

## UNHCHR

### **Contribution of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to the Annual Progress report on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDC) for the Decade of 2001-2010.**

The Brussels declaration and the Programme of action recognizes that, among other elements, good governance at the national and international level; rule of law; respect for all internationally recognised human rights, including the right to development; promotion of democracy; security through preventive diplomacy and peaceful resolution of armed conflicts; and gender equality have to be at the core of the strategy for achieving equitable and sustained economic growth and sustainable development through nationally owned and people centred poverty reduction. The OHCHR has been directing its efforts to build national capacities in these areas and to base international development cooperation on a framework of partnership that is rooted in the principles and norms of human rights as the universally accepted standards and guidelines for human development. Poverty and inequality are not merely economic or social problems, but are viewed as human rights issues. The international community not only has moral imperatives but also legal obligations under the international law to address these denials and violations of human rights and to put the LDCs and on a path to sustainable development and human dignity.

The OHCHR has been assisting the LDCs in building national capacities to implement human rights at the country and regional level, through initiatives such as the support to independent national human rights institutions, support to regional development initiatives as in case of NEPAD and through the joint HURIST programme with the UNDP. In addition, recognizing that broad macroeconomic objectives for economic growth are often perceived to be in conflict with poverty reduction, realisation of human rights or other social development goals and that there is a need to integrate these competing objectives in development frameworks and strategies, the office has, to start with, brought out guidelines for human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies. Finally, since the launch of the Secretary-General's reform programme in 1997, designating human rights as a cross cutting theme in all activities, the OHCHR has been active in assisting the Organisation's operational agencies and programmes to integrate human rights into development planning, policy and projects. The principle vehicle for this has been mainstreaming human rights and rights –based approaches in the CCA/ UNDAF process.

Independent national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights play an important role in fostering a culture for human rights and respect for human dignity. Since the adopted of Tehran framework for regional technical cooperation by States in 1998, the OHCHR activities have been focused on supporting the four identified pillars namely, national plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening of national capacities; human rights education; national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights; and strategies for the realisation of the right to development and economic, social and

cultural rights. In this context, during **2002-03** besides supporting and strengthening the national institutions in many LDCs, the Office was actively engaged in the organization of the following regional/ sub-regional workshops: Human Rights Education and the Administration of Justice (**25-27 June 2002**, Nadi, Fiji); Regional Workshop on National Human Rights Institutions, Human Rights Education, Media and Racism (15 - 16 July 2002 Sydney, Australia); Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions 7th Annual Meeting (11-13 November 2002, New Delhi, India); Training Programme for National Human Rights Institutions in Asia (28 October - 8 November 2002, Bangkok, Thailand); Minority Rights: Cultural Diversity and Development in South East Asia (4-7 December 2002, Chiang Mai, Thailand); Sub-regional workshop for Melanesian States on “Universal Adherence to the Principal International Human Rights Instruments” (December 2002, Nadi, Fiji) and the 11th Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian and Pacific Region (25 - 27 Feb 2003, Pakistan).

At a regional level, the OHCHR has been actively engaged in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (**NEPAD**). It is an African-led and African owned initiative that has been described as a comprehensive integrated development plan to address key social, economic and political priorities in a coherent and balanced manner. The initiative explicitly integrates economic growth and promotion of democracy, human rights and poverty eradication in overall social development by committing itself to achieving the agreed international development goals by 2015. In this context and with a view to infuse practicality and human rights in the NEPAD process OHCHR took the initiative to convene a workshop on “NEPAD, Human Rights and OHCHR”, during the inaugural summit of the African Union in July 2002, Durban, South Africa. There was a follow-up workshop during the World Summit on Sustainable Development on 31 August 2002, Johannesburg, South Africa. The deliberations in the workshops covered a number of themes relating to: peer review mechanisms; developing human rights indicators for measuring progress; the participation of women, and the role of civil society in the NEPAD process; and building partnerships between NEPAD, OHCHR, African regional economic communities, UN agencies and other actors. The workshop was preceded by the organization of Africa Dialogue II on the theme of “Promoting Justice and Reconciliation in Africa: Challenges for Human Rights and Development” in collaboration with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania (**24-26 May 2002**). The Dialogue brought together human rights experts and policy makers on the continent, representatives of African governments, lawyers, judges, human rights activists and international observers. A set of recommendations directed at the various stake holders including the States, regional economic communities, the Steering Committee of NEPAD, Civil society and OHCHR, other UN agencies and international community were adopted.

The HURIST (Human Rights Strengthening) joint programme between OHCHR and UNDP was established in 1999 as a means of strengthening national capacities for the implementation of a human rights approach to development, and integrating a rights-based approach to UNDP's development programming. As to **2003 HURIST** supported activities in approximately 30 countries (many are LDCs), including the placement of United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) human rights specialists in UNDP Country Offices in LDC's. The activities range from support for the development or implementation of National Human Rights Action Plans (NHRAPs), to the integration

of human rights within national level development planning and policies, in areas such as health and pro-poor policies.

In the second half of 2002, OHCHR developed draft guidelines on a human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies (available at <http://www.unhchr.ch/development/poverty.html>). The short-term objective of this initiative is to provide governments, development agencies and other practitioners involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies with operational guidelines. The long-term objective is to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of poverty reduction strategies. While the draft Guidelines can be used by various actors involved in the design and implementation of poverty reduction strategies, they are mainly directed at the developing countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries, providing them with guidance on how to translate human rights norms and standards into concrete anti-poverty measures.

The Draft Guidelines are divided into three sections. Section I sets out the basic principles of a human rights approach that should inform the process of formulating a poverty reduction strategy (for example identification of the poor, participation, empowerment, non-discrimination, national and international human rights framework). Section II sets out the human rights approach to determining the content of a poverty reduction strategy. It identifies, for each right relevant to poverty reduction (food, education, health, housing, work, personal security, privacy, political rights and freedoms), the major elements of a strategy for realizing that right. The rights have been grouped under two broad headings the national and the international, depending on the level at which action will have to be taken. Section III explains how the human rights approach can guide the monitoring and accountability aspects of poverty reduction strategies. Like the principles discussed in Section I, accountability is also one of the basic principles of a human rights approach to poverty reduction. But because of its special significance in the context of human rights and poverty reduction, it is singled out for discussion in a separate section. The project has two phases. The first phase has now been implemented. The second phase will be implemented in 2003 during which the Draft Guidelines will be piloted through substantive consultation and field testing with a view to revise them.

In the context of the mainstreaming human rights in the CCA/ UNDAF process, the OHCHR has helped train UN country teams and Resident coordinators in rights-based development. The Office has worked, in collaboration with the UN staff College to integrate a rights based approach in the general CCA/UNDAF curriculum for country teams as well as provided specific inputs for country teams. At present it is contributing to the process of revising the guidelines for these instruments.