



Permanent Mission  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
to the United Nations  
New York



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## CONCEPT NOTE

### THIRD ANNUAL SEMINAR SERIES ON NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (NHRIs) TOPIC: PARTICIPATION OF NHRIs IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM AND THE ROLE OF NHRIs AS INSTITUTIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To highlight pathways to broader participation of NHRIs with the international human rights mechanisms at the global and national levels, share good practices as well as critical issues and challenges faced by NHRIs as they engage with international processes and to strengthen the constituency and champions of NHRIs supporting participation
2. To demonstrate the various ways in which NHRIs can be instrumental in the post-2015 development framework based on the standards and principles of human rights and the accountability framework as well their role in supporting early warning with respect to serious human rights violations and for the prevention of emerging crisis

#### BACKGROUND

The “Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions”, what are today commonly referred to as the “Paris Principles” were endorsed by the Commission on Human Rights (resolution 1992/54, March 1992) and later adopted by the UN General Assembly ([resolution 48/134](#)) in December of 1993.

Effective NHRIs are an important link between government and civil society, in so far as they help bridge the “protection gap” between the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of the state. NHRIs are central to a strong national human rights system along with an independent judiciary, effective parliamentary oversight mechanisms, fair administration of justice, dynamic civil society and free and responsible media. NHRIs, through their mandate to advance human rights, are instrumental in supporting democratic governance and strengthening the rule of law with particular emphasis on the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. In light of this prominent role for the promotion and protection of human rights in country, supporting them to be more effective in order to play an even greater role in the development and implementation of international norms is vital.

#### THEMATIC FOCUS: PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Secretary-General has recognized that NHRIs ‘play a crucial role in promoting and monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights norms and standards at the national level.’



NHRIs, as independent bodies with national-level expertise, bring important information and perspectives to the work of UN human rights bodies and their decision-making processes. In the most recent report of the Secretary General on national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (A/HRC/27/39) from June 2014, NHRI's independent participation in UN bodies is supported and it is recommended that:

*'National human rights institutions are encouraged to continue to advocate for their independent participation in the meetings of the United Nations human rights bodies, namely, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing'.*

The role of NHRIs is buoyed by their recognition as institutions of accountability both in respect to development planning and frameworks and also in relation to the monitoring and reporting role of NHRIs. Successful implementation of the new development agenda will require a strong accountability framework at the international and national levels. NHRIs can play a vital role as institutions of accountability in the post-2015 development framework by *inter alia* ensuring that national development policies and poverty reduction strategies are not only sensitive to human rights standards and principles (such as participation, non-discrimination, and accountability), but are also implemented according to those standards and principles, thus ensuring accountability through effective and efficient monitoring.

Similarly, there is growing recognition of the role that NHRIs play in supporting the establishment and strengthening at the national level of mechanisms to monitor and support follow up of implementation of recommendations of international human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Special Procedures. As a bridge between civil society and governments, NHRIs are pivotal in conducting dialogue on the effective implementation of the UPR recommendations, improving national level follow up of special procedures mechanism and furthering the realization of human rights domestically. The same can be said in regards to their pivotal role in monitoring and overseeing trends in the human rights situation in countries and to act as important preventive actors in instances of escalating or serious human rights violations where possible. The Secretary-Generals' Human Rights-up Front initiative has highlighted the importance of gathering reliable human rights information and NHRIs with their unique mandates are key institutions that play a prominent role in monitoring, reporting and enquiring on situations of concern.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Participants will comprise UNDP, OHCHR, ICC, NHRI regional networks, NHRIs from all regions, Member States, representatives of the human rights treaty body system and representatives of UN Agencies, civil society and academics amongst others.

## **LOCATION AND DATE**

**The seminar will be held in New York on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2015, 0900 – 1300 in Conference Room 6 of the General Assembly building, UN Headquarters.**

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