



Permanent Mission of
Finland to the
United Nations



Permanent Mission of
Tajikistan to the
United Nations



United Nations
Rule of Law Coordination
and Resource Group

The Permanent Missions of Finland and Tajikistan to the United Nations, and the Rule of Law Unit on behalf of the UN Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group invite you to a discussion on:

***“Sharing national practices:
Ombudsman institutions – guardians of the rule of law”***

**Friday, 13 May 2016 at 10.00 am –12.00 pm
Conference Room 6, UN Headquarters, New York**

Introductory remarks

Mr. Edric Selous

Director, Rule of Law Unit, Executive Office of the Secretary-General

Panellists

H.E. Mr. Mikko Puumalainen

Deputy Chancellor of Justice, former Ombudsman for Minorities of Finland

H.E. Mr. Zarif Alizoda

Ombudsman of Tajikistan

Discussants

Ms. Tahmina Juraeva

Deputy Director, NGO Human Rights and Rule of Law, Tajikistan

Ms. Maarit Kohonen-Sheriff

Deputy to the Head of New York Office, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Closing remarks

Ambassador Niklas Lindqvist

Ambassador of Finland to Tajikistan

Moderator

Ms. Ana Graça

Policy Advisor, Rule of Law, Justice and Security, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

Please see the attached concept note for further details.

**Concept note: “Sharing national practices:
Ombudsman institutions – guardians of the rule of law”**

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In the Declaration of the High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law (A/RES/67/1), the General Assembly recognized that “*all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to just, fair and equitable laws and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law*”.

Ombudsman institutions function at the very core of this idea. They provide citizens with an independent agency through which to keep public administration accountable. While ombudsman institutions are shaped differently in different countries depending on their constitutional, legal and political contexts, there are some common features.

Most ombudsman institutions have a competence to independently monitor and investigate public administration, make recommendations to address shortcomings in law or its implementation, and thereby contribute to preventing maladministration from recurring. Many ombudsman institutions also function as the National Human Rights Institutions, guided by the Paris Principles, and have mandates to promote and protect human rights. Core principles guiding ombudsman institutions are independence, impartiality and fairness. As a good practice, ombudsman institutions should be easily accessible to people, have unimpeded access to government information and publicly administered institutions, be empowered to undertake investigations both at their own initiative and based on complaints, and report on their findings.

In addition to general ombudsman institutions, many Member States have also established specialised ombudsman functions, such as for children or for minorities.

This meeting will provide an opportunity to hear Member State experiences on developing their ombudsman institutions and ensuring that they function in accordance with international guidelines. Finland and Tajikistan will share their good practices and lessons learnt. Finland has a well-established and multi-layered ombudsman institution, with a Chancellor of Justice of the Government appointed by the President, and a Parliamentary Ombudsman appointed by the Parliament. Their functions are complemented by Ombudsmen for non-discrimination, for children and for gender equality, based on specific legislation proscribing their respective mandates, tasks and powers. In Tajikistan, an amendment to the Law on the Ombudsman has been very recently passed, solidifying key elements of strengthening the institution and creating a separate mandate for an Ombudsman for children. A new strategy for the Ombudsman institution has also recently been approved, and it includes significant steps to solidify protection of human rights and enhance access to justice.

The event will also provide an opportunity to discuss aspects of mutual learning, as Finland – through UNDP as its project implementing partner and in implementation of a voluntary pledge made on the occasion of the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law in 2012 – has engaged in a multi-year programme to support Central Asian states to strengthen the rule of law. An important part of the support has been the strengthening of the ombudsman institution in Tajikistan, and several important lessons have been learnt, including with regard to the participation of civil society and the importance of unimpeded access to information and to government institutions.

The meeting will offer a space for dialogue between the legal and rule of law advisers, development experts and human rights experts on an issue which is of fundamental importance to the rule of law, to the promotion and protection of human rights, and to strengthening institutions and good governance.