



National Human Rights Institutions

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This Info Note prepared by the National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section (NIRMS) of FOTCD contains information on NHRIs' highlights at the national, regional and international level, as well as forthcoming events on NHRIs.

For more information:
www.nhri.net

I. Regional and National Highlights

Africa

The OHCHR/AU Regional Consultation on Enhancing Cooperation between Regional and International Mechanisms for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia on 30 November – 2 December 2009, under the auspices of OHCHR, in cooperation with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the regional network of African NHRIs. Participation was drawn from representatives of Governments, regional mechanisms, UN experts, NHRIs, NGOs and academia. Participants recognized the importance of cooperation with NHRIs and civil society organizations in implementing human rights norms at the national level, and further indicated the importance of establishing NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles. A number of recommendations were adopted, including the need to set up a system of cooperation between the two human rights systems, under the auspices of OHCHR and AUC; as well as greater access and participation of NHRIs in the regional and international mechanisms.

OHCHR attended the inauguration of the headquarters of the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen in Tangier, Morocco, on 4 November 2009. The meeting focused on the role of ombudsman associations and networks in the development of such institutions.

The Rabat Declaration on "Peace and Justice: Role of NHRIS" was adopted during the 7th Regional Conference of African NHRIs that took place in Rabat, Morocco from the 3 to 5 November 2009. It was jointly organized by OHCHR, the Morocco Advisory Council on Human Rights, the

Network of African NHRIs and the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*. The Declaration highlights the inter-dependency of peace and justice; as well as the need to promote and implement international instruments and best practices relating to transitional justice. The Declaration encompasses a number of action-oriented aspects to strengthen the role of NHRIs in transitional justice processes and mechanisms, namely, their role in facilitating national consultation for the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms in close cooperation with the victims; ensuring that such mechanisms are in compliance with international human rights standards and practices; gathering information and documenting human rights abuses; providing assistance to victims and witnesses; monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the recommendations of transitional justice mechanisms; engaging and interacting with international and regional human rights mechanisms; participating in the development of education programmes, etc.

The Workshop on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Investigative Techniques took place in Rabat, Morocco from the 6 to 7 November. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs, Ms. Margaret Sekaggya, participated in this meeting and encouraged the attendants to foster the dissemination and implementation of the Declaration on HRD adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998. Mr. Gianni Magazzeni, Chief of the NIRMS underlined the need to deliver training in witness protection, as well as to appoint focal points for HRD amongst the NHRIs.

From 12 to 14 November 2009, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held a meeting in Banjul, Gambia. This meeting provided an opportunity to review the situation of human rights in the member States

with emphasis on challenges and achievements that have been recorded since January 2009. Other areas of focus for the member States Report were: status of NHRIs in member States with regard to the Paris Principles and the Human Rights Council rating; human rights violations by the Governments and security agents and how they have been tackled; the state of media rights and specific suggestions of what ECOWAS can do in enhancing the functionality of NHRIs.

Further objectives of the meeting were: to finalize and adopt the constitution and logo of the Network of NHRIs in ECOWAS member States; to agree on a one-year plan for the Network to enhance the respect for human rights in the region as well as strategies for its implementation. Also the Network Bureau was elected for a three-year tenure and comprises the Chair (Senegal); Vice-Chair (Nigeria); 2nd Vice-Chair (Guinea Bissau); General Treasurer (Benin); Rapporteur (Mali); and Deputy Rapporteur (Sierra Leone).

The meeting discussed the challenges confronting human rights specifically in Gambia and mapped out strategies to improve the situation. Also the meeting had in attendance all Heads of NHRIs in ECOWAS member States, representatives of relevant civil society and international organizations. OHCHR was represented by the Head of the West Africa Regional Office, Mr. Cissé-Gouro Mahamane.

From 9 to 13 November 2009, OHCHR organized in Bamako, Mali, three activities including a conference on the preparation of the core document for the UN treaty bodies, (9-11 November), workshop on the role of NHRIs



regarding migration in West Africa (12 November), and the first meeting of the West African NHRIs Network, established in October 2009. A total of 50 representatives from Governments, NHRIs and NGOs attended the events.

The Conference on the core document was meant to gather and discuss views on how better enhance the capacity of Governments in drafting the core document; raise civil society's and NHRIs' awareness on the procedure of the submission of reports to treaty bodies and the objective of the core document; and facilitate exchange of best practices in the submission of reports to treaty bodies. For that end, participants included representatives of Governments, NHRIs and civil society.

The Workshop on migration was mainly devoted to West African NHRIs with the participation of representatives of the respective Governments and the civil society. It focused on following up on the commitments of the Santa Cruz Declaration, adopted during the 8th NHRIs' International Conference held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, from 24 to 26 October 2006, and on adopting a road map to promote and protect the rights of migrants.

On 13 November, NHRIs and representatives of civil society discussed the drafting of rules and procedures and the workplan for 2010-2012 of the West African NHRIs' Network West.

Ghana

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), on 10 September 2009, organized a meeting in Dodowa for experts/stakeholders to fashion out ways of developing a **National Human Rights Action Plan for Ghana**. The Action Plan is expected to be adopted by the government to serve as a basis for public policy in the country's quest to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of all persons in Ghana.

The concept of National Plans of Action for human rights promotion and protection was created at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993, whereupon each country should identify areas where they did not measure up and draw up a national plan of action identifying ways to improve the situation.

The plan will indicate the current human rights situation, the problems to contend with and set out objectives as well as performance indicators that could be used to measure the nation's progress with regard to human rights promotion and protection. The government embraced the concept by appointing a focal person to represent it on the team of experts spearheading the development of the plan.

Mr. Joseph Whittal (Director, Legal and Investigations of CHRAJ) stressed that it was necessary for a national steering committee to be set up to see the development of the plan and also, one to monitor the achievement of the set goals. He also said that, in consonance with the 1993 Vienna Conference recommendation, countries such as Australia (1993), Malawi (1995), The Philippines (1996), South Africa (1998), New Zealand (2002), Sweden (2006) and Nigeria (2009) have all developed and adopted human rights plans of action.

Morocco

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and with financial support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Advisory Council on Human Rights (CCDH) organized the final seminar on the **Project on Promoting Women's Rights and their Role in Transitional Justice Process** on 28 September 2009. The objective of the seminar, attended by various national and international partners of the project, was to share the achievements of the project and discuss the prospects.

The seminar was organized around three working sessions: (1) Gender and transitional justice, general introduction: presentation of achievements of the project; (2) Moroccan experience in gender and transitional justice: qualitative analysis and action strategy; (3) Testimonies by NGOs managing pilot projects.

CCDH has developed a strategy for mainstreaming the gender approach throughout the process of following up on the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) recommendations, particularly regarding the community reparation programme. The project helped to highlight the role and contribution of women in democratic processes and strengthen their participation in reconciliation and conflict resolution. It revolved around five areas:

(1) Support for the institutionalization of the gender approach in the framework of

mechanism of monitoring recommendations; (2) Support for economic, social and cultural development activities integrating gender approach and women's rights in the regions targeted by the IER report in a perspective of reparation/reconciliation/preservation of memory; (3) Promotion of dialogue between actors at local level with a concern for gender and protection of women's rights; (4) Development of awareness materials on the issue of past gross human rights violations in Morocco, according to the gender approach and women's human rights; (5) Making the Moroccan experience in gender and transitional justice a model through a study of the process implemented by Morocco in the context of regional exchange of lessons learned.

Togo

In order to take stock of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Togo convened, from 26-28 October 2009 a workshop on the assessment of the application of the Convention with the participation of NGOs engaged in the defense of human rights, women's rights, and the rights of the child, as well as other specific groups. The events was run within the framework of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the CRC and gained the cooperation of the Association Francophone des Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme (AFCNDH) and the financial support of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

The main issues discussed include "The CRC and its covenants", "Government policy in protecting the rights of the child since the adoption of the CRC", "The Protection of children in conflict with the law: challenges and prospects".

The large ratification of the CRC had been seen as a positive achievement, including steps taken to make concrete its provisions, but further efforts are necessary to enhance its implementation. In this connection, participants established a permanent dialogue body to better follow up the implementation of the CRC prior to a situational document



on the level of effectiveness of the CRC to be further developed by the NHRC.

Uganda

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) has been urged to carry out mass sensitization of the general public on the right to health as one of the ways through which the **Human Rights Based Approach to Health** would be realized. This was one of the resolutions following a consultative meeting held for senior health managers on the implementation of the right to health in Kampala on 17th and 18th September 2009.

Based on the support rendered by the UNDP to the Commission, the participants have been urged to adopt the human rights based approach by implementing its key principles of participation, rule of Law, accountability, empowerment, equality and non-discrimination and adherence to human rights norms.

The participants unanimously concurred that the Government of Uganda should increase the budgetary allocations to the health sector in order to improve service delivery to all and avail necessary drugs. They further urged the UHRC to monitor the implementation of the right to health and coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders working towards the promotion and protection of the right to health in Uganda.

During the workshop, a number of presentations were made and these included "Ensuring Health Services for all: The Human Rights Based Approach to Health" by Mr. Busingye Kabumba from Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC); "The Right to Health as a human right; the Human Rights Based Approach to Health, by Mr. Gerald Tushabe from Human Rights Network (HURINET); "Overview of the Right to Health in Uganda and the role of the UHRC in the promotion and protection of the Right to health" by Freda-Nalumansi-Mugambe of the UHRC; 'Health Professional Ethics and Human Rights' by Dr George Bagambisa (ACHS (HRD) Ministry of Health.

Sierra Leone

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone has published the first issue of its newsletter and gives an insight into HRCSLs' programme of work and engagement with civil society organizations

and the Sierra Leone Police on "**The State of Human Rights in Sierra Leone**" in 2008.

The expected outcome of the report, submitted to the Parliament on the 9 July 2009, is an Action Plan and commitment from the civil society organizations to work in close collaboration with HRCSL. On 8th October 2009 the HRCSL engaged, with the Executive Management Board (EMB) of the Sierra Leone Police, on recommendations directed at the Police in the report. These include that the police forces together with HRCSL should be involved in educating the public on citizen's rights; and that the use of force should be a last resort and kept to a minimum and as only when necessary and proportional to the threat faced by the Police. An interactive session between HRCSL and its international partners was held on 26th August 2009. The primary objective of the interaction was to present an overview of HRCSL's activities, including its Strategic Plan (2009-2011), plan of activities and to discuss the human rights report for 2008.

The conflict resolution process in Sierra Leone moved on to real peace building in 2002. In this process the mandate of HRCSL provides a fine linkage between peace consolidation and the protection and promotion of human rights; such as the provision of technical legal advice, recommendations and legislative support to the Parliament and civil society, or the submission of recommendations to the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) on key human rights issues. HRCSL also has a representative in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) National Governing Council, responsible for leading Sierra Leone's implementation of the process. The APRM is part of the African Union New Partnership for Africa's Development. Moreover, HRCSL in collaboration with UNDP, UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone held a three-days training for Parliamentarians in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone.

Americas

From 28 to 29 October **XIV Congress and Annual Assembly of the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsman (FIO)** was held in Madrid. The meeting was hosted by the Spanish Defensor del Pueblo and was attended by more than 150 NHRIs' representatives from the Ibero-American States. The Prince of Asturias delivered a statement in the opening ceremony. Two opening academic conferences were

delivered by Mr. Gregorio Peces Barba and Mr. Sergio Garcia Ramirez which elaborated on issues such as the universality and inter-dependency of human rights and the relationship between the ombudsman and the Inter-American System of Human Rights. The Ibero-American Human Rights Observatory was presented, as well as the reports of the Network of Women and the Com-FIO Network. Staff from the OHCHR National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section (NIRMS) participated as international observers.

From 8 to 11 December a **regional workshop for NHRIs on HIV and AIDS** took place in Lima, Peru. Representatives from 10 NHRIs attended the workshop which included presentations on the regional trends regarding the HIV epidemic and the human rights challenges, as well as discussions on areas of collaboration such as public policies and integrating HIV-related human rights into the training curriculum of health professionals. A Handbook on HIV and Human Rights for NHRIs was presented. There was widespread support for the proposal of the Peruvian Ombudsman institution that the 2010 Annual report of the *Federation of Ibero-American Ombudsmen* (FIO) should focus on HIV-related human rights. The participating NHRIs expressed a sense of urgency to work on the rights of transgender people.

On October 29 **VIII General Assembly of the Network of National Human Rights Institutions of the Americas** was held in Madrid. The meeting brought together the presidents of 12 NHRIs of the Americas. The session was opened by the Chair of the Network's Secretariat, Ms. Gabriela del Mar Ramirez, the *Defensora del Pueblo* of Venezuela who highlighted the support of OHCHR to the NHRIs of the region and to the network. As part of the agenda, the work Programme for 2008-2010 was discussed, focusing on issues such as economic, social and cultural rights; women's rights and displaced persons. During the session, Ms. Jennifer Lynch, Chairperson of the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs (ICC) and Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, reported on



the work of the ICC. She highlighted the new model of governance of the ICC, the adoption of its Statute and the incorporation of the ICC under the Swiss law. The meeting benefited from the support provided by staff of the OHCHR/NIRMS. During the session, the message from Mr. Gianni Magazzeni, Chief of the OHCHR NIRMS, offered an account of the increasing and fruitful cooperation between the Americas Network of NHRIs and the OHCHR.

The OHCHR/OAS Regional Consultation on Strengthening Cooperation and Dialogue between the International and Regional Human Rights Systems was held in Washington D.C. on 8 and 9 December 2009. It was organized by OHCHR and OAS, and with the collaboration of the Regional Network of NHRIs from the Americas. Participants included experts from the Inter-American Human Rights System and the UN, as well as representatives from Governments, NHRIs and NGOs. A number of recommendations were adopted, including the need to develop internal coordination mechanisms between the systems in areas such as Special Rapporteurs' country visits; joint press releases and reports on situations that require special attention; and establishment of a data base to exchange information. Participants recognized NHRIs' role in strengthening the national human rights protection systems and in contributing to the strengthening of Government's capacity to ensure the implementation of human rights norms.

El Salvador

On 31 August, El Salvadorian *Procuraduría para la derechos humanos* presented the 2009 electoral report which contains an evaluation of the electoral process from January 18 to 15 March 2009. Thereby the *Procuraduría* monitored and evaluated the electoral administration, the electoral campaign and the days of the elections in regard to their compatibility to human rights standards. Based on these observations the *Procuraduría* expressed necessary reforms for the electoral process as a whole. The conclusion includes that in the context of political transition it is important to strengthen all the institutions' compliance with democratic electoral-process regulations, in order to enhance

the consolidation process of democracy. Especially the El Salvadorian "*Tribunal Supremo Electoral*" needs to be independent and separated from the government in terms of appointment of its members; moreover the vote of El Salvadorian non-residents must be valid and integrated into the electoral process. Additionally transparency can be increased by introducing a more comprehensible ballot paper and a clear and binding law for the establishment of political parties. These measures have to be implemented in the shortest term to overcome many of the errors stated by the *Procuraduría*.

Asia Pacific

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) organized an international conference on "Legislation for Women's Rights", in Kabul on 22-24 November 2009. Speakers and relevant experts from Asia shared knowledge and discussed legislation for women's rights, taking into account both religious values and international human rights law. Members of Afghan civil society, international NGOs and UN women's rights officers of the UN offices and the AIHRC's regional and provincial offices also participated. The Conference discussed, inter alia: (1) different steps of legislation; (2) the instrumental role of legislation in guaranteeing for women equal rights as for men (3) Advocacy and lobbying for adoption of law guaranteeing for women equal rights as for men; (4) Laws concerning women's rights and international norms and standards; (5) Islam and laws for women; (6) Obstacles in legislation for women rights; (7) Mechanisms required for enforcement of laws; (8) The role of financial resources for legislation and enforcement of laws for women; (9) The components of the law of violence against women; (10) The family law and its impact on gender equality; (11) The individual law and fundamental rights of citizens; (12) The importance of laws on violence against women Islamic countries.

Australia

On the 17 November 2009 the Australian Commission for Human Rights organized a seminar for lawyers and barristers on using the optional protocol to the UN Women's Convention in Melbourne, in order to improve protecting and promoting women's rights. In December 2008, Australia

became party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This treaty establishes two procedures – a communication procedure and an inquiry procedure – to enforce women's rights with regard to non-discrimination and equality. This seminar examined how the communication and inquiry procedures can be used to better protect and promote women's rights, both at domestic and international level. It explained how these procedures operate. It also considered key jurisprudence decided under the Optional Protocol and reflected on lessons for advocates.

The seminar was introduced by special guest speaker Dr. Cassandra Goldie Director, Sex Discrimination Unit, Australian Human Rights Commission and presented by Simone Cusack Public Interest Lawyer, PILCH Lucy McKernan Public Interest Scheme, PILCH.

Malaysia

On 24 October 2009, SUHAKAM organized in Kuala Lumpur a seminar to enhance judges' knowledge of human rights, in particular to apply international human rights law at domestic level. The objectives of the seminar were as follows: (1) To illustrate or provide examples to the judiciary on how to apply international human rights principles and standards in the context of the local legal system; (2) To offer an avenue for judges and members of the judiciary to impart, receive and exchange views and knowledge on human rights. IT also examined two main issues: (1) Challenges and issues related to the contextualization and adoption of international human rights law (IHL) at the domestic level. (2) Best practices of adoption and application of IHL in court cases in other countries.

Bahrain

On 11 November the King of Bahrain issued a Royal Order (46) on the establishment of a national human rights institution. OHCHR had provided guidance on compliance with the Paris Principles in earlier drafts of the legal text which is currently under review. This step follows the UPR discussion within the HRC and a joint OHCHR



UNDP project for the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the UPR.

Europe

The 3rd Coordination meeting between OHCHR and the CoE was held in Strasbourg on 16-17 November 2009. OHCHR held bilateral working meetings with staff from the CoE, inter alia, regarding the accreditation process of NHRIs by the ICC.

Workshop on NHRIs Role and cooperation with UN Human Rights Machinery: Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Treaty-Based Reporting and Special Procedures

This 3-days workshop was held in Geneva from the 24 to 26 November. It was jointly organized by OHCHR/NIRMS and the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre to strengthen the capacity of NHRIs CIS countries and Croatia in interacting with the international human rights system. Representatives from 13 NHRIs benefitted from the expertise of OHCHR staff. Special attention was given to the role that NHRIs could play in following-up on the implementation of the UPR recommendations.

The OHCHR/CoE Regional Consultation on Enhancing Cooperation between the International Human Rights System and the European Mechanisms of Human Rights took place in Strasbourg on 16-17 December 2009 under the auspices of OHCHR and CoE and with the collaboration of the Regional Group of NHRIs from Europe. Participants included experts from CoE, the European Union, OSCE, the UN, as well as representatives from NHRIs, NGOs and academia. The following issues were highlighted: (1) the complementarity between the international, regional and national human rights systems; (2) the need to have an effective cooperation mechanism to implement human rights norms at the national level; (4) the importance to cooperate with NHRIs, particularly in monitoring the implementation of international human rights standards and in following-up on the implementation of judgments, decisions and recommendations from the international and regional human rights systems.

On 11 November 2009 and in the context

of the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, the German Institute for Human Rights and the European Network of Masters in Children's Rights in cooperation with Europe direct – Contact Centre, International Academy (INA gGmbH) at the Free University Berlin and Save the Children Sweden, organized an **International Workshop on “Conceptual Approaches in Human Rights Education for Children- Participation and Citizenship”**. As starting point for discussions, COMPASITO manual on human rights education for children aged 6 to 13, which was initiated in 2007 by the Council of Europe and currently translated into different languages was introduced. Participation included Poland, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Malta, Serbia, Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova and Germany.

OHCHR participated in the 3rd meeting of the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen in Athens on 14 and 15 December 2009, where the main topic was: **Transparency and public services: what role for the ombudsman?**

On 7 October 2009 the Equality and Human Rights Commission of Britain (EHRC) launched a new report that analyses how a range of British organizations have established equality policies encouraging employees from diverse backgrounds to participate fully in the workplace. The report looks at eight employers - including Asda, the British Library and North Wales Police - to see what policies and practices they have adopted to encourage lesbian, gay, bisexual and older employees and those with different religions or beliefs to take up recruitment, promotion or advancement opportunities in the workplace. The report will be used by the Commission to **develop guidance for employers on implementing effective equality policies**.

Andrea Murray, Acting Group Director Strategy from the Commission, said: 'This research provides us with an understanding on how effectively implemented equality policies in the workplace can lead to employees from diverse backgrounds feeling confident and able to fully participate in the organization. This report will be used to develop guidance to assist employers in positively engaging with staff from diverse backgrounds. Discrimination based on

sexual orientation, age and religion or belief continues to be a problem in some organizations and understanding how to prevent these issues is an important step towards equality for these groups.'

Georgia

The Public Defender demands **improvement of prisoners' condition** in the Rustavi Penal Institution No. 2 and has addressed the Minister of Corrections, Probation and Legal Assistance, Dimitri Shashkin, with a recommendation to solve the problem of overcrowding and repair the cells in the Rustavi Institution No. 2.

On 5 October 2009, the Public Defender visited the Rustavi Common, Strict and Jail Regime Institution No. 2. The institution is intended for 2,744 prisoners, though at the time of the monitoring, there were 3,315 inmates. At the time of the monitoring, it was found that in four out of the institution's five cell blocks the sanitary-hygienic condition of the cells is unsatisfactory and the cells are in need of repairs. According to Paragraph 2 of Article 33 of the Georgian Law on Imprisonment, the cell area per convict in a penal institution should not be less than 2 square meters. By European standards, the norm for the cell area per convict is 4 square meters. In spite of the imperative demand of the law, the cell area per convict in the Rustavi Penal Institution No. 2 is so small that it does not allow every prisoner to have one's own bed, which is a gross violation of the rights of convicts. The Public Defender addressed Dimitri Shashkin with a recommendation to solve the problem immediately.

II. ICC Bureau Meeting

The ICC Bureau meeting took place in Rabat, Morocco on 1-2 November 2009. During the meeting, the Bureau members discussed the development of the ICC Strategic Plan. In order to ensure that all views are reflected and that all members have opportunity to provide input, the process of setting the ICC strategic lines would rely on the information collected through the regional consultations to be carried out by the respective Regional Chairs. As part of the agenda, the ICC Bureau members approved the report of the Finance Committee. In this regard, it



was decided that the membership fees would be paid in Swiss Francs and that the Regional Chairs would contact members that had not yet paid. The ICC Bureau also considered the possibility of making Arabic as the 4th ICC language. Other issues such as the establishment and strengthening of regional secretariats; the promotion of interaction between regions and the sharing of knowledge and best practices were also discussed. The OHCHR/NIRMS provided technical secretariat to the organization of this meeting.

III. UN Related Activities and Thematic Highlights

20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

On 8 and 9 October, OHCHR and Committee of the Rights of the Child (CRC) organized a two-day commemoration to mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the CRC. The event brought together more than 500 participants from States parties, UN bodies, NHRIs, international and national NGOs, children's and youth groups and academics. The Chair of the CRC and the High Commissioner for Human Rights opened the event. Six working groups discussed a set of recommendations that will guide policy makers and other stakeholders in implementing the CRC. These recommendations will be reviewed and formally adopted by the CRC at its next session in January 2010. Stakeholders in the field are invited to contribute with additional input and suggestions, which can then be considered by the Committee in their January deliberation and included in the publication dedicated to the 20th anniversary. Inputs and suggestions can be sent to HRTB (CRC secretariat). UNICEF invites to visit a special CRC website dedicated to this occasion: www.unicef.org/rightsite

Fellowship Program 2010: The National institutions Fellowship programme is an opportunity for staff members of "A" status NHRIs from all over the world to spend 6 to 12 months working with the OHCHR National Institutions and Regional Mechanism Section (NIRMS). The aim of this initiative, which is now at its third year, is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at providing NHRI staff with a better

understanding and practical appreciation of the international human rights system, through the experience the fellows will acquire knowledge and working level experience with the UN human rights system (including Treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review and Special Procedures mechanisms), OHCHR's work with and for NHRIs, and technical and substantive issues relating to NHRIs. On the other hand, it will allow the fellows to develop an extensive network of contacts within OHCHR and other UN departments and agencies, as well as NGOs represented in Geneva. Ultimately the fellows will strengthen their NHRIs' capacity in international human rights upon their return. 37 applications were received (19 from Africa, 14 from Asia, 2 from Europe and 2 from the Americas). Further to the comparative evaluation of all applicants, the following candidates have been recommended: Mr. Shree Ram Adhikari (Nepal) from March to August 2010; Ms. Manju Khatiwada Regmi (Nepal) from September 2010 to February 2011; Mr. Salahaldin Ali Kamel Mousa (Palestine) from February to July 2010; Ms. Guizell Box Mendoza (Nicaragua) from April 2010 to February 2011; Ms. Mai Naiguib (Egypt) from August 2010 to February 2011; and Mr. Bamazi Kossi Tchaa (Togo) from February 2010 to February 2011.

Treaty Body Sessions

The 97th session of the **Human Rights Committee** was held from 12 to 30 October. Five country reports (Switzerland, Moldova, Croatia, the Russian Federation and Ecuador) were examined. The Committee adopted lists of issues on the reports of Cameroon, Colombia, El Salvador, Estonia and Israel.

The **Committee on Migrant Workers** was in session from 12 to 16 October, and reviewed Sri Lanka and held a general day of discussion on migrant domestic workers on 14 October.

The **43th session of the Committee against Torture** took place from 2 to 20 November in Palais Wilson, Geneva. Azerbaijan, Colombia, El Salvador, Moldova, Slovakia, Spain and Yemen were examined by the Committee. The *Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* of El Salvador and the *Defensor del Pueblo* of Spain, both "A" Status Institution within the

ICC, submitted an independent report to the Committee and attended the session. Both institutions, in a private meeting, briefed the Committee members on key issues of concerns on the implementation of the Convention at the national level.

New ratifications

Switzerland ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (Effective, 24 September 2009). On 2 October 2009, **Seychelles** ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This brings to 71 the number of states parties to the Convention. On 6 October 2009, **Paraguay** signed the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. There are now 30 States signatories. And ultimately on 7 October 2009, **Malawi** ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sales of children, child prostitution and child pornography. There are now 133 States parties to the Protocol.

Disability and human rights

On 26 October 2009, OHCHR hosted an opened-ended consultation meeting on **National Frameworks for the Implementation and Monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

The meeting is part of the preparation of an OHCHR study on the structure and role of national implementations and monitoring mechanisms. Representatives of States, NGOs and NHRIs attended the meeting.

During this day, the ICC in collaboration with OHCHR and International Disability Alliance held a parallel event which aimed at providing the opportunity to share best practices in the monitoring and implementation activities under the Convention and to explore opportunities for NHRIs and Disability Person Organizations in the protection of the



rights of persons with disabilities in United Nations human rights mechanisms.

IV. Upcoming Events

OHCHR/Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting on Regional Human Rights Arrangements in Geneva, 27-28 January 2010

7th Session of the Working Group on the UPR will be convened from 8 to 19 February 2010 in Geneva. Request for accreditation should be sent to upraccreditation@ohchr.org or Fax: +41 (0) 229179011. During the session, Fax: +41 (0) 229170494

13th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva 1-26 March 2010

NHRIs are requested to observe the **12 February 2010 deadline** for the submission of documents: (ccastaneda@ohchr.org)

23rd Annual Session of the ICC in Geneva, 22-25 March 2010. (lsekaggya@ohchr.org)

International Consultation on Strengthening Cooperation between the UN and regional human rights arrangements in Geneva, May 2010. (vlozano@ohchr.org)

Session of the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation in Geneva, 29 March-1 April 2010. (falbanese@ohchr.org)

10th International Conference of NHRIs on "Business and Human Rights" in Edinburgh, 7 - 11 October 2010. (lsekaggya@ohchr.org)

TREATY BODIES SESSIONS

53rd Session of CRC in Geneva, 11 – 29 January 2010

The following countries will be reviewed: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mongolia, Norway, Paraguay and Tajikistan.

Further information is posted at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs53.htm>

45TH Session of CEDAW in Geneva, 18 January – 5 February 2010

The following countries will be reviewed: Botswana, Egypt, Malawi, The Netherlands, Panama, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan.

Further information is posted at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws45.htm>

76th Session of the CERD in Geneva, 15 February to 12 March 2010

The following countries will be reviewed: Argentina, Cambodia, Cameroon, Guatemala, Iceland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Monaco, The Netherlands, Panama and Slovak Republic.

Further information is posted at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/cerds76.htm>

98th Session of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) in New York, 8-26 March 2010

The following countries will be reviewed: México, Argentina, Uzbekistan and New Zealand. And for the following countries the list of issues will be adopted: Cameroon, Colombia, El Salvador, Estonia, Israel and Poland.

Further information is posted at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs98.htm>

For more details on the upcoming Treaty Bodies sessions you may contact Ms Liza Sekaggya (lsekaggya@ohchr.org) or Ms Carmen Celina Arévalo (nifellow2@ohchr.org)