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

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Adverse Impacts of Unilateral Coercive Measures on Human Rights

We welcome all the extensive efforts by the mandate of the Special Rapporteur of UCMs, aimed at developing a tool for the Impact Assessment of primary and secondary sanctions and sanctions induced over-compliance. We strongly support the mandate and welcome the UCM report submitted to 57th session of the human rights council on monitoring and assessing the impact of sanctions on human rights.

As we have been repeatedly mentioning in the previous Sessions of the Human Rights Council over the past years, we are seriously concerned about the negative and adverse impact of UCMs on enjoyment of human rights, including the right to life; to food; to clean water; to health and access to imported medicine, timely and affordable medical care and required medical equipment; to education at all levels; to work; to housing; to an adequate living standard; to development and attainment of all sustainable development goals.

Proliferation of Sanctions

We strongly condemn and criticize the policies adopted by some Western States that strengthen the illegal extraterritorial reach of sanctions, such as the European countries criminalization of sanctions circumvention. One more time, we inform these States of the ineffectiveness of UCM carve-outs which force sanctioned countries to circumvent sanctions, in order to meet their own commitments under international law. Sanctioned States bear the international responsibility to guarantee the fundamental human rights of their populations which is being systemically violated under UCMs, such as the right of people to timely access to quality medicine and medical care which is extensively violated by UCMs.

We regret the proliferation of sanctions in recent years despite all the efforts by the UCM mandate and the alarms expressed by developing countries, on the malicious impacts of sanctions on human rights. In 2023, all States that issue unilateral coercive measures expanded their sanctions programs. The United States Treasury issued 2,376 new sanctions in 2023 and 2,441 sanctions in 2022. Canada and the EU expanded their sanctions by over 600 new designations in 2023 (1).

We highly regret the sanctioning States' resort to various means of enforcing UCMs including publication of a magnitude of "non-legal documents", by governmental and non-governmental entities.

Adverse Human Rights Impacts

We confirm the following negative impacts of UCMs on human rights in almost all sanctioned countries:

On "the Right to Health", sanctions impact availability of medicines, medical equipment, raw material for domestic production of medicine as well as availability of spare parts, software required for medical equipment disproportionately impacting child patients, chronic patients, people with disabilities, mothers, people with mental issues and the disadvantaged strata of society. While we emphasize that essential goods such as food and medicines, including vaccines, should not be used as tools for political coercion.

On "the Right to Food", sanctions negatively impact adequate access to certain foodstuffs, import or production of basic food products; availability of agricultural input including quality seeds and fertilizers; availability of agricultural equipment and spare parts, the production and maintenance of the equipment. UCMs impact on food prices, compared to average monthly salary, they lead to dietary changes and increase food insecurity, depending an increasing number of people on government food support programs.

They also negatively impact on the right to water, the right to education and the right to access to justice for UCM victims. In addition, Unilateral Coercive Measures are a major obstacle

to the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as mentioned in the annex to the UN Resolution 41/128.

Additionally, unilateral sanctions create obstacles to trade relations and friendly relations among States, impede the full realization of all human rights, and severely threatens the freedom of trade as mentioned in the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993.

Recommendations

We consider the sanctioning States and third States, including some European States, responsible for UCM-related human right violations caused by adoption of legislations that criminalize sanctions circumventions and call on these countries to abide by their own commitments under international law and refrain from extraterritorial human rights violations through sanctions.

We further confirm that sanctions circumvention is the only means which can be utilized by sanctioned countries in order to guarantee the humanitarian needs and the human rights of their population, considering the bitter reality that sanctions humanitarian exemptions are largely ineffective on the ground and mostly exist on paper.

The humanitarian carve-outs are specified in unilateral sanctions programs and claim to facilitate the flow of humanitarian goods and services to the sanctioned countries. However, their wording is often complex and vague and their approval procedures are so costly or lengthy that deter their use, while at the same time they exacerbate over-compliance and de-risking. Therefore, we call on the international community to take action against establishment of legal frameworks that lead to violations of human rights in sanctioned countries.

We call on sanctioned States, as well as NGOs active in these countries, to get involved in the process of Impact Assessments of sanctions in order to create a body of valid literature on the deadly and destructive human rights impacts of UCMs and over compliance.

We remind the international community of the UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries and we call on the UN member States, especially the sanctioned countries to united to establish international mechanisms to prevent easy and costless imposition of unilateral measure which are imposed beyond the authority of the UN, the international rule of law and the UN Charter.

1- <https://www.castellum.ai/insights/2023-sanctions-year-in-review>