Union's key priorities; whereas the human rights situation, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, is a matter of concern in neighbouring countries, which must take appropriate measures in this regard and work together with their respective civil societies, which include pro-European and democratic members;

O. whereas travel bans to prevent human rights defenders (HRDs) from attending international events have been used by a growing number of countries, particularly in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America;

Human rights and democracy: general trends and key challenges

1. Welcomes the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic of those states which have placed the rights to life and health as their first imperatives; stresses that, at the same time, it is crucial to ensure that people have adequate standards of living; emphasises that all measures in response to the pandemic must be grounded in and comply with human rights and the principles of non-discrimination, and should safeguard progress towards the SDGs;

2. Stresses the need to ensure full respect for human rights and adherence to the principle that human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and condemns any attempt to relativise them;

3. Expresses very serious concerns about the decline in democratic and human rights standards and in the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms that the crisis has caused in some countries; is of the opinion that this pushback primarily results from a rise in authoritarianism, as well as from the devastating economic and social consequences of the crisis and their use as a pretext to manipulate state institutions and electoral timelines, suppress the activities of HRDs, in particular defenders of minorities, political opponents, media or civil society representatives, and restrict fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the rights of persons or groups exposed to discrimination, such as religious and belief minorities, and LGBTI people, for purposes unrelated to the pandemic; stresses in this regard the rise of hate speech, based on race, ethnicity, religion or caste, disinformation, the targeting of vulnerable groups accused of spreading the virus, the increase in domestic and gender-based violence and gender inequality; expresses concern over cases of discrimination in the distribution of COVID-19 pandemic-related aid; rejects any denial of aid under any circumstances, including on the basis of religion; also stresses with concern the use, in violation of human rights, of digital technologies aimed at containing the pandemic by tracking citizens and retrieving their private data;

4. Affirms that states must refrain from exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic to consolidate authoritarian power, to weaken democracy and the rule of law, or to trample on human rights; expresses its deep concern at the exacerbation of measures taken by authoritarian regimes, aimed at repressing dissent and reducing the space for action of civil society; underlines the importance of civil society, the existence of which allows for flexible, timely and effective responses to regimes that violate international law, human rights and democratic principles; is worried about the fact that COVID-19-related emergency measures are often not paired with clear obligations to revoke them once the crisis has ended;

5. Recalls that universal access to healthcare is a human right and supports any progress towards universal health coverage as essential for sustainable development; welcomes the global response of the European Union to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the Team Europe approach, which focuses on expressing solidarity and offering tangible assistance to partners, in particular the most vulnerable and affected countries;

6. Notes with concern the shortcomings in many states of the healthcare system, which undermine peoples' right to physical and mental health and to remedy, and of the shortcomings in preventive actions to avoid contamination, in the water and sanitary measures, in information and in non-discrimination in access and rights; welcomes the statement by the Commission that the vaccines against COVID-19 should be made available globally and that the EU will make every effort to this end;

7. Recalls that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, states must ensure that their responses include a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach in order to guarantee the rights of all women and girls to live free from discrimination and violence, and to access the essential sexual and reproductive health services they need;

8. Recalls that the pandemic has also led to a decrease in the monitoring and documenting of human rights violations at global level; supports the international efforts to evaluate the differing national responses to the pandemic as regards restrictions on political, social and economic freedoms, and to work towards the establishment of a joint human rights-based framework that will inform future responses to sanitary crises; welcomes, in this context, the development of the Global Monitor by the Commission and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA);

9. Strongly denounces the many cases of discrimination, intolerance, persecution and killings linked to race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, disability, caste, religion, belief, language, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics that continue to occur in many countries and societies; deplores the targeting of individuals or communities with intolerant and hate-filled declarations and actions; considers the prevalence of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia in many countries to be unacceptable; insists that governments around the world clearly condemn and take a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination;

10. Underlines the tremendous and increasing threat to human rights that climate change, environmental destruction and loss of biodiversity entail by depriving people of the fundamental right to life, due in particular to a higher level of global hunger, economic and social inequalities, restrictions on access to water and additional deaths from malnutrition, and the increased spread of diseases; stresses that climate change also undermines the enjoyment of other human rights, including the right to food security, safe drinking water and sanitation, health, adequate housing, self-determination, work and development; draws attention, furthermore, to the risks posed by climate change to peace and security, as food insecurity and water scarcity can lead to competition over natural resources and then to instability and conflicts within and between states; draws particular attention to the link between the exploitation of natural resources and the financing of conflicts, wars and violence, directly or indirectly, including by some actors from the private sector; highlights that least developed countries are the most vulnerable to climate change, as they find it hardest to withstand its devastating impacts, despite producing fewer greenhouse gases than richer countries, which are less likely to be as impacted by climate change;

11. Affirms that the promotion and protection of human rights and climate and environmental action are interlinked, because, in particular, human rights international law provides access to remedies and legal means to redress the damage caused by climate change, to implement measures to combat climate change and to hold states, businesses and individuals accountable for their responses to climate change and actions which contribute to the further degradation of the environment;

12. Stresses that biodiversity and human rights are interlinked and interdependent, and recalls the human rights obligations of states to protect the biodiversity on which those rights depend, including by providing for the participation of citizens in biodiversity-related decisions and providing access to effective remedies in cases of biodiversity loss and degradation; expresses its support to the nascent normative efforts at international level in relation to environmental crimes; in this regard, encourages the EU and the Member States to promote the recognition of ecocide as an international crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC);

13. Underlines the need to pay particular attention to aid to environmentally and climate-displaced persons; considers it important to work at international level to define the concept of 'environmentally displaced persons' within the United Nations with a view to establishing an international legal framework and adopting a common approach to the protection of those obliged to leave their place of residence; recognises that the environmental consequences of climate change may exacerbate forced displacement, and therefore stresses the need to rapidly implement policies to reduce the effects of climate change in line with the Paris Agreement;

14. Expresses major concern over deforestation, illegal mining and the production of illicit drugs, in particular in the Amazon in 2019, given that forests contribute to mitigating climate change by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide; stresses that indigenous peoples have often been the first victims of deforestation, which endangers their rights to land, among other rights, and access to vital resources; underlines, in this regard, the right to determine and establish priorities and strategies for their self-development and for the use of their lands, territories and other resources; stresses that impunity for violations of the rights of indigenous peoples is a driving force in deforestation and therefore deems accountability for these violations to be essential; notes that the unlawful exploitation of natural resources may result in severe adverse impacts on the social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights of local communities, including the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination and the principle of permanent sovereignty over their natural resources;

15. Welcomes the growing aspirations and mobilisations of citizens, in particular the younger generations, for political and societal changes favourable to respect for human rights, democratic governance, equality and social justice, more ambitious climate action and better protection of the environment; highlights the emergence in 2019 of massive protest movements in every region in the world reflecting these aspirations, demanding change in the institutional and economic orders of societies, action to combat climate change and supporting the development of a more equitable global society; condemns the fact that in many countries people are denied the right to demonstrate peacefully, with legal, administrative and other measures such as the suppression of demonstrations through the use of force, harassment and arbitrary detention; stresses that in 2019, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were arrested, many of whom were subjected to ill-treatment and arbitrary detention, and have had to pay heavy fines in trials where minimum procedural standards were not guaranteed; stresses the importance of maintaining the peaceful nature of protest actions and expresses its concern about some fringe groups that have been taking the opportunity provided by demonstrations and the expressions of social movements to carry them out through violence and the disruption of daily life; calls on governments not to use disproportionate force against peaceful protestors and to hold all perpetrators of such acts to account;

16. Deems essential the political responses to the legitimate demands of societies, families, and individuals that are based on inclusive dialogue that leads to positive change; condemns, on the other hand, the repression of peaceful movements, in particular through the excessive use of force by security agents, which certain governments have inflicted on their populations with a view to stifling dissenting and critical voices;

17. Stresses that murders, physical and defamatory attacks, imprisonment, death threats, harassment, intimidation and restrictions on freedom of expression remain systematically used around the world against HRDs, including women's human rights defenders (WHRDs), defenders of religious and belief rights, local communities, indigenous groups, environmental and land defenders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society activists, whistle-blowers and journalists; notes that WHRDs face gender-specific threats;

18. Is deeply concerned about the use by some countries of repressive cybersecurity and counter-terrorism legislation to crack down on HRDs; underlines the existence of political trends towards deeper nationalism and the misuse of religion for political gain, which are conducive to intolerance;

19. Stresses that it is the duty of the EU institutions to actively support organisations and individuals engaged in defending democracy and human rights; demands justice and accountability for all attacks against HRDs; calls for the EU to support and protect HRDs in all their diversity; underlines in this regard the importance of Parliament's action in making their voices heard and in pressurising third countries' authorities to immediately and unconditionally release HRDs detained as a result of their activism; supports the work of European political foundations in strengthening democratic processes and fostering a new generation of political leaders around the world;

20. Is seriously concerned at the persistence of the scourge of wars and military conflicts, and of protracted occupation or annexation of territories, which give rise to grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, in particular genocides, mass killings, forced displacements of civilian populations, including religious minorities, and sexual violence, in particular against women and children; strongly condemns the engagement of dictatorial or authoritarian powers in proxy wars and stresses that negotiated political solutions are a prerequisite for sustainable peace; expresses deep concerns at heightened international political tensions, and in certain regions of the world, at the increased activity of non-state armed groups and terrorist organisations, and the development of communal violence;

21. Deplores the fact that while the UN marked its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020, a number of governments inspired by inward-looking attitudes have taken action to counter multilateralism and international cooperation efforts in favour of peace, conflict resolution and the protection of human rights based on the purposes and principles of the UDHR, international law, the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act; criticises the lack of joint international leadership from democratic countries to respond consistently to serious violations of international human rights law and to join forces to advance human rights and democracy, and to sustain the rules-based international systems, and urges the EU and the Member States to fill this leadership void;

22. Deplores the plight of migrants and refugees around the world, particularly displaced women, children, persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses, persons with diverse sexual orientations, people belonging to persecuted ethnic, religious and belief minorities, who are among of the most vulnerable; notes that the number of international migrants in 2019 is estimated to be almost 272 million ([5]), which equates to 3,5 % of the global population, over 20 million of whom were refugees ([6]), and that large-scale displacement and migration events have occurred over the last two years; notes the increase in the number of asylum seekers in 2019, applying for international protection in the Member States of the EU-27 ([7]) as a consequence of repressive practices and human rights abuses on the part of, among others, dictatorships which hold political power illegally; denounces political measures eroding the human rights of migrants and refugees and putting at risk their safety and lives; strongly denounces the cases of discrimination, intolerance, persecution and killings linked to migration or refugee status; rejects the negative tendency towards the harassment and the criminalisation of the work of those who stand in defence of the human rights of migrants and refugees and provide them with assistance;

23. Welcomes the fact that efforts to advance the rights of women and girls have gained further prominence worldwide; notes, however, that no country in the world has achieved gender equality yet;

24. Stresses the persistence of widespread gender-based violence, including femicide, and discrimination in every region of the world, including the EU, which arises from gender inequality, unequal gender norms and power dynamics, cultural practices such as caste-based discrimination or long-established discriminatory legal systems, as well as from propaganda and disinformation actions that undermine women's rights; condemns the exploitation of women through human trafficking and all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual, physical and psychological violence, which are among the most widespread and systematic violations of human rights;

25. Highlights, furthermore, the use of sexual violence targeting women because of their opinions, religion, philosophical or sexual orientation or their activism in defence of human rights; stresses that women and girls from ethnic, religious and belief minorities are doubly vulnerable to gender-specific violence and discrimination; recalls that violence against lesbian and bisexual women in the form of 'corrective rape' remains a systemic problem in some countries owing to social stigma and discriminatory legal systems;

26. Condemns the ongoing backlash against gender equality and women's rights, including all attempts to roll back existing entitlements and protections in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as legislation, policies and practices that continue to deny or restrict these rights in many countries in the world; condemns, in this regard, the denial of access to affordable, high-quality comprehensive sexuality education, family planning services, modern contraceptives, safe and legal abortion care and maternal healthcare, and abuses and mistreatment of women in maternal, antenatal and post-natal healthcare settings, as well as coercive sexual and reproductive health practices that fail to respect

([5]) World Migration Report 2020 — International Organisation for Migration (https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf).
([6]) According to data published by the UNHCR (https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=fd4J).
([7]) Asylum statistics — Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics).

women's free and informed consent; highlights the need to protect parents in vulnerable situations, in particular single parents and those who have large families, to help them to avoid poverty and social exclusion; points out the need to create a social and economic environment and conditions that allow parents to continue their professional development;

27. Highlights the need to protect mothers in vulnerable situations, in particular single mothers, so as to prevent poverty and social exclusion; points out the need to create the social and economic environment and conditions that allow mothers to continue their professional development;

28. Also condemns governments worldwide that are opposing or fanning a negative backlash against women's demands for equal rights; underlines the prominent role that women play through their activism in political and social movements and deplores the heavy toll they have paid by being victims of violence caused by brutal repression and war, as well as sexual exploitation during armed conflicts;

29. Expresses deep concern at the continuation of serious human rights abuses against children around the world in 2019, the year of the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC, namely child labour, early and forced marriages, the trafficking and exploitation of children, including for sexual purposes, the conscription or enlistment of children into groups, the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts, child sexual abuse and prostitution, family separation and the detention of children, including for immigration-related reasons, as well as the challenges faced by girls in terms of sexual and gender-based violence, untimely pregnancy, HIV infection and school drop-out; finds it regrettable that in the context of the pandemic, numerous children and young people have had to take up jobs in order to meet basic needs and support their households and, as a result, have left school; stresses that this undesired development is a regression in terms of the school education of children;

30. Expresses its deep sorrow at and condemnation of the terrorist attacks and bombings perpetrated in the first half of 2019 that targeted believers and their places of worship that need to be preserved and protected; is alarmed that these horrific acts coincided with hate campaigns ramped up by certain political leaders and terror groups that aim to deny or limit the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; urges states to promote the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and protect vulnerable religious and belief minorities, taking swift action against the perpetrators of violence or incitement to hatred;

Putting the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights at the core of EU foreign policy

31. Recalls that the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as set out in Article 2 TEU; stresses that promoting these values externally, advancing democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, is at the core of the EU's common foreign and security policy, in accordance with Article 21 TEU and the Union's strategic interest, and should be reflected, in an effective and coherent way, in all areas of the Union's relations with non-EU countries;

32. Stresses the importance of the efforts of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to stand up against and respond in a robust and vocal manner to human rights violations wherever they occur, including in close partner countries, and to continuously strengthen the awareness and knowledge of officials of the EU and its Member States with regard to human rights and gender equality; recalls that effective engagement and meaningful dialogue with civil society is a cornerstone of a successful human rights policy; calls on all EU delegations and their respective focal points on human rights to consistently abide by their obligation to meet with HRDs, including WHRDs and members of civil society, visit detained activists, pro-democracy dissidents and HRDs, monitor their trials and advocate for their protection on the ground; also calls on EU delegations to facilitate such actions when they are attempted by visiting MEPs in the framework of official missions of the European Parliament; stresses the importance of addressing not only the consequences, but also the root causes of human rights violations;

EU work at multilateral level

33. Urges the EU and the Member States to develop an explicit strategy to counter increasing state withdrawal and pushback against the international human rights framework, in line with the stated commitments to multilateralism in the action plan on human rights and democracy, as well as attempts at international level to undermine the concept of human rights as established in the UDHR; stresses its view that international human rights law and the promise of achieving the SDGs by 2030 should remain cornerstones; recommends that the EU continue its efforts by engaging with countries and stakeholders which may or may not share the same values as the EU, in order to preserve or develop international standards in the field of human rights in line with Article 21 TEU;

34. Calls on the Member States to make the EU's foreign and security policy more effective by using the rule of qualified majority voting in the Council, especially in relation to human rights-related matters, in particular on issues falling under the EU action plan on human rights and democracy and for the adoption of sanctions; calls on the Member States to speak with a single, strong EU voice in multilateral forums, and act in unison when faced with crises that challenge the European Union's core values and interests, as this is the only way that the Union can play a leading role on the international scene and use its influence to bring about positive changes and more coordinated responses to global challenges, primarily the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as environmental and climate-related challenges;

35. Reiterates that the EU will only be recognised, credible and effective on the global scene if its core values, in particular those of respect for freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and equality are credible externally, and this will only be possible if the EU ensures the internal and external coherence of its policies on these matters; calls for the EU and its Member States to lead by example, strictly uphold human rights, ensure consistency in defending and adhering to its values, and ensure an enabling environment for civil society;

36. Deplores the fact that authoritarian regimes have abused multilateral institutions, seeking to neutralise multilateral human rights institutions and mechanisms in their ability to hold states accountable for human rights violations; calls for the EU and its Member States to work with like-minded democratic allies to support a reform of multilateral institutions so that they become more resilient against the negative influence of authoritarian regimes; also deplores the fact that seats on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) are often occupied by countries with proven track records of grave human rights violations, and calls on the EU Member States to be extremely cautious in their voting patterns and to avoid supporting countries which are candidates to serve as UNHRC members and which clearly violate human rights;

37. Considers that human rights dialogues with non-EU countries may constitute a useful tool for bilateral engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights, provided they are carried out in a result-oriented manner and are regularly reviewed; recalls that the EU guidelines on human rights dialogues outline a number of criteria for opening a dialogue, including 'the extent to which the government is willing to improve the situation, the degree of commitment shown by the government in respect of international human rights conventions, the government's readiness to cooperate with United Nations human rights procedures and mechanisms, as well as the government's attitude towards civil society'; calls for the EEAS to carry out a regular assessment of each dialogue, as foreseen by the EU guidelines; insists on the importance of raising individual cases in the context of human rights dialogues and of ensuring adequate follow-up and transparency over these cases;

EU Special Representative for Human Rights

38. Welcomes the appointment on 28 February 2019 of Eamon Gilmore as EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR); reiterates that the appointment of the EUSR should be subject to a prior hearing in Parliament; encourages the EUSR to pursue diplomatic efforts to enhance the effectiveness of EU human rights policy, to consolidate international alliances for promoting the human rights agenda and to convince interlocutors around the world to adopt and implement policies that conform to the highest standards of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance, and international law and norms, in particular international humanitarian law and international criminal justice; recommends, furthermore, that the EUSR redouble his efforts to ensure the EU's internal coherence in defining and implementing EU human rights foreign policy; insists that his regular reports to the Council are also shared with Parliament; calls for the EU to reinforce the visibility of the EUSR and the transparency of the position's activities and missions, including through

a dedicated section of the EEAS website, to make the EUSR a permanent position, with adequate resources and the ability to speak publicly in order to report on the achievements of visits to non-EU countries and communicate the EU's positions on human rights-related topics, as part of an overall reform of the EUSR's position;

International agreements

39. Reiterates its call for human rights clauses to be systematically included in all international agreements, in particular those on trade and association, between the EU and non-EU countries and for them to be duly enforced and monitored, including through measurable benchmarks and regular impact assessments, with the involvement of Parliament and civil society; stresses that these clauses should provide for mechanisms to ensure their effective enforcement and for procedures setting out clear and credible consequences that follow from breaches of the agreements, including suspension or, as a last resort, the withdrawal of the EU from the agreements; calls for better coordination and communication between the specialised actors responsible for relevant policy areas such as trade and human rights, for more efficient integration of human rights aspects into trade and investment policy; urges the setting up of independent monitoring mechanisms on human rights in relation to trade and foreign investment agreements, as well as an independent complaints mechanism, to provide affected citizens and local stakeholders with effective recourse to remedy;

40. Stresses that the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights in third countries can be achieved effectively through the use of conditionality in the EU's economic and political incentives such as access to EU funding, the granting of the generalised system of preferences (GSP) and of further tariff facilitations, and the granting of EU Schengen visa waivers; recalls, in this context, that according to Regulation (EU) 2018/1806, the Commission should monitor and report regularly to Parliament, including on the human rights situation in the third countries which are beneficiaries of the visa waiver and should suspend the visa exemption in the case of violations in the country concerned;

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument

41. Calls for the implementation of an adequate budget for activities and support to promote and protect democracy and human rights under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to match the level of the Union's commitment and ambition;

42. Calls on the Commission to monitor and include as part of its annual report on the achievement of the objectives of the NDICI a chapter on respect for human rights and compliance with Article 8 — General principles of the Instrument by the partner countries that benefit from its funding; calls on the Commission to propose appropriate measures, including the suspension of EU funding to state actors and the redirection of aid towards civil society, in the event of a serious violation of human rights or of the principles of the NDICI by its beneficiaries; calls for greater transparency regarding human rights-related provisions in financing agreements and a clarification of the mechanism and criteria for the suspension of such agreements in the event of a breach of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law and in serious cases of corruption; calls on the Commission to strictly refrain from using budget support to third countries' governments as an operational modality in countries witnessing widespread violations of human rights and repression of HRDs;

43. Calls for the EU to take particular care to assess and prevent any violation linked to the Union's own policies, projects and funding in third countries, including by creating a complaints mechanism for individuals or groups whose rights may have been violated by EU activities in these countries;

44. Welcomes the invaluable assistance provided to civil society organisations worldwide under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, which constituted the flagship instrument of the European Union in implementing its external human rights policy; calls for funding to civil society and human rights under the successor global instrument to be further enhanced;

45. Calls on the Commission to establish, in cooperation with the EEAS, a framework for annual reporting by the European Investment Bank (EIB) on its operations outside of the EU with regard to compliance with the general principles guiding the Union's external action as referred to in Article 21 TEU and the EU strategic framework and action plan for human rights; urges the Commission to ensure that the projects supported by the EIB are in line with EU policy and commitments on human rights, and that accountability mechanisms exist for individuals to report violations related to the activities of the EIB; calls on the EIB to further develop its policy on social standards into a human rights policy in the area of banking; calls for the inclusion of human rights benchmarks in its project evaluations;

EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy

46. Welcomes the adoption of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024; expresses its disappointment that the EEAS did not give due attention to the offer of Parliament and its Subcommittee on Human Rights to actively contribute to its preparation, in a spirit of good interinstitutional cooperation;

47. Calls on the EEAS and the Commission to hold regular consultations with civil society and to engage in a structured and regular dialogue with Parliament's competent bodies on the implementation of the new action plan in order to allow Parliament to play its part in the action plan's activities, in particular through parliamentary diplomacy, and to effectively fulfil its scrutiny role; recommends that a set of benchmarks and progress indicators be established in order to effectively monitor the implementation of the action plan; calls on the EEAS to report on the progress made in achieving the objectives of the action plan against these benchmarks; requests that the EEAS follow up regularly on Parliament's resolutions and debates which are relevant for the implementation of the action plan; insists that Member States take ownership of the action plan and contribute to the annual report on its implementation by reporting on their own activities carried out under this strategic document;

Responding to global human rights and democracy challenges

Democratic governance and enabling space for civil society

48. Takes the view that democratic governance and the rule of law are globally under attack due to a combination of factors including the rise of authoritarianism and populism, increased inequalities and poverty, pressure on civil society, the proliferation of fake news, disinformation, cyber threats and hybrid warfare, political interference and campaigns conducted by external actors, loss of credibility of public authorities, the polarisation of societies and the weakening of collective organisations defending the public interest; also emphasises that attacks on media freedom and attempts to manipulate public discourse through spreading fake news in social media have never been so frequent and so strong; expresses concern that authoritarian practices such as the stigmatising of civil society actors as 'foreign agents' are being copied and spread globally;

49. Calls for the EU and its Member States to continue supporting the strengthening of democratic institutions and transparent and credible electoral processes worldwide, to encourage and unleash democratic debate, combat inequalities, ensure the work of civil society organisations, support dialogue between different segments of society, fight corruption and impunity, and strengthen the independence and impartiality of judiciaries and the accountability mechanism; calls for the EU to strengthen its efforts on electoral observation even more and for closer cooperation with international organisations, especially with those of special relevance such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;

50. Stresses that corruption and human rights abuses are intrinsically linked; calls for the EU to integrate the fight against corruption into its human rights agenda; reiterates the EU's duty to protect anti-corruption associations, investigative journalists and whistle-blowers who work to expose corruption and fraud;

Climate action and human rights

51. Affirms that the promotion and protection of human rights and climate and environmental action are interlinked, because, in particular, international human rights law provides for legal avenues to redress the damage caused by climate change, to implement measures to combat climate change and to hold states, in particular those which are the most polluting, businesses and decision-makers accountable for their responses to climate change;

52. Supports an inclusive and rights-based approach to boost climate action that ensures public participation and access to justice in the making, implementation and review of political decisions related to climate change and its consequences; affirms that the fight against climate change goes hand in hand with the support and protection of those who defend the planet and its natural resources, including land and environmental defenders and indigenous communities;

EU approach to conflicts, accountability for human rights violations and fight against impunity

53. Underlines the complexity of modern conflicts, which often develop domestically at national or regional level, sometimes in the form of hybrid or cyber-attacks, involve many parties, including terrorist organisations and non-state actors, and have disastrous humanitarian consequences, in particular because of the difficulty in distinguishing between

combatants and non-combatants; calls for the EU to strengthen its response to conflicts, addressing their root causes, investing in conflict prevention and mediation efforts, seeking and maintaining space for political solutions, creating alliances with like-minded countries and regional organisations, providing further financial and technical support and personnel to peacekeeping civilian missions and military operations missions, and promoting trust-building initiatives between belligerents; also calls for the EU to ensure the integration of a gender perspective throughout these efforts, increasing the role of women and young people in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction operations, transitional justice and the promotion of human rights and democratic reforms; also calls for the EU to address trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence, and ensure sustained access to essential and life-saving health services; insists on the importance of ensuring the coherence of EU policy in relation to situations of occupation or annexation of territory; recalls that international humanitarian law should guide EU policy in relation to all such situations, including in cases of protracted occupation;

54. Calls on all governments to grant unfettered access to all their territories for international observers, including the EUSR, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures; underscores the importance of providing unimpeded access for the key international humanitarian organisations and international observers to the areas affected by ongoing conflicts and military aggression;

55. Calls on the Member States to strictly abide by the provisions of the Article 7 of the UN Arms Trade Treaty on Export and Export Assessment and of the EU Common Position on Arms Exports, by refusing any transfer of arms and surveillance equipment which would result in the risk that the importing state or non-state actors may commit or facilitate violations of human rights or international humanitarian law, including in the context of the European Peace Facility (EPF);

56. Calls on the Member States to set up a human rights pillar within the EPF containing, among other things, the aim of empowering and supporting civil society, including through programmes with funds specifically allocated to the support of HRDs as contributors to peace building; calls on the Member States to consider the possibility of including mandatory human rights safeguards and impact assessments in the future EPF, including compliance with a robust human rights due diligence (HRDD) policy framework on defence and security matters, inspired by the UN HRDD policy;

57. Reaffirms its unwavering support for the ICC and calls on the States Parties to the Rome Statute to provide the ICC with proper financial resources in order to enable it to fulfil its tasks within its mandate; calls for the ICC to continue its work with impartiality and independence; calls for the EU and its Member States to encourage all UN members to ratify and implement the Rome Statute; calls on the signatories of the Rome Statute to cooperate with the ICC; considers the attacks against the ICC to be deeply regrettable and lastly condemns the individual sanctions imposed on its staff, notably those against the ICC chief prosecutor, which are unacceptable; calls on the States Parties to take concrete action to seek the removal of those sanctions and to support those affected by them; stresses that the ICC is the only international institution that has the ability to prosecute some of the world's most horrific crimes and to defend victims that have no other recourse; recognises the work of the Independent Expert Review, tasked with identifying areas for reform, and calls on the ICC to take all necessary measures to improve its performance, effectiveness and positive impact, particularly on the communities and victims influenced by its work; asks the EU and Member States to continue to protect the ICC's independence and impartiality against attacks that aim at obstructing the functioning of international criminal justice; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to explore ways and present new tools to contribute to the fight against international crimes, to help the victims of violations of international human rights law and of international humanitarian law to access international justice and obtain remedy and reparation, including through building the capacity of Member States and non-EU countries to apply the principle of universal jurisdiction in their domestic legal systems;

58. Reiterates its call for the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to appoint an EU Special Representative on International Humanitarian Law and International Justice with a mandate to promote, mainstream and represent the EU's commitment to the fight against impunity;

59. Calls on the Member States and the EU Genocide Network to support the UN investigative team in collecting, preserving and storing evidence of crimes currently being committed or very recently perpetrated so that they are not lost;

60. Expresses the need to ensure justice for all victims of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and in light of all the ongoing armed conflicts, calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities; stresses that the international community has a responsibility to put an end to impunity, and to the gross violations that have been committed in several countries;

61. Expresses grave concerns over the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war; stresses that sexual crimes and gender-based violence are considered by the Rome Statute as war crimes, crimes against humanity or constitutive elements of genocide or torture; calls for concerted action to put an end to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war; welcomes UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2467 on conflict-related sexual violence and all related UNSC resolutions, beginning with UNSC 1325 on women, peace and security, which affirms the commitment of the UNSC to preventing the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism through the use of all means at its disposal, including sanctions and other targeted measures against perpetrators; stresses the need to ensure that all necessary safe medical and psychological assistance and services are provided to female war rape victims, including safe abortion, as provided for under international humanitarian law; calls for the EU to combat impunity for sexual and reproductive rights violations in conflict settings and supports the rights of women and girls to truth, effective remedies and reparations for violations of these rights; welcomes, furthermore, the creation on 30 October 2019 by the UN of a Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, with a view to helping them accede to reparations;

62. Recalls the UN Evaluation Reports on Enforcement and Remedial Assistance Efforts for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by the United Nations and Related Personnel in Peacekeeping Operations; underlines the need for the UN, EU Member States and the EU's common security and defence policy bodies to investigate, prosecute and sentence any UN, national and EU personnel who have committed acts of sexual violence without delay and with the firmest resolve; recalls the need to reform the relevant structures in such a way as to end impunity of UN and EU personnel, and by establishing functioning and transparent oversight and accountability mechanisms; finds it unacceptable that legal actions regarding alleged abuses currently remain purely voluntary and dependent on the troop-contributing country; is convinced that such grave crimes could also be reduced and prevented through training and education; recalls the urgency of preventing such crimes in the future, also in order to restore the trust of local populations in international peacekeeping;

63. Stresses the link between human rights violations and widespread impunity and the lack of accountability in regions and countries affected by conflicts or characterised by politically motivated intimidation, discrimination, harassment and assault, abduction, police brutality, arbitrary arrests, cases of torture and killings; calls for the EU to support actions aimed at combating impunity and to promote accountability in countries where the dynamics of impunity reward those who bear the greatest responsibility and disempower victims;

64. Regrets the need to suspend Sakharov Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from the Sakharov Prize Community, but welcomes the decision as a response to her failure to act and her acceptance of the ongoing crimes against the Rohingya community in Myanmar;

65. Expresses its concern that extrajudicial killings, torture and other human rights violations are occurring in the name of fight against illicit drugs; reiterates that the fight against crime does not justify any violations of human rights and calls for the compilation of best practices involving a harm minimisation approach based on the rule of law;

66. Commends the work and contribution to the fight against impunity of Agnès Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in conducting investigations into suspected cases of extrajudicial murders in 2019, for example, on the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, while being subjected to intimidation and threats;

67. Supports reforms of the judiciary to ensure its impartiality and independence, including those dealing with issues associated with the recruitment and appointment of judges, corruption and gender bias within the judiciary;

68. Calls for the urgent adoption and implementation of an autonomous, flexible and reactive global EU human rights sanctions mechanism, the so-called EU-Magnitsky Act, as an essential part of the EU's existing human rights and foreign policy toolbox which would strengthen the EU's role as a global human rights actor, allowing for targeted sanctions against individuals, and state and non-state actors and other entities responsible for or complicit in serious human rights violations, including acts of systematic corruption related to grave human rights violations; welcomes the adoption of global human rights sanction mechanisms in an increasing number of countries; stresses the importance of this system complying with the EU judicial review mechanism; underlines the necessity of allocating sufficient resources to enable its effective implementation; calls for the establishment of an EU-level advisory committee with Parliament's participation; stresses that such a mechanism will contribute to combating human rights violations, fighting impunity and protecting human rights activists and defenders around the world, as well as reaffirming the importance of the European Union acting on human rights sanctions in an efficient way, which therefore means using qualified majority voting; welcomes the adoption of the Council decision on targeted restrictive measures to deter and respond to cyber-attacks which constitute an external threat to the EU and to its Member States;

69. Considers that the global outbreak of COVID-19 should not be used as a pretext to undermine sanctions regimes; stresses, however, that sanctions should not impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance, in line with international humanitarian law;

Human rights defenders

70. Condemns the killings, arbitrary detention, torture, persecution, harassment, intimidation, blackmail, remote digital and physical surveillance of and smear campaigns against HRDs, their families and lawyers, as well as those who support and sympathise with them; notes with great concern the ever-increasing number of violent attacks against and murders of land and environmental HRDs in 2019 for standing up to protect natural resources and the rights of individuals to live in a safe and healthy environment; notes that in some parts of the world these attacks have attained dangerous levels; highlights, in this context, the particular vulnerability of HRDs and the need for adequate protection to enable them to conduct their vital work free from harassment and persecution; underlines the role faith-based organisations may play in responding to humanitarian crises, promoting peace, justice and respect for human rights, addressing non-violence and acting as mediators in negotiations to resolve conflicts;

71. Is particularly concerned about the increasing number of sentences imposed without guarantees of the minimum fair trial standards required by international law; calls on the EU to continue to use cooperation and diplomacy to ensure that the right to a fair trial is fully respected for each and every person;

72. Calls for an end to all attacks against HRDs, the release of all those arbitrarily detained and for those responsible to be held accountable; calls for the EU and its Member States to develop a strategic high-level vision to counter the mounting global attacks against HRDs, including through the adoption of strong Foreign Affairs Council conclusions in which the Foreign Ministers should call for ambitious EU global action in defence of HRDs; calls on the EU institutions to strengthen their support for HRDs as a key and integral part of the Union's external policy on human rights; stresses that political dialogue and engagement with the authorities of non-EU countries, trial observation, meetings with HRDs in country visits, visits to detained HRDs, relocation support and public statements are essential implementing elements of this policy; calls for the EU and its Member States to step up their efforts by acting in a more united way and using these instruments in a coherent and uniform manner, regardless of the country concerned, in cases where the rights of HRDs have been violated; calls for the EU and its Member States to issue, in this spirit, annual Council conclusions on HRDs, taking stock of their action on HRDs and setting out strategic commitments at the highest level for HRDs; highlights the continuous action in 2019 of Parliament and its Subcommittee on Human Rights to support and draw attention to the situation of HRDs, including Sakharov Prize laureates and nominees, in particular when they are in danger or face violations of their rights;

73. Calls for the EU to guarantee the access of WHRDs facing gender-specific violence to protection mechanisms, resources, to support them politically, to increase financial allocations for independent civil society organisations that promote the rights of women and girls, and to adopt as an annex to the EU Guidelines on HRDs, a toolkit that would provide practical steps for the EU to better meet the needs of WHRDs worldwide;

74. Calls for the EU and its Member States to raise the level of ambition to secure the release of jailed HRDs, including emblematic cases of jailed HRDs that are illustrative of the way in which repressive governments around the world consistently use the law in an attempt to smear and silence HRDs; stresses that such cases include European Parliament Sakharov laureates and finalists;

75. Urges EU delegations and Member States' representations to continue using public diplomacy and initiatives to raise individual cases of HRDs, and, where appropriate, to facilitate the issuing of emergency visas and provide temporary shelter in the EU Member States;

76. Calls for the EU and its Member States to improve access to EU visas for the short-term relocation of HRDs, in particular through the inclusion of instructions in the EU Visa Handbook on granting facilitations to HRDs and their family members, and to work towards amending the legal instruments on visas, particularly the Visa Code;

77. Welcomes the renewal in November 2019 for another three years of the EU HRDs mechanism ProtectDefenders.eu; recalls the importance of this mechanism vis-à-vis the growing needs and diversity of problems facing HRDs; calls for the reinforcement of this mechanism and its constant re-assessment in accordance with its needs;

Women's rights and gender equality

78. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement the gender equality strategy in a coherent manner both within and outside the EU, and to take effective and concrete actions to counter the backlash against women's rights, gender equality and SRHR;

79. Recalls that SRHR, and adequate sexual education, are human rights; calls for the EU and Member States to reaffirm the inalienable rights of women to bodily integrity, dignity and autonomous decision-making, and to uphold the universality and indivisibility of all human rights in all contexts, and to defend and promote in particular those that are most under threat, such as SRHR;

80. Welcomes the conclusions of the Presidency of the Council, supported by 24 Member States, on the EU action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations for 2021-2025 (GAP III), with strong commitments and actions on SRHR; calls in this regard for the reinforcement of EU support for non-EU countries, in particular for enlargement and neighbouring countries, that are implementing new policies and legislative changes with a view to aligning national legal frameworks to international and SDG commitments concerning women's rights and gender equality, to preventing and combating violence against women and girls, to protecting WHRDs, to advancing women's SRHR, to providing young people with science-based, comprehensive, adequate sexual education, enabling girls and young women to make a safe transition towards adulthood and to preventing and putting an end to sexual and gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices, including early and forced marriage;

81. Further calls for the EU and the Member States to promote gender equality and SRHR in all their external actions, including in multilateral and bilateral forums, with special attention to marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as LGBTI persons, and the objective of attaining universal health coverage through linked SRHR and HIV interventions;

82. Encourages going beyond simply tackling the root causes of structural gender inequalities by guaranteeing equal opportunities and strengthening women's participation;

83. Points out the need to create a social and economic environment and conditions that allow parents to continue their professional development;

84. Calls on the Member States to adopt a common approach and to cooperate with international institutions to obtain new, comparable and disaggregated data, as well as to develop focused policy and legislative interventions to combat human rights violations and calls on the Commission to include commitments and benchmarks to eradicate female genital mutilation in its cooperation negotiations and agreements with the countries concerned;

85. Recalls that the Istanbul Convention, as the first universally binding treaty combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence, sets the benchmark for international standards that need to be ratified and implemented; reiterates that the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention has been recognised as a key priority of the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025; calls for the EU and all of its Member States which have not yet done so to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention as soon as possible; calls for the EU to work with other countries in order to step up their actions in the fields of education, healthcare and social services, data collection, funding and programming, and to better prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence worldwide;

86. Stresses that migrant and refugee women and girls in need of protection should be seen as rights holders;

87. Commends the progress on the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative; calls on the Commission to ensure that projects sponsored by the initiative work towards addressing the root causes of women's rights violations, including the perpetuation of harmful gender-based stereotypes;

Rights of the child

88. Reiterates its call for the EU and its Member States to step up their cooperation and dialogue with non-EU countries, with children's rights and protection as a priority, with the aim of children's rights being respected everywhere in the world and of no child being left behind; urges in this regard the EU and its Member States to work with partner countries and to pledge further financial resources, in particular within the framework of official development assistance, in order to meet global challenges regarding the health and education of children, including the right to education in one's first language, the eradication of child labour, the fight against violence, sexual abuse and early and forced marriage, trafficking and exploitation, and recruitment or use in armed conflicts, of which millions of children are victims; recalls that the best interests of the child include the protection, care and safety of a child in an environment where they are able to grow up with the support and protection they need, and with their primary needs covered; stresses that education is an essential tool for combating discrimination and violence against children; calls for measures to facilitate the access of children to education;

89. Welcomes the attention given to the EU actions on protecting and promoting the rights of the child on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC and reiterates its call on the Commission to explore how the EU as a body can accede to the UNCRC;

Rights of persons with disabilities

90. Welcomes the ratifications in 2019 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of its Optional Protocol; stresses the importance of fully considering the specific needs of persons with disabilities; calls for the EU to incorporate the fight against disability discrimination into its external action and development aid policies, along with the fight for equal access to the labour market and access to education and training, as well as to promote solutions that make it easier for persons with disabilities to operate within society; reiterates the importance of effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by both the EU Member States and its institutions, especially with regard to EU obligations on humanitarian aid and international cooperation throughout all relevant EU policies; stresses the importance of non-discrimination and the need to credibly mainstream the principle of universal accessibility, and to ensure respect for all the rights of persons with disabilities;

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

91. Condemns the stigmatisation, arbitrary detention, torture, persecution and killings of LGBTI persons and the incitement to violence against them; considers regrettable the growing divergent developments between countries which are moving towards a better protection of the rights of LGBTI persons, notably by de-criminalising homosexuality, and those which undermine them and leave the field free for persecution, discrimination and stigmatisation against LGBTI persons; believes that practices and acts of violence against individuals on the basis of their real and perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or sex characteristics should not go unpunished and must be eradicated;

92. Calls for the EU to play a leading role in defending the human rights of and combating discrimination and stigmatisation against LGBTI persons, so-called conversion therapy, genital mutilation and forced sterilisation of transgender people; further calls for the EU to use all diplomatic tools at its disposal to advocate the de-criminalisation of sexual relations between consenting same-sex partners, and to set an example in tackling violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, through the effective implementation of the new LGBTI+ equality strategy, both within the EU and externally; calls for the EU and the Member States to thoroughly and consistently apply the EU Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons across its external policy;

93. Highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic has hit LGBTI communities hard, due to a spike in domestic violence against LGBTI people who were forced to quarantine or return to discriminatory families and households, increased unemployment and homelessness, the inability to access life-saving medical treatment such as HIV services and transition-related medical care, and leading to increased scapegoating; calls for the inclusion of LGBTI people in COVID-19 relief programmes;

Indigenous peoples

94. Is seriously concerned at the suffering and vulnerability of indigenous communities and individuals that results, among other things, from the consequences of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, the loss of their lands and livelihoods due to corporate activities and related damages; regrets the fact that indigenous peoples continue to face widespread and systematic discrimination and persecution worldwide, including forced displacements, arbitrary arrests and the killing of human rights and land defenders; recommends that the EU and its Member States include references to indigenous peoples and the rights contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the relevant and emerging frameworks for due diligence, and ensure that multinational companies be held to account in the event of a breach of their obligations;

95. Reiterates the call for the EU, its Member States and their partners in the international community to adopt all necessary measures for the recognition, protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples, including to their language, lands, territories and resources; welcomes the work that civil society and NGOs are doing on these issues; reaffirms the need to create a grievance mechanism to lodge complaints regarding violations and abuses of indigenous peoples' rights resulting from the activities of multinational businesses; recalls its decision to appoint a standing rapporteur on indigenous peoples within Parliament, with the objective of monitoring the human rights-related situation of indigenous peoples; calls on countries to ratify the provisions of ILO Convention 169 of 27 June 1989 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples;

96. Urges governments to pursue development and environmental policies that respect economic, social and cultural rights, and are inclusive of indigenous people and local populations, in line with the UN SDGs;

Racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

97. Welcomes the adoption in 2019 by the Council of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action; calls on the EU and its Member States to use all the tools at their disposal to ensure that those responsible for violations of rights on the grounds of discrimination based on race, caste (work and descent), religion, ethnic or national origin are held accountable;

98. Notes with great concern the scale and consequences of caste hierarchies, caste-based discrimination and the perpetuation of caste-based human rights violations, including the denial of access to the legal system or employment, continued segregation, poverty and stigmatisation, and caste-related barriers to the exercise of basic human rights and the facilitation of human development; reiterates its call for the development of an EU policy on caste discrimination; reiterates its call for the EU and its Member States to intensify efforts and support initiatives at the UN and in EU delegations and missions in third countries to eliminate caste discrimination;

99. Recalls the importance of actively supporting inclusive and anti-racist initiatives, especially given the rise of xenophobic and racist attacks worldwide, in the context of the increased calls for social justice which inspired a wave of worldwide protests;

100. Reiterates the crucial role of education in deconstructing prejudices and stereotypes, promoting tolerance, understanding and diversity, and highlights that education is a key tool to end structural discrimination and racism in our societies; calls on the Member States to promote anti-discrimination policies in all areas; considers that the fight against racism is a horizontal issue and that it should be taken into account in all areas of Union policy;

101. Calls on all EU delegations and their respective focal points on human rights to consistently abide by their obligation to assess and analyse the state of non-discrimination and to present it in their EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies (HRDCS) under the chapter pertaining to Non-discrimination and Exclusion, as well as its relevant sections on the specific grounds for discrimination and/or for discriminated groups; stresses that the updates to the state of non-discrimination in the Annual Implementation Reports of the HRDCS and Heads of Missions' reports are vital for the preparation of and for informing the Human Rights dialogues and that the guidelines also state that the EU must encourage and support the active participation of civil society in multilateral forums and mechanisms in relation to discrimination based on caste (work and descent);

National, ethnic and linguistic minorities

102. Deplores the fact that many countries, despite their international obligations and commitments to protect minorities, are pursuing a policy of forced assimilation of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities by disregarding their fundamental and human rights;

103. Calls for the governments of the EU's partner countries to respect the fundamental human rights of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities, including their culture, language, religion, traditions and history, in order to preserve cultures and diversity; reiterates the need to fulfil the obligations and commitments they have assumed under international treaties and agreements, such as the Council of Europe's recommendations;

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

104. Is appalled by the number of killings, attacks and acts of persecution, discrimination, harassment and incitation to antagonism that took place, and the number of restrictions on rights that were imposed in 2019 against individuals and groups targeted because of their religion, belief, atheism or agnosticism; reaffirms its support for victims of violence based on religion or belief, and its commitment to eradicating such violence; underlines the need to pay special attention to the situation of persecuted religious groups around the world, who face discrimination, threats, blasphemy laws, anti-conversion laws, demolition of their places of worship, violence, enslavement, rape, forced disappearances, executions and genocide; underlines the need to pay special attention inter alia to the situation of the persecuted Christians around the world, who make up the vast majority of the religious groups facing discrimination, violence and death;

105. Further expresses concern about the misuse and instrumentalisation of religion to undermine other human rights, including SRHR and the rights of LGBTI persons; deplores the fact that some countries already have, enforce or are seeking to introduce penal laws providing for the punishment of blasphemy, conversion or apostasy; stresses that the freedom of religion and belief includes the rights not to believe, to espouse theistic, non-theistic, agnostic or atheistic views and the right to apostasy;

106. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to implement the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief; reiterates its calls on the Council and the Commission to carry out a transparent and comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and added value of the position of the Special Envoy prior to launching the process of the renewal of this mandate and position by the Commission; insists that following the assessment, its work should be provided with adequate resources to enhance the EU's effectiveness in this area; laments the delay in carrying out this assessment; calls on the Commission to guarantee transparency in the nomination, mandate, activities and reporting obligations of the next Special Envoy and to ensure their commitment to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and to European values; reminds the Commission of the need to adequately support the institutional mandate, capacity and duties of the Special Envoy;

107. Welcomes the Global Exchange on Religion in Society, launched by the VP/HR in Brussels on 6 September 2019; recommends, however, that equal attention be pay to both intra-religious and inter-religious relationships; calls in this regard for the development of EU support to intra-religious dialogue at local level with the aim of fighting extremism and hate speech; calls furthermore for the objectives of promoting and protecting freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief to be mainstreamed into a wider range of EU activities related to human rights;

108. Reiterates the importance it attaches to academic freedom and urges the EU and the Member States to step up their diplomatic efforts through bilateral and multilateral engagement in relation to threats or attacks on academic freedom by state and non-state actors, in particular violent attacks on institutions and members of the higher education community, as well as discriminatory policies or practices, undue restrictions or pressure on research or expression, and wrongful prosecution or detention; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to revisit existing support and protection mechanisms for HRDs, in order to develop the capacity to identify and provide assistance, including emergency protection and support, in cases involving attacks on academic freedom; calls on the Commission to ensure continued high-level support to the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation and the Global Campus of Human Rights and Democracy, as a flagship of the EU's support to human rights education worldwide;

Freedom of expression, media freedom and the right to information

109. Condemns the killing, kidnapping, imprisonment, harassment and intimidation of and attacks against, including by physical and judicial means, many journalists, bloggers and whistle-blowers, and the control or shutdown of the internet and the media; recalls that freedom of expression and freedom of the media are essential foundations of a democratic society; recognises the importance of the right to information in modern societies, including in the native language for all ethnic communities and the role all forms of communication play in the development of a culture of pluralism; recalls that the media should obey the principle of non-discrimination;

110. Denounces the attempts of some regimes and authorities to eliminate or restrict the rights to freedom of expression or media freedom, which they illegitimately justify as being necessary for the purposes of strengthening security or public health, or fighting terrorism, defamation, insult or blasphemy; highlights the new wave of censorship on the part of some governments which are using the fight against fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic as a cover;

111. Condemns the disinformation and propaganda attacks aimed at delegitimising the values that the EU stands for and targeting minorities; is deeply concerned about the growth in hate speech and incitements to violence in online and offline communication as this represents a direct threat to the rule of law and the values embodied in human rights; notes that the increased social and political polarisation amplified by social media algorithms employing mental seduction techniques nourishes radicalism, completely inhibits critical thinking, makes dialogue impossible and paves the way to extremism;

112. Recommends that the best possible safeguards against the spread of disinformation and hostile propaganda be put in place by developing a legal framework both at EU and international level for tackling hybrid threats, including cyber and information warfare; continues to support initiatives that help to draw a distinction between fake news or propagandistic misinformation and information gathered as a part of genuine and independent work performed by journalists;

113. Underlines the cases of media concentration within the hands of individuals, as well as the lack of transparency in media ownership, which limit the pluralism that is essential for access to non-biased information;

114. Firmly condemns unjustified legal proceedings against journalists with the aim of bankrupting (strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP suits)) and silencing them, particularly in corruption cases; underlines the need to set up platforms providing early warnings when journalists are in danger, as well as platforms providing protection for their work, in order to allow fellow journalists to pursue the ongoing investigations without interruption or fear of legal consequences;

115. Recalls that any limits on freedom of expression or media freedom must serve a legitimate aim in line with the international obligations enshrined in Article 19 of the ICCPR;

116. Calls for the EU to make every effort to protect freedom of expression, media freedom and those who try to advocate it; calls for the EU and the Member States to condemn all means of physical or judiciary intimidation used against journalists in an effort to silence them; urges the EUSR to pay special attention to the protection of the freedom, independence and pluralism of media worldwide; emphasises the importance of ensuring the effective and systematic implementation of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, and of regularly monitoring their impact;

117. Highlights the continuing change in media landscapes and the increasing use of social networks worldwide; underlines the challenges and risks that this evolution poses regarding violations of freedom of offline and online expression, censorship, data protection, hate speech, harassment and the safety of journalists and whistle-blowers, among others; calls on the Commission to monitor social media companies' policies and practices, in particular their self-regulatory tools, which have implications for the exercise of freedom of expression worldwide, and present proposals for policy or legislation changes where appropriate;

Death penalty, torture and other forms of ill-treatment

118. Condemns the use of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and the death penalty, which continue to be applied in many countries all over the world; calls on countries that have not already done so to establish an immediate moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition; welcomes the positive development in 2019 of the weakening of political support for maintaining the death penalty in some countries which have not abolished it; deplores, however, the decisions of some national judicial authorities which led to an increase in executions compared to previous years; calls on the EU to continue to condemn systematically the use of the death penalty and to implement communication campaigns against the death penalty worldwide; urges the EU and its Member States to defend abolition in all international forums and advocate for the widest possible support for this position;

119. Reaffirms its commitment to prohibiting torture everywhere in the world, standing by victims and holding torturers accountable; welcomes the updating of the EU Guidelines on EU Policy Towards Third Countries on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; urges all Member States and other countries which have not done so to ratify the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its optional Protocol (OPCAT), the 35th anniversary of which was celebrated in 2019; recognises the importance of civil society organisations and HRDs in the fight against torture and other forms of ill-treatment;

Fight against modern slavery and human trafficking

120. Calls for a stronger international response towards eradicating modern slavery and human trafficking and their networks, with the establishment of new due diligence obligations for businesses to identify, assess, cease, prevent and mitigate such situations and cooperate with authorities to improve penal policies against traffickers and those who exploit or draw benefits from modern slavery; recalls that these unacceptable working conditions undermine human dignity and basic human rights; calls on the states which have not done so to ratify the ILO conventions relevant to combating these scourges and child labour;

Economic, social and cultural rights

121. Calls for the EU to strengthen its efforts for the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights through EU foreign policy and external action, in particular by making effective use of the human rights clauses of international agreements, including provisions on labour, and by investing in culture and education as vectors for durable change; welcomes the adoption of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment, which contains new and binding international labour standards which are essential to banish these scourges from the field of work and protect victims; emphasises the need for specific protection for mothers at work, during and after their pregnancy, including in relation to maternal health, maternity leave and benefits, employment protection and non-discrimination, and breastfeeding;

122. Denounces the fact that violations of workers' and trade union rights continue to take place worldwide and that the freedom of association, the right to bargain collectively, the right to information, consultation and participation and to take collective actions, as well as the right to fair remuneration, decent working conditions and health and safety in the workplace, are at the core of such violations;

123. Recalls that access to culture and education are fundamental rights; notes the importance of cultural diplomacy to promote the values of peace and respect for human rights; calls for the EU to integrate culture, education and the relevant related rights within its human rights policy into its external dealings;

Business and human rights

124. Welcomes the attempts made by a number of European companies to implement their corporate responsibility policies, to respect human rights and implement the various policies and legislation put in place to encourage or require due diligence across various Member States; calls on EU-based companies to live up to their corporate responsibility by moving towards adherence to the ethical rules and standards embraced within the EU's single market;

125. Calls for the setting up of an EU mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence instrument that requires companies to engage actively in the identification, assessment, mitigation, prevention and notification of any adverse impacts of their businesses and supply chains on human rights, applicable to corporate bodies, business leaders and executives in the event of a breach and providing victims with access to justice and remedy; welcomes the announcement that the Commission proposal will include a liability regime; calls on the Commission to consider exploring the possibility of incorporating further liabilities, including criminal liability, for the most severe violations;

126. Recommends that a legal duty of care be included as a specific element of this instrument in order to prevent the use of modern slavery and child labour by businesses in their overseas supply chains; recommends that a transparency requirement be part of the due diligence instrument to facilitate victims' ability to access grievance redress; calls for effective mechanisms to protect those lodging grievances from retaliation, including legislation to deter SLAPP suits; recalls the manifold violations of human rights that may occur in relation to the exploitation of natural resources;

127. Stresses the importance of all countries fully implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and calls on the EU Member States that have not yet adopted national action plans on business rights to do so as soon as possible; encourages the EU and its Member States to participate constructively in the work of the UN Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights;

128. Stresses the need to establish an international binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of multinational and transnational corporations and other companies;

New technologies and human rights

129. Is concerned at the use in response to the COVID-19 pandemic of a variety of data-based and new technology-driven tools; underlines the risks, often difficult to perceive, that they pose in terms of enjoyment of fundamental freedoms, abuse of power and increased vulnerability to cyber-attacks when effective technical and legal safeguards are not in place; expresses concern about the ongoing use of technology to monitor and limit freedom of expression and as a tool of harassment; calls for the EU, as a leader in global standard setting on privacy and data protection, to establish new norms and best practices both for intra-EU use and as solutions to be emulated worldwide, in order to prevent potentially harmful effects of new data-based tools;

130. Recalling its resolution of 27 February 2014 on the use of armed drones ([8]), expresses its continued concern over the use of armed drones outside the international legal framework; calls once again for the EU to urgently develop a legally binding framework for the use of armed drones to ensure that the Member States, in keeping with their legal obligations, do not perpetrate unlawful targeted killings or facilitate such killings by third states; calls further on the Commission to keep Parliament properly informed about the use of EU funds for all research and development projects associated with the construction of drones; calls for human rights impact assessments in respect of further drone development projects; recalls its resolution of 12 September 2018 on autonomous weapon systems ([9]); urges the VP/HR and the Member States to ban the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons which lack meaningful human control over the critical functions of selecting and attacking targets; insists on the launch of international negotiations on a legally binding instrument that would prohibit lethal autonomous weapons without meaningful human control; urges the VP/HR and the Member States to adopt a common position for international negotiations in this respect;

([8]) OJ C 285, 29.8.2017, p. 110.
([9]) OJ C 433, 23.12.2019, p. 86.

Migrants and refugees

131. Urges governments to engage in responses based on respect for human rights and dignity and solutions to address migrants' and refugees' vulnerability and their need for protection, in line with the principles of solidarity and partnership, and providing clarity with regard to adequate and accessible legal pathways for migration; calls on the EU and the Member States to address the root causes of migration leading individuals and families to leave their home country because they are not able to live in a dignified and secure environment;

132. Reiterates the need to combat criminal organisations and individuals engaging in human trafficking; regrets the bleak situation faced by refugees in refugee camps, their lack of prospects, the long waiting times for asylum applications to be processed and the problem of access to basic medical care and, in the case of children, to education; urges that non-custodial alternatives to detention for migrants and refugees be found, and rejects, in this context, any inhuman or degrading treatment of migrants; underlines the importance of respecting human rights when undertaking compulsory health screening, and emphasises that all asylum seekers and migrants must be guaranteed access to essential services, including comprehensive healthcare; stresses the importance of upholding the right to asylum worldwide;

133. Calls on the competent authorities of EU Member States to treat people who ask for refugee status with goodwill and diligence and in line with the principles of the rule of law, and to support family reunification with a view to ending situations in which refugees are separated from their close relatives, in particular children;

Democracy support

134. Calls on the EU to increase its support for democratic civic activism, which has grown since 2019 in the context of the rise of populism, nationalism and authoritarian regimes; calls on the Commission and the Council to strengthen the Union's democracy support programmes globally, by fostering pro-democratic bottom-up processes, and building institutional resilience; highlights, in this regard, democracy support activities implemented by Parliament, including election monitoring, mediation and training and mentoring programmes, that need to be adapted to the evolving situation of partner countries, while taking into account the cultural and national backgrounds of the third countries involved, in order to strengthen the dialogue and partnership with them; endorses the call in the Council conclusions of 14 October 2019 on democracy and in the 2020-2024 EU action plan on human rights and democracy to promote a more flexible, innovative, long-term and conflict-sensitive approach to supporting democracy; welcomes and, in this context, encourages and supports, the work of independent organisations which operate on the basis of the European Union's core values and foster democratic transition in the world;

135. Commits itself to promoting greater transparency of democratic processes, particularly of the financing of political and issue-based campaigning by different non-state actors;

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136. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General, the President of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, the President of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EU Heads of Delegation.