

THE DANISH
INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS



REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING AND FOLLOW-UP IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

MARRAKECH, 7-8 DECEMBER 2022

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About this report

This report consists of the proceedings of the 'International Seminar on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRFs) in the field of human rights' organised by the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco in partnership with the Danish Institute for Human Rights, and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, in Marrakech on 7 and 8 December 2022.

The report is not word-for-word transcription of exchanges. The Seminar was held in three languages (Arabic, French and English), and interventions were translated when necessary. They were also condensed, and all interventions regarding networking and cooperation between NMIRFs are grouped in one section at the end of the report. These editing choices aim to make the written report complete, substantially consistent and easier for readers to follow.

The draft of the report was shared with all participants for review prior to publication. In view of nurturing direct exchanges between NMIRFs, participants also agreed to have their contacts mentioned at the end of the report (Annexe 2).

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil society organisation
DIHR	Danish Institute for Human Rights
GANHRI	Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
IDHR	Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco
NCPs	National Contact Points on Responsible Business Conduct
NHRAP	National Human Rights Action Plan
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NMIRFs	National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up
NRTD	National Recommendations Tracking Database
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SDGs	Sustainable Developments Goals
TBCBP	Treaty Body Capacity-Building Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
URG	Universal Rights Group



Final picture of the participants to the International Seminar on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up, Marrakech, 7-8 October 2023.

SEMINAR AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2022		
09:15-10:00	Plenary session	<p>Opening Session</p> <p>Moderation: Ms Sara BENTEFRIT, Director of International Cooperation and Legal Studies, Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco</p> <p>Addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Abdellatif OUAHBI, Minister of Justice, Kingdom of Morocco • Mr Eduardo PINTO DA SILVA, Head of the Human Rights Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, former Chair of the 'Group of Friends on NMIRFs' • Mr Mahamane CISSE-GOURO, Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights • Ms Mette THYGESEN, Director, International Division, Danish Institute for Human Rights • Ms Martine THERER, Deputy Resident Representative from the UN Development Fund to the Kingdom of Morocco • Mr Abdelkarim BOUJRADI, General Secretary, Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco
10:00-10:45	Plenary session	<p>International guidance on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up</p> <p>Moderation: H.E. Mr Ambassador Omar ZNIBER, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other International Organisations in Switzerland</p> <p>Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Mahamane CISSE-GOURO, Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: 'Presentation of international activities on NMIRFs since 2016.' • Mr Miguel CANDIA, Director of Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay: 'Presentation of the Resolutions on NMIRFs at the Human Rights Council.'
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00-12:30	Parallel groups	<p>Country experiences regarding the establishment, mandates and work methodologies of NMIRFs</p> <p>Group 1 will start with presentations from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights and International Law of Burkina Faso: Ms Hadjaratou ZONGO SAWADOGO, General Director for Human Rights, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights • The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights of Italy: Ms Maja BOVA, Expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation • The National Mechanism for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up on Recommendations of Lebanon: Ms Rana AL KHOURY, Ministry of Foreign Affairs • The Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and relations with the civil society of Mauritania: Mr Limam SIDI MOHAMED, Director of Human Rights, Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Relations with Civil Society. <p>Moderation: Ms Amal LOUBANI, Team Leader, Danish Institute for Human Rights</p>

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2022		
		<p>Group 2 will start with presentations from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Human Rights Council of Moldova: Ms Svetlana MIRCA, Senior Consultant, Human Rights and Social Dialogue Department, State Chancellery • Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco: Mr Abdelouahed ELATIR, Chargé de Mission, Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights • The National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up of the Recommendations from Treaty Bodies and the UPR of Niger: Ms Guisso Lailata ALFARI, Member of the National Mechanism, representing the Ministry of Labour • The National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan: Ms Dilnoza MURATOVA, Deputy Director, The National Centre for Human Rights <p>Moderation: Ms Edna Paola BIYOGO, Director General for Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, in charge of Human Rights of Gabon</p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-15:30	Parallel groups	<p>Exchange of experiences on the roles and functions of National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up</p> <p>Group 1: Coordination with other ministries, governmental agencies, and other state actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing and moderation: Ms Virginia BRAS GOMES, former Chairperson of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; former ministerial representative at the Portuguese NMIRF • Country experiences: Morocco, Moldova <p>Group 2: Consultations and engagement with other actors in the national human rights system (civil society, national human rights institutions, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing and moderation: Mr Miloon KOTHARI, member of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, former UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, President of UPR-Info. • Country experiences: Morocco, Niger, Uzbekistan, and interventions from NHRIs <p>Group 3: Information management systems and indicators ('National Recommendation Tracking Databases', etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing and moderation: Mr Domenico ZIPOLI, Research Fellow, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights • Country experiences: Morocco, Paraguay and presentation of the NRTD
15:30-15:45	Coffee Break	
15:45-18:15	Plenary session	<p>Day 1 Final Plenary Session (Chatham House rules)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from group exchanges • Tour de table and sharing of opinions from delegations, as regards expectations for strengthening cooperation between NMIRFs (2-3 minutes per delegation) <p>Moderation: Mr Abdelkarim BOUJRADI, Secretary General, Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco and Ms Mette THYGESEN, Director, International Division, Danish Institute for Human Rights</p>
Evening	Official Dinner, courtesy of the Minister of Justice	

THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022		
09:10-09:25	Plenary session	<p>Presentation of key results from Day 1 exchanges, Objectives and expectations for Day 2</p> <p>By Ms Sara BENTEFRIT, Director of International Cooperation and Legal Studies, Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco</p>
09:25-10:45	Plenary session	<p>Reflexions on potential avenues and modalities for reinforcing exchanges between NMIRFs</p> <p>Moderation: H.E. Mr Ambassador Omar ZNIBER, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other International Organisations in Switzerland</p> <p>Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Marie-Eve BOYER-FRIEDRICH, Human Rights Office, Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: 'State of play and prospects for the virtual knowledge hub and the organisation of intersessional seminars' • Mr Eduardo PINTO DA SILVA, Head of the Human Rights Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal: 'Networking experience of the Group of Friends of NMIRFs' • Mr Louis MASON, Legal and Policy Analyst, Universal Rights Group: 'Experiences of exchanges between NMIRFs organised with the support of the URG – notably with Pacific countries' <p>Discussion</p>
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00-12:30	Plenary session	<p>Lessons learned from other experiences of networking and cooperation between state actors in the field of human rights</p> <p>Moderation: Mr Sébastien LORION, Senior Adviser, Danish Institute for Human Rights</p> <p>Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Martin MENNECKE, Associate Professor, University of Southern Denmark: 'The experience of the Network of Focal Points on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)' (online) • Ms Lena DIESING, Policy Analyst, Centre for Responsible Business Conduct, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development): 'The experience of the Network of National Focal Points for Responsible Business Conduct (NCPs)' (online) <p>Discussion</p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch	

THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022		
14:00-15:45	Plenary session	<p>Views and suggestions on modalities for the reinforcement of cooperation and networking between NMIRFs</p> <p>Moderation: Ms Marie-Eve BOYER-FRIEDRICH, Human Rights Office, Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights</p> <p>Participants were invited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. define topics that require sharing of experiences, 2. identify short- and medium-term follow-up activities, 3. discuss preferable modalities for structuring cooperation or networking, and 4. define expectations and suggest contributions to the OHCHR virtual knowledge-sharing platform.
15:45-16:15	Coffee Break	
16:15-18:15	Plenary session	<p>Day 2 Final Plenary Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from group exchanges • Conclusions and Recommendations • Marrakech Declaration <p>Moderation: Mr Abdelkarim BOUJRADI, Secretary General of the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco</p>
Evening	Dinner	

OPENING ADDRESSES

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO, MR ABDELATIF OUAHBI

This international symposium on 'National Mechanisms for the Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up of Human Rights', being held in the historic city of Marrakech, is the first of its kind. It brings together high-level officials, international experts on human rights issues, and representatives from the national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up, which have become important actors at the international and national levels. On the one hand, NMIRFs are the institutional mechanisms in charge of keeping pace with the strategic dynamics and coordination with the relevant actors at the national level. On the other hand, NMIRFs are the national counterpart ensuring and tracking the implementation of the obligations related to the international and regional human rights systems.

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to human rights issues – whether at the levels of policies, institutions and practices – continues through the consolidation of key national achievements and experiences. These are strongly reflected in several strategic and structural reforms and initiatives. The experience of transitional justice, Amazigh linguistic rights and legislative reforms related to the rights of women, children and migrants are prime examples. The launch of economic and social programmes and projects on human and sustainable development, the new development model, social protection, and clean and renewable energies are also part of the path rooted in the constitutional reform, which responded to the aspirations of national forces.

At the initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who gives particular attention to human rights issues, the Kingdom of Morocco decided to be one of the first countries to set up a national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up, called the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights. This mechanism is guided by the need to develop national policies in the field of human rights, strengthen the methodology, methods and means of action and improve national interactions, while at the same time complying with the international obligations of the Kingdom of Morocco as a State Party to all the core conventions and most of their additional protocols in this field.

The establishment of this mechanism was also in alignment with the Kingdom of Morocco's interest in keeping pace with developments related to the increasing volume and depth of international commitments and the multiplicity of actors involved in them, while taking into account the requirements of specialisation and institutional governance to achieve coherence in public policies and programmes. As a result, it ensures coordination, dialogue, cooperation and concertation between the various actors, including governmental departments, parliament, national institutions and civil society.

In this context, the Kingdom of Morocco has sought to make this national mechanism a permanent institutional space for the various actors involved in promoting human

rights. The Delegation's mandate is to coordinate the follow-up of international human rights commitments as a strategic and irreversible national choice, by elaborating national reports submitted to the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council, replies and responses submitted under the individual communications mechanism, those submitted to the special procedures and the OHCHR, as well as coordinating visits by special procedures to the Kingdom of Morocco. The Delegation is also mandated to coordinate the follow-up of reports issued by international non-governmental organisations and to promote partnerships with national civil society organisations working in the field of human rights.

The Moroccan government has made compliance with international human rights obligations an essential part of government policy. As institutional coordination in this field is carried out within the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights, the Head of Government invited the Interministerial Delegation to devote the necessary attention to monitoring the implementation of international commitments in connection with the submission and consideration of national reports before the UN mechanisms, as well as the implementation of the recommendations issued following the examination of these reports, an example of which is, the Head of Government inviting the Interministerial Delegation to prepare a vision for implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women after the examination of the combined fifth and sixth national reports. The promotion of human rights knowledge through the initiative of the University Scientific Conference on Human Rights was also among the government's concerns.

The Interministerial Delegation gained the attention of parliamentary actors, both during the consultations on national reports with the competent committees of both Houses of Parliament, and during the discussions on sectoral budgets within the financial laws. Its work was noted and praised. Parliamentarians called to give it the attention and resources it deserves. This is without losing sight of the interest of the various components of both Houses of Parliament in human rights issues, within their role of oversight.

The Moroccan government is fully aware of the importance of ensuring the best possible performance of the Interministerial Delegation. It is committed to develop the Delegation's means of work and improving its interventions, in line with the directives of the Royal Message on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We reviewed the legal framework governing it and provide it with the financial and administrative means needed to perform its functions and roles, considering its position at the heart of institutional coordination, evaluating its experience and developing its expertise in order to meet international obligations professionally, competently and qualitatively.

The Moroccan government pays full attention to human rights issues in accordance with our country's international commitments. In the government program 2022-2026, they are considered a priority basis in all policies, plans and programs. The National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights has been updated as a priority among our commitments. We are also interested in adapting the legal framework related to the penal system, as well as promoting the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, migrants, social justice, education and health.

There is no doubt that the national choice of establishing the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights is reinforced today more than ever. In light of the growing trend among many states to establish similar mechanisms in the last decade, following the publication of the 2012 report of the OHCHR on the treaty body system. Not only did the number of these mechanisms increase, but so did their roles and interventions, creating a dynamic in terms of their international standing and the evolution of their functions at the national level. The results of the regional consultations and studies conducted by the OHCHR have shown the urgent need to build on the expertise and experience accumulated by NMIRFs, as well as the importance of strengthening cooperation among them. The Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 7 October 2022 calls for more exchanges among national mechanisms at the international and regional levels and to facilitate the establishment of a community of practice and the development of a virtual knowledge hub.

In this context, we hope that this international symposium, with your distinguished participation, extensive experience and qualitative contributions, will constitute a founding initiative in terms of sharing successful experiences and exchanging best practices and expertise. It is an opportunity to exchange opinions, views and reflect on ways to achieve the necessary cooperation among national mechanisms to serve human rights issues. The Kingdom of Morocco remains ready to respond to all relevant initiatives that enhance the position of the United Nations, strengthen its role and develop its system in the field of human rights in a world of increasing risks, horrors and challenges.

ADDRESS BY MR EDUARDO PINTO DA SILVA, HEAD OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIVISION, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PORTUGAL, FORMER CHAIR OF THE ‘GROUP OF FRIENDS ON NMIRFS’

In this opening address, allow me to point out the advantages for a state resulting from the establishment of a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up, drawing on Portugal's experience. The National Human Rights Committee is the NMIRF of Portugal, and the Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acts as its Executive Secretariat.

The establishment of the National Human Rights Committee follows a voluntary commitment of Portugal after its first UPR review, in 2009. The country had struggled to prepare its national report, and after the review, it was also a challenge to implement recommendations received. Similar challenges were experienced with regards to treaty bodies. Portugal had many reports behind. Internal communication with line ministries was difficult. Ad hoc working groups were created to deal with each report. That is why the National Human Rights Committee was established, by a 2010 resolution of the Council of Ministers.

The creation of the National Human Rights Committee has had many advantages. The first immediate advantage pertained to reporting obligations. The considerable delays experienced with regard to some reports were expunged in a relatively short period of time. The Committee is also always involved in preparing visits of special procedures' mandate holders. Recent official visits by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment or the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent were coordinated within the Committee.

One of the key improvements was in relation to daily working methods: while exchanges with ministries previously went through official communications, and it could be difficult to reach the person in line ministries, the Committee led to more targeted and less formal interactions. There is a mailing list with all focal points in each ministry, and information now flows quickly and efficiently. The Committee not only meets three times a year in plenary but also whenever necessary. During the pandemic, the work of the Committee was adapted and continued in a virtual way. It helps that each ministry has two focal points: one at a higher – political or senior official – level, and another one at a more technical level. The fact that these two levels exist helps in putting pressure whenever we need to rush or to have something done.

Second, the Committee has not only helped in complying with the reporting obligations, but also for implementing obligations and commitments, and following up on recommendations. It just concluded the preparation of the mid-term review for the UPR. Follow-up questions from the treaty bodies are also dealt with by the Committee. The Committee leads national initiatives across ministries. For instance, it created a working group to develop human rights indicators. Thanks to this work, sets of indicators have been developed in different areas, both on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights.

Third, the Committee serves as a useful channel to coordinate internal positions on human rights matters. The position of Portugal expressed, for example, at the Intergovernmental Working Group that is negotiating a convention on business and human rights, is elaborated within the Committee. The Committee created a specific working group on business and human rights to define and discuss the draft convention. In-depth discussions within the Committee also led Portugal to decide to be more vocal and supportive of the drafting of a treaty on the rights of older persons. These examples show that the Committee is flexible and has a wide scope of action, not limited to reporting: it takes initiatives at various levels.

Fourth, the Committee helped to build ownership in each of the line ministries on human rights issues. The flow of information has considerably improved: the Secretariat of the Committee sends information, such as the OHCHR publications, to all relevant ministries. All the questionnaires and requests for inputs from mandate holders, otherwise only dealt with by ministry of foreign affairs, are now accessible to all ministries and they can help preparing information to be submitted to the UN.

The Committee's experience is that its activities made all public administrations realise that they all have something to do with human rights, and that human rights do not belong only to specific ministries, but that they are indeed everywhere. In 2010, when the Committee was created, it integrated only 12 government areas. Those were the ones included in the resolution of the Council of Ministers – but fortunately, the resolution had an open-ended clause regarding membership. Now 22 government areas are represented in the Committee, covering basically all line ministries. For example, the Ministry of Finance, not initially part of the Committee, now realises that it is too an essential partner and implementer of human rights obligations, especially as regards economic, social and cultural rights, that demand resources.

Fifth – and related to both implementation and ownership, the National Human Rights Committee adopts an annual plan of action and produces an annual report. For the annual plan, each ministry has to identify three human rights actions to implement during the forthcoming year. Initially, that practice was challenging for some ministries – for example, the Ministry of Agriculture would struggle to find some actions that they could implement like tangibly. With time, this exercise became easy. They almost automatically suggest activities that they could do on human rights – for example, helping realise the right to food in schools through the provision of milk or some meals for students.

Sixth, an important advantage of the Committee has been the reinforcement of dialogue with civil society. It had been difficult for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to reach civil society and maintain a dialogue with organisations. An issue was simply to know the organisations dealing with human rights internally. With the Committee, one out of three plenary meetings are open to civil society. This year, that plenary meeting will be dedicated to mental health and human rights, and it will be used also to feed in the resolution that Portugal will be presenting in March 2023 at the Human Rights Council on the matter. This is an opportunity to listen to civil society on their priorities. The Committee has a mailing list to engage with civil society. It engages on a daily basis with them by email and also through the Committee's Facebook page. Civil society is invited to discuss draft reports to UN treaty bodies before they are presented to Geneva. The Committee's working groups can also meet with civil society.

Seventh, the Committee's membership extends to three standing observers. One is the national human rights institution. NMIRFs and national human rights institutions are separate yet complementary actors. The NHRI – in Portugal's case the Ombudsperson – is a completely independent entity in line with the Paris Principles. It has a standing observer status at the Committee: it is invited to all meetings and receives all communications. Following a recommendation by the OHCHR, the Committee also added the Parliament as an observer, given its competencies in terms of legislating on human rights issues. The public prosecutor's office is the third standing observer.

Eighth, the creation of the Committee led to bilateral cooperation with counterparts. It has shared experience and met with the Supreme Standing Committee of Egypt, and with the community of Portuguese-speaking countries – e.g., providing training to Equatorial Guinea on human rights and on the development of an NMIRF. It also participated, in partnership with the OHCHR in seminars benefitting Uganda and Cape Verde administrations.

These are some of the tangible contributions of NMIRFs, which can go far beyond the timely submission of reports to international bodies. They help implementation of commitments and obligations and improve internal coordination between all the public administrations regarding human rights. I look forward to the discussions during the Seminar and hearing from additional practices developed by other NMIRFs around the world.

ADDRESS BY MR MAHAMANE CISSÉ-GOURO, DIRECTOR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND TREATY MECHANISMS DIVISION, OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

I would like to thank the Kingdom of Morocco and the Danish Institute for Human Rights for inviting the OHCHR to participate in this exchange seminar on national reporting and monitoring mechanisms. I would also like to express my appreciation to the distinguished participants who came from different regions of the world (Africa, America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East) to share their experiences on this topic.

This exchange seminar takes place at an important moment for the UN human rights mechanisms, namely the beginning of the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, but also the recent decision by the chairpersons of the UN treaty bodies to adopt a predictable calendar for the review of reports to be submitted by States. It also comes in the wake of the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution on national mechanisms, which we will have the opportunity to discuss in greater detail during this seminar.

For national mechanisms, reporting to international human rights mechanisms is an opportunity for self-evaluation and engagement with local actors, including civil society organisations. They systematise and facilitate cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms. They also strengthen national ownership, improve human rights expertise and stimulate dialogue on human rights issues. Indeed, during the regional consultations mandated by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, several countries shared examples that reflect this central role of national mechanisms.

It is clear from all the recent exchanges that states need to:

- Continue to share experiences among peers through events such as this that can foster the exchange of best practices
- Create a compendium of best practices and a community of practice for national mechanisms
- Strengthen the information management systems of the national mechanisms, in particular, by acquiring tools such as the National Recommendations Tracking Database for the follow-up of recommendations or others.

This Seminar provides a platform to discuss these issues. Those who have years of experience will have the opportunity to showcase best practices, and those considering the creation of a new mechanism or the strengthening of an existing one will be able to draw on them. Therefore, I encourage you to engage openly and constructively in discussions about the needs of your respective mechanisms.

The OHCHR is committed to taking the Marrakech conclusions into account in **the development of the online platform mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 51/33** that will be made available to you and other stakeholders and that we will have the opportunity to discuss tomorrow.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to express the wish that the deliberations that you will be called upon to undertake will be successful and that your work will produce innovative ideas that will contribute to strengthening the effectiveness of actions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

ADDRESS BY MS METTE THYGESEN, DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIVISION, DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

As his Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, solemnly recalled in the Royal Message on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, solid state institutions, combined with avenues for civil society participation, are vital for the realisation of human rights standards – whether guaranteed in our Constitutions or in ratified treaties.

Such institutions include independent national human rights institutions, such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights or the National Human Rights Council in Morocco. They also include governmental human rights structures, many prime examples of which, including our host, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of Morocco, are represented here today. These may be Interministerial delegations indeed, or human rights ministries, units in Prime Minister's Office or Justice Ministries, and so forth, and generally referred to today as 'National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up' (NMIRFs).

As consistently recalled by the UN Secretary General, NHRIs and NMIRFs are both key elements needed for efficient national human rights systems, in addition to other institutions and actors such as courts, parliaments and a vibrant civil society and academia. They have distinct and complementary roles. While NHRIs monitor, protect and promote human rights, governmental structures dedicated to human rights have a crucial implementation role. They need to ensure that all governmental entities participate in the implementation of human rights commitments, obligations and recommendations, and mainstream a human rights approach to their work.

In its international work, the Danish Institute for Human Rights has supported governmental actors for over two decades in engaging with international bodies, through reporting and follow-up, integrating international commitments in national legislation and policies, and in implementing those locally. I recognise in the room some long-standing partners of our Institute, from Burkina Faso and Niger to Kyrgyzstan. This cooperation is based on a partnership philosophy, where the need and priorities of the partners are the driving force for our engagement. In addition, our Research Department has pioneered a research agenda on governmental actors and policies, leading the way to decrypt practices as well as support the development of international guidance and tools.

The concept and guidance on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-Up ('NMIRFs'), developed by the OHCHR and promoted through key resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council, has since 2016 given a solid reference point for anyone's work on governmental structures. We now see trends in states' establishment of such structures. These play a key role for international reporting and follow-up, but also in many cases for implementing national policies and legal frameworks in human rights. Implementation is the key word here, as reporting alone does not trigger any change.

As was made clear in the most recent reports and resolutions on NMIRFs, there is a need for more tools and guidance for NMIRFs to efficiently fulfil their mandates, as

well as an appetite for peer-to-peer exchanges between NMIRFs. We at the Danish Institute stand ready to accompany the development of these tools and interactions. We are therefore delighted that our partner, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of Morocco, has suggested organising this seminar, and that so many states and actors positively replied to that invitation.

As we see it, the Seminar will be helpful in: 1) establishing direct connexions between NMIRFs and getting to know each other; 2) tracing ways forward to enhance futures interactions between NMIRFs; 3) suggesting relevant ideas those of us involved in the conception of tools and guidance for NMIRFs. I, therefore, encourage each of you to actively take part in the discussion.

ADDRESS BY MS MARTINE THERER, DEPUTY RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND

Respect for human rights is the bedrock on which UNDP exercises its development mandate and works with governments to end poverty, build democratic governance, rule of law and inclusive institutions. It is now commonly accepted that poverty is not measured solely by lack of income. It also manifests itself in the living conditions and deprivations caused by the lack of resources. This is why, since 2010, the multidimensional poverty index has focused on households and counts the deprivations that affect them in the areas of health, education and standard of living. These dimensions of human development are sufficiently important to have been recognised as human rights by national and international law.

Respect for human rights and the creation of an environment conducive to the full exercise of these rights, whether civil, cultural, economic, political or social rights, are essential to development. There can be no sustainable development without respect for fundamental human rights principles, such as non-discrimination, participation, and the rule of law. The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development states that everyone without distinction has the right to economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all the rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can find full effect. Development improves the well-being of the whole population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and equitable sharing

In 2015, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals, all Member States underlined that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must comply with human rights. They promised not to leave anyone behind. Human rights are at the heart of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Notably, Goal 5 deals with gender equality and goal 10 aims at reducing inequalities within and between countries. In Morocco, the 2011 Constitution enshrines the attachment to human rights and the irreversible choice to build a democratic rule of law. A choice reaffirmed in the new development model, which has resulted in significant democratic advances and substantial progress. The consultations around the new development model have made it possible to highlight the path that remains to be travelled so that the spirit of the Constitution prevails.

I would like to congratulate the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights for the broad national and regional consultation that it organised with the support of the UNDP to prepare the recent review of the human rights situation in Morocco within the framework of the UPR. This practice reflects the desire of Morocco to broaden the debate on issues relating to human rights and to strengthen the appropriation of fundamental rights and freedoms at all levels. By organising this seminar and by opening up to the experience and good practices of other countries, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights is showing its willingness to fully play its role in the application and monitoring of international conventions relating to the human rights and to promote the respect for these rights in the execution of public policies.

National mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up help states meet their treaty obligations. It also helps them to make the most of their collaboration with international human rights mechanisms, as it facilitates the assessment of the human rights situation in their countries on the ground and the revision of their legislative frameworks. and policies with regard to their obligations and commitments. There is no universal model. But whatever approach is chosen, it is essential that these national mechanisms have the visibility, political influence, and financial and human resources necessary to fulfil their primary mission of building knowledge and promoting synergies between all stakeholders, including with civil society.

**ADDRESS BY MR ABDELKARIM BOUJRADI, GENERAL SECRETARY,
INTERMINISTERIAL DELEGATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE KINGDOM OF
MOROCCO**

On behalf of the Interministerial Delegate in charge of human rights, I am pleased to wish you all a pleasant stay in your second country, Morocco, and all the best for the work of this important international symposium. We meet today at this international event on national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up, which coincides with the world's celebration of the seventy-fourth anniversary of an inspiring international instrument, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

While this Declaration launched human rights at the United Nations level, we witness today remarkable developments at the normative level, that have led to an expansion of international obligations. These developments can be challenging for states, which must monitor the fulfilment of international obligations and ensure their implementation on the ground. Thus, international thinking on institutional mechanisms to achieve these goals has evolved.

Some states, including the Kingdom of Morocco, have been frontrunners in establishing national mechanisms responsible for coordinating the implementation of international human rights obligations. More recently, the United Nations and in particular the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, have facilitated discussions on these national mechanisms and ways to institutionalise effective approaches, especially since the 2012 UN report on the treaty body reform. Discussions and exchanges on implementation mechanisms are also organised within the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary mechanisms. In the context of increasing international commitments and the expansion of human rights norms and challenges, it is necessary to establish solid institutions and provide them with the required means to carry out their tasks to the fullest.

In spite of their diversity, national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up all share similar core roles and functions. They provide a basis and platform for sustained coordination, cooperation, consultation, partnership and dialogue with all relevant actors, as well as initiatives aimed at promoting human rights at the national level.

We hope that our Seminar, more than ten years after the establishment of the first generation of these mechanisms, will be practical and useful, allowing us to share the experiences across countries, to exchange best practices and lessons learned, and to discuss ways to create spaces for sustained dialogue and cooperation. There is no doubt that the United Nations system, represented with us today by a key partner, the United Nations Development Programme, the participation of representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the outstanding support of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, constitute a strong support for the processes of reflection on the possibilities and modalities of future cooperation.

The Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights reiterates its willingness to contribute to the implementation of the commitments resulting from the work of this International Seminar and to participate in all initiatives aimed at implementing the relevant proposals on which the opinion of the participating institutions will be settled. I also express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency the Minister of Justice, Mr Abdelatif Ouahbi, for being with us and for his continued support of the work of the Interministerial Delegation, as the one responsible for the human rights policy in the government. I would also like to thank our partners for their valued contribution to this seminar, as well as all the participants, including high-level officials, experts and representatives of the participating departments and institutions, in the hope that the work of the Seminar will culminate in results that would foster the foundations for dialogue and cooperation among national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up in the field of human rights.

PLENARY

INTERNATIONAL GUIDANCE ON NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING AND FOLLOW-UP

Moderator: H.E Mr Omar ZNIBER, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations at Geneva and other International Organisations in Switzerland.

The objective of the first session was to discuss the evolution of the concept of NMIRFs and initiatives taken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Group of Friends of NMIRFs at the Human Rights Council and other stakeholders to promote National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up at the international level, including through resolution 51/33 co-sponsored by Paraguay and adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022.

Two speakers with direct insights on the above processes participated in the panel: Mr Mahamane Cissé-Gouro, Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division at the OHCHR, on the key milestones of the evolution of the concept of NMIRFs, and Mr Miguel Candia, Director of Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, on resolutions on NMIRFs at the Human Rights Council.



INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES ON NMIRFS

Presenter: Mr Mahamane Cissé-Gouro, Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

To start a discussion on experiences pertaining to state engagement with UN human rights mechanisms and efforts made to follow-up on the recommendations stemming from these mechanisms, it is important to look back and reflect upon the key steps that

led to the creation of sustainable governmental structures today generally referred as 'national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up' (NMIRFs).

Why institutionalise state engagement with international mechanisms?

There has been a continuous and exponential growth in the number of international and regional mechanisms, notably with the adoption of treaties relating to specific groups or the mandates of special rapporteurs and other independent experts, accompanied by an increase in the number of recommendations addressed to states.

It is undeniable that the demand for quality reports, notably through the addition of statistical data, as well as the timely submission of reports, require the development of a capacity for coordination, and of a capacity to consult with civil society. These same qualities and skills are needed for the follow-up of recommendations and thus better implementation at national level. Ad hoc mechanisms and systems are therefore not the best way to achieve this.

Why favour a sustainable system?

Reporting requires political commitment, technical knowledge and dedicated resources and capacity. In addition, the focus is increasingly on implementation so that recommendations made at the international level have meaning and impact on people's lives and on the rights they should be able to enjoy at the national and even local levels.

It is also important that all stakeholders, including the most marginalised, are able to contribute to the assessment of the human rights situation in the country and to the development of measures that are meaningful for the enjoyment of their rights.

States that use ad hoc mechanisms to prepare their reports generally face the same capacity constraints each time they form a new drafting committee and face challenges caused by a lack of coordination and weak institutional memory. They also have less legitimacy to follow up on the recommendations. Or perhaps they simply do not have the mandate and legitimacy?

Permanent mechanisms are therefore more desirable to maintain institutional memory, strengthen links with parliament, the judiciary, the NHRI and civil society, and allow for follow-up of recommendations to achieve implementation of international human rights obligations. Sustainable systems provide a predictable and reliable means for all and allow for a national dialogue on these issues. Compared to ad hoc structures, permanent mechanisms also enhance governmental coordination, optimise the use of existing resources and simplify access to international or bilateral technical assistance.

What is meant by a national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up?

Against this background, the United Nations and civil society (in particular the Universal Rights Group) have taken up this issue at the international level and, drawing on emerging practices of states, promoted the establishment of 'national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up' (NMIRFs). NMIRFs are a government structure responsible, on behalf of the state, for:

1. Coordinating and preparing reports for regional and international human rights mechanisms; and
2. Coordinating and monitoring the follow-up and national implementation of treaty obligations and recommendations/decisions emanating from these mechanisms.

The national mechanism is, therefore, not a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). The latter is an independent public entity funded by the state, with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights. The Paris Principles guide it. NHRIs and NMIRFs are complementary in the national human rights protection system.

At the international level, UN General Assembly resolution 68/268, adopted in April 2014, which aimed to strengthen and improve the functioning of the treaty bodies, referred to the importance for states to strengthen engagement at the country level. Increasingly, this issue has also been addressed in the context of the Universal Periodic Review and by treaty bodies in their dialogues with states. In 2016, the OHCHR prepared a study that brought together the experiences of 23 countries. This meeting resulted in a practical guide that offers some guidance for setting up a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up. The [OHCHR Study](#) and the [Practical Guide](#) were published in 2016.

Initiatives at the level of the UN Human Rights Council

Other initiatives have emerged within the Human Rights Council. We can mention the group of friends made up of Member States such as Portugal, but also Paraguay, Italy, Morocco and Denmark. With the appropriation of this issue by the Human Rights Council, we have seen that the focus has increasingly shifted to the importance of national mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of human rights recommendations. This shift is also noted in the emphasis on implementation in the context of the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review.

Such visibility and commitment to the issue led to the adoption in 2019 of Human Rights Council [resolution 42/30](#), in which the OHCHR was requested to organise five regional consultations to allow for sharing experiences among national mechanisms. These consultations took place in late 2021, online, due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. The [report](#) summarising these discussions on good practices and challenges and proposing concrete recommendations to strengthen national mechanisms was presented to the 50th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2022.

Thanks to the leadership of Paraguay and Brazil, the Council adopted a [resolution](#) in October 2022 asking the OHCHR to continue these efforts, including through the organisation of a one-day seminar in 2023 and another in 2024 in Geneva, so that states and other stakeholders can continue sharing experiences and improving national mechanisms. The resolution also called for the creation of a virtual platform to enable national mechanisms to share promising practices and facilitate the creation of an online community of practice. This platform would allow more visibility into the work that national mechanisms are doing. This could include a collection of documents, training packages and other checklists useful for NMIRF's work.

RESOLUTIONS ON NMIRFS AT THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Presenter: Mr Miguel Candia, Director of Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay

Paraguay has long understood the need to find a solution to a systemic problem it has been facing in relation to the implementation and follow up of human rights recommendations. The inflation of recommendations stemming from UN Human Rights Mechanisms is indeed a challenge. Tackling this issue through Human Rights Council's resolutions helped create a momentum and take this opportunity to develop national tools and institutions, leading in Paraguay to the creation of its Monitoring System of Human Rights International Recommendations and Sustainable Development (so-called SIMORE and its enhanced version entitled SIMORE Plus).

With the inclusion of this topic as an issue to be considered within the ambit of the Human Rights Council, Paraguay, the Core Group and the 'Group of Friends of NMIRFs' have sought to:

1. recognise the important, valuable and mutually reinforcing role and contribution of all human rights mechanisms from the international and regional human rights systems for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom; and
2. underline that the enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for the full achievement of the purposes of the United Nations, including the effective promotion and protection of all human rights.

Accordingly, we wanted the Human Rights Council to 'promote international cooperation to support national human rights follow-up systems and processes', and did so by adopting a series of resolutions bearing that name and pointing to specific actions.

The **first resolution on the topic (A/HRC/RES/30/25 adopted in 2015)**

'encourage[d] States to establish and strengthen national human rights follow-up systems and processes and to seek, as needed, technical assistance and capacity-building, and to share experiences and good practices to that end'. It also requested the OHCHR 'to organise an intersessional half-day panel discussion, taking advantage of existing capacities, to share experiences and good practices in the establishment and strengthening of national human rights follow-up systems, including the role of international cooperation in this regard, and to prepare a summary report thereon'.

The **second resolution (A/HRC/RES/36/29 adopted in 2017)**

recognised that 'national human rights mechanisms for reporting and follow up could make a contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by strengthening the capacity of States to assess needs, set priorities and implement measures that effectively promote and protect, including on a preventive basis, the human rights of all persons, especially those living in vulnerable situations, thus leaving no one behind'. It also requested the OHCHR 'to continue to compile, assess and raise awareness of good practices, challenges and lessons learned on the potential contribution of national human rights follow-up systems and processes'.

Resolution A/HRC/RES/42/30, adopted in 2019, requested the OHCHR ‘to organise five regional consultations to exchange experiences and good practices related to the establishment and development of these national mechanisms and their impact on the effective implementation of human rights obligations and commitments’. These regional meetings were a real success and showed that it is important to do outreach continuously. The Group of Friends’ purpose is precisely to keep the momentum on this issue. The conclusions and recommendations of the regional meetings were presented by the Office in its Report A/HRC/50/64. It showed that states had acquired considerable experience in the functioning of national mechanisms and that learning could be harvested from that experience. Knowledge generated through peer-to-peer learning is authentic and, by definition, reflects the realities on the ground. The report represented a fundamental basis for the Draft Resolution that the Core Group presented this year to the Council for consideration, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Portugal in Geneva, representing the Group of Friends of NMIRFs, and the Universal Rights Group.

This year’s **resolution (A/HRC/RES/51/33 adopted in 2022)** encourages the work carried out by NMIRFs to turn them into essential instruments to promote greater implementation of the obligations and recommendations in the area of human rights. Paraguay strongly believes that it is fundamental to strengthen the capacity of states in this area to improve the situation on the ground. In other words, national human rights systems constitute the essential counterparts of international and regional human rights mechanisms, translating their recommendations into effective human rights progress at the national level.

What does the new resolution foresee as the next steps?

The previous resolution, in 2019, gave the mandate to identify forms of cooperation between the Human Rights Council and these national mechanisms. This identification has begun and has been expanded with the development of the five regional consultations and the subsequent report prepared by the OHCHR. But Paraguay believed the Council needed to continue creating spaces for formal exchanges to strengthen the capacities of state actors, non-governmental stakeholders, and various agents of civil society.

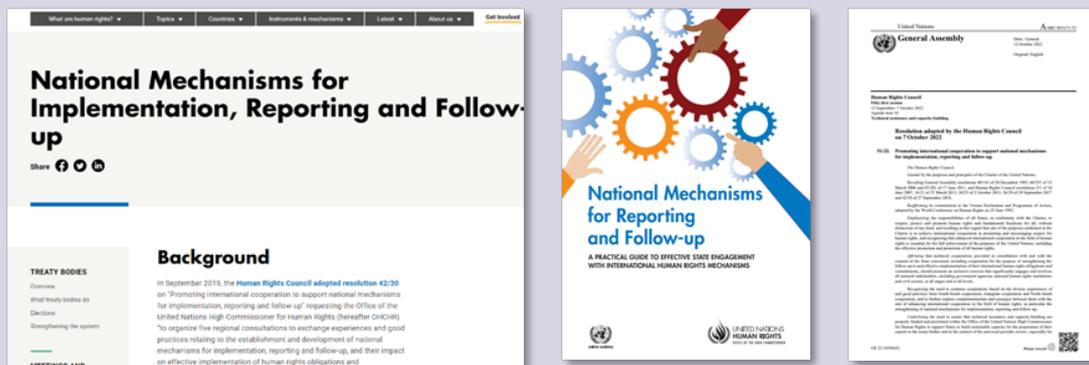
For this reason, the 2022 resolution seeks to create space for the exchange of good practices on the Council’s agenda and focus on establishing a forum so that a ‘community of practice and knowledge’ has the opportunity to emerge, grow and enrich itself. This is consistent with the outcomes of the regional consultations captured in Report 50/64, which calls to support more exchanges between national mechanisms at the global and regional levels or on specific topics and to facilitate the creation of a community of practice and a knowledge-sharing centre for national mechanisms in collaboration with interested partners. That proposal was very well received by the Core Group and the Group of Friends.

As such, Human Rights Council resolution 51/33 requests the OHCHR ‘to organise intersessional seminars to consider further the experiences and good practices shared during the five online regional consultations relating to the establishment and development of national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-

up’ and; as well as ‘to establish and maintain a virtual knowledge hub for national mechanisms, in collaboration with States and relevant stakeholders to share good practices and to facilitate the exchange of experiences’. It is one of the topics for which the present International Seminar is devoting space.

Setting up a Virtual Hub can be challenging: the OHCHR can count on the government of Paraguay to support its efforts. Paraguay is sure this will facilitate international cooperation to strengthen national mechanisms. Paraguay is willing to be one of the hubs for such exchanges. Paraguay is always working on improving its national mechanism at the national level, hence the transition from SIMORE to SIMORE Plus. The next step will be to move from a single tool, SIMORE, to a set of tools that will reinforce the work of the state in an overarching manner towards fulfilling its broader international human rights commitments.

For more information on UN activities on NMIRFs:



All UN information on NMIRFs, including practical guidance, reports and UN resolutions can be found on the OHCHR dedicated page: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/national-mechanisms-implementation-reporting-and-follow>

WORKSHOPS

ESTABLISHMENT, MANDATES AND WORK METHODOLOGIES OF NMIRFS: COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Moderator: Ms Amal Loubani, Team Leader, Danish Institute for Human Rights (workshop 1) and Ms Edna Paola Biyogou, Director General for Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, in charge of Human Rights of Gabon (workshop 2)

These two parallel workshops aimed at introducing more in-depth the participating NMIRFs. Eight structured presentations were delivered, and other country representatives were invited to ask questions or present their situation too. Reflected in this report section are the presentations delivered by the representatives of Burkina Faso, Italy, Lebanon, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Niger, and Uzbekistan.

The following description of NMIRFs covers how they were established, their mandates and their missions. This includes a discussion on engagement with international actors – a core attribution of NMIRFs – while other key functions (coordination with other governmental actors and institutions, engagement with other stakeholders including civil society and NHRIs, and information management systems) were the topics of distinct workshops addressed in the next sections of the report.



BURKINA FASO

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MULTISECTORAL COMMITTEE FOR MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UPR RECOMMENDATIONS

Presenter: Ms Hadjaratou Zongo Sawadogo, General Director for Human Rights, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights

The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights

The NMIRF of Burkina Faso falls part of structures created under the Ministry in charge of Justice and Human Rights of Burkina Faso. The Ministry exists in one form or another (initially as a State Secretariat) since 2000, and has wide responsibilities. The mandates of the Ministry with regard to human rights are as follows:

- Coordination of the government's actions in the areas of human rights, citizenship and peace
- Integration of the human rights-based approach into Burkina Faso's public policies
- Support and advice to civil society in the field of human rights
- Implementation and monitoring of international human rights agreements and conventions
- Promotion of a culture of safeguarding national values, tolerance and peace
- Prevention and management of community conflicts
- Implementation of all measures likely to ensure the best possible protection by the public authorities of individual and collective rights
- Monitoring the activities of the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law
- Information, training and awareness-raising of citizens and legal entities on their rights and duties.

To carry out its mission, the Ministry has created several structures, some of which are directly attached to the Minister's Office because considered strategic missions, namely the permanent secretariat of the National Observatory for the Prevention and Management of Community Conflicts, and the permanent secretariat of the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law; and others attached to the General Secretariat, namely the Directorate General for the Promotion of Citizenship and Peace, the Directorate General for Human Rights and the Regional Directorates for Human Rights, the Promotion of Citizenship and Peace, with local offices in 12 out of 13 administrative regions in order to bring actions closer to the populations.

The Multisectoral Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review

A Multisectoral Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review was created in 2012 by an Interministerial decree. Its mandate has been extended in practice to include preparing reports to treaty bodies. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice in charge of human rights chairs it. The Secretary General of the Ministry in charge of Foreign Affairs is the first Vice-President, and the Secretary-General of the Ministry in charge of Finance, the Second Vice-President. The Director-General for Human Rights acts

as Rapporteur, and the Directorate provides the Technical Secretariat for Monitoring International Agreements.

The Multisectoral Committee is composed of 23 members, including:

- Representatives of ministerial departments
- A representative of the National Human Rights Commission
- Two representatives of civil society organisations

The Multisectoral Committee is responsible for the following:

- Identifying the necessary actions for the implementation of the treaty bodies' recommendations
- Identify and mobilise all actors who can contribute to implementing the recommendations
- Monitor national action plans for the implementation of recommendations
- Carry out consultations with the various public institutions within the framework of the implementation of the action plans
- Collect information that may be used in the preparation of reports.

The Committee holds four sessions in the year and extraordinary sessions whenever necessary. In practice, the development and monitoring process includes several phases:

- Data and Information Collection
- Development of roadmaps and national action plans for the implementation of recommendations
- Monitoring the implementation of roadmaps and action plans. This monitoring has been done since 2020 through an online tool on Google Sheet, called Mechanism for monitoring the implementation of Burkina Faso's recommendations and voluntary commitments, which centralises information on the implementation of the UPR recommendations and all the monitoring bodies of Burkina Faso
- Preparation of preliminary draft reports and their validation through national workshops involving national public and private actors
- Examination and validation of the preliminary reports by the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law
- Consideration and adoption of the draft report by the Council of Ministers
- Transmission of the report to the Treaty Body via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Presentation of the report to the body.

Strengths and challenges

Burkina Faso's mechanism has many strengths, including: the fact that justice and human rights are approached as one sector of state planning, with the existence of a dedicated sectoral policy for 2017-2026 with a designated human rights component; the assiduity in the preparation and presentation of reports; the quality of the reports presented with a very good rate of implementation of recommendations, and the existence of the Interministerial Committee responsible for validating the draft reports at a high technical level.

The existence of expert and experienced staff is also a key asset. Since 2006, two 'specific employment' categories have been created in Burkina Faso's civil service: the Human Rights Counsellors, with advisory functions and higher administrative rank, and

the Human Rights Officers, tasked with executing functions. Both receive a 30-month specialised training at the National Administration and Judiciary School.

However, there are still some challenges hampering the mechanism's operations:

- How to raise the participation of the Prime Minister, all institutions, the National Assembly and the Superior Council of the Judiciary as members of the Multisectoral Committee;
- Strengthening ownership of the mechanism and its mandate by all relevant actors to facilitate the work of members representing other ministerial departments, particularly concerning the data collection and the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations;
- The preparation and follow-up of all reports to treaty bodies by the Multisectoral Drafting Committee, as in practice, the Committee ensures the follow-up and preparation of reports only for the UPR and seven treaty bodies. Reports for the CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child are not prepared by the Committee;
- Capacity building of Committee members on the country's human rights commitments to enable them to better contribute to reporting and monitoring;
- The mobilisation of partners and financial resources to strengthen human rights actions is also challenging.

ITALY

INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Presenter: Ms Maja Bova, Expert, Interministerial Committee for Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Establishment and composition of the CIDU

The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU) is the NMIRF of Italy. It was established in 1978 with the aim of fulfilling reporting obligations following the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy and is composed of representatives from various government agencies. These agencies include:

- The Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- The Ministry of Justice
- The Ministry of Interior
- The Ministry of Education
- The Ministry of Labour
- The Ministry of Health
- The Ministry of Economic Development
- The Ministry of Defence
- The Ministry of Environment
- The Ministry of Agriculture
- The Ministry of Cultural Heritage
- The National Office against Racial Discrimination
- The Superior Council of the Judiciary
- The National Office of Statistics
- The Carabinieri Corps

- The Revenue Guards Corps
- The National Association of Italian Municipalities
- The Union of Italian Provinces
- The Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces
- The Italian Society for International Organisations
- CREA – the Council for the research in the agricultural sector and the analysis of agrarian economy (Ministry on Agriculture)
- CNEL – the National Council for Economics and Labour
- The Italian Commission-UNESCO.

CIDU's mandate and activities

CIDU serves as the National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up, and performs various tasks to promote human rights in Italy. These tasks include:

- Reviewing draft laws related to human rights, upon request
- Reporting on international human rights standards (mainly UN and Council of Europe) and interactions under individual communications
- Participating in international and regional forums, such as the UN Human Rights Council or the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union
- Coordinating the consideration of Italy under the UPR mechanism
- Coordinating country visits to Italy from UN special procedures, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Elaborating the national action plan on women, peace and security and the national action plan on business and human rights
- Promoting human rights through education and training
- Dialogue with CSOs

CIDU's involvement in the UPR process is of utmost importance. As part of the UPR, CIDU prepares a national report and participates in the oral consideration, submitting an addendum and mid-term reporting.

CIDU submits an annual report to the Parliament, in accordance with Law No. 80/1999, and participates in hearings before relevant parliamentary committees, when needed.

The need for networking and information management system

To further enhance its activities, CIDU can benefit from networking. Sharing of good and best practices, including from the regional and local level, and systematic consultations with civil society organisations, parliament, and local and regional governments through their representatives within CIDU's membership are of relevance. Moreover, providing human rights education and trainings are also of relevance to raise awareness and understanding of human rights issues.

Data collection and analysis are also critical for CIDU's work. Accurate and up-to-date information on human rights is essential for effective monitoring, reporting, and follow-up. This is made possible in particular thanks to the above mentioned Italian National Office of Statistics. Data collection and analysis can provide valuable insights into the human rights situation in Italy and inform the development of policies and programs aimed at promoting and protecting human rights.

The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights efforts towards the Universal Periodic Review recommendations and to engage with various stakeholders, including civil society organisations, parliament, and local and regional government authorities, are critical for the effective promotion and protection of human rights, domestically. The Committee can further strengthen its work by leveraging the benefits of networking and collaboration, providing human rights education and trainings, and collecting/analysing data on human rights. Ultimately, the National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up, such as the CIDU, are key to contributing to the implementation of the SDGs by 2030.

LEBANON

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREPARATION OF REPORTS AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Presenter: Ms Rana El Khoury, Secretary of the Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Establishment and composition of the Committee

Lebanon's National Committee for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up of the Implementation of the Recommendations of International Mechanisms for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights was created in 2018 in response to the recommendations received by the Lebanese government during the discussion of its second national report on the human rights situation.

The Prime Minister of Lebanon chairs the Committee. It includes delegates from the Ministries of Justice, National Defence, Interior, Municipalities, Public Health, Labour, Social Affairs, Economy and Trade, Environment, Education and Higher Education, Culture, Media, State Security, Central Statistics Department, National Commission for Lebanese Women, and the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee.

Mandate and activities of the Committee

The Committee's main responsibilities are to prepare and discuss Lebanon's national reports before the international human rights mechanisms on the Human Rights situation. As soon as the Committee was established, it organised several training courses for its human rights staff in Beirut to gain the expertise required for their work in the Committee and benefit from other countries' experiences. It has also facilitated the process of preparing due periodic reports, which restored regularity to the process of submitting Lebanon's reports to international human rights bodies.

The Committee's decree provided a clear framework for organising and facilitating cooperation between ministries and national institutions concerned. Some examples of the Committee's actions since its establishment are:

- Preparing the delegation and preparing the discussion of Lebanon's national report before the ICCPR in Geneva 2018
- Drafting Lebanon's national report on the elimination all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), promising the delegation to discuss it before the concerned committee. The Committee continued the dialogue with the CEDAW Committee by answering its complementary questions

- Drafting Lebanon's third national report under the Universal Periodic Review and preparing the delegation to the Human Rights Council.

After the UPR session, the Committee held a series of consultative meetings (virtual due to the pandemic) over a period of 4 months to determine the national position on the recommendations issued by the Human Rights Council.

The Committee has also institutionalised Lebanon's cooperation with human rights procedures, organising the visits of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the delegation of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, and responding to joint correspondence received by the Lebanese government on new human rights topics. Following the discussion of its first national report under the universal periodic review, Lebanon issued a standing invitations to special mandate holders to visit Lebanon. Several examples were highlighted, including:

- The visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. The Committee also engaged with the results of this visit, such as the issuance of the initial draft of the report, the preparation of written responses to its content, the discussion of the final report before the Human Rights Council
- The visit of the delegation of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture was also organised. The Committee is awaiting the issuance of the first draft of the subcommittee's report to engage with its conclusions
- The largest number of joint correspondences received by the Lebanese government on new human rights topics was also answered.

Strengths and challenges

The Committee takes advantage of its central position, granted by decree establishing it, to establish the links necessary for its work. According to Article 3 of the decree, the Committee shall cooperate with several other parties concerned with human rights, including civil society organisations. Although collaboration is working, it remains to strengthen communication with the National Human Rights Institutions, including the Committee against Torture, and with other committees tasked with preparing national reports, such as the National Committee for the Preparation of the Voluntary Report to Follow Up the Implementation of the SDGs, to standardise goals, discourse, and terminology.

An assessment of the work of the Committee so far found that it has been able to establish its ability to complete the first part of the mandate granted to it in the preparation of periodic reports and communication with special procedures. The Committee still has to find ways to carry out the second part of the mandate and ensure the centrality of its role in following up on the recommendations issued by international bodies. This work requires cooperation and coordination between the ministries and national institutions, the House of Representatives, and the Government. It also needs to adopt modern systems and rules for the gradual collection of human rights data and to contribute to the ongoing process of updating the 'National Action Plan for Human Rights Plan' for the coming years. The biggest challenge facing the committee is to ensure its sustainability in light of the magnitude of the challenges imposed by the political, financial, economic and social crisis, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic.

MAURITANIA

COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, HUMANITARIAN ACTION, AND RELATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY, AND ITS INTERSECTORAL COMMITTEE

Presenter: Mr Sidi Cheikh Ahmedou, Commissioner of Human Rights, Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and relations with Civil Society

The Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and relations with Civil Society

The Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and relations with Civil Society were initially created in 1998. According to the latest decree on its organisation (Decree nr. 0013-2021 of 13 January 2021), it has a wide mandate, consisting of developing and implementing national policies on human rights. To this end, its missions are to:

- coordinate the implementation of the national human rights policy
- train and raise awareness of actors intervening in the field of human rights
- mainstream the human rights approach in the government's programmes
- develop and implement strategies, programmes, and action plans to better promote and protect human rights
- translate and vulgarise legal provisions for the protection of human rights
- support the prosecution of acts of slavery
- establish a complaints-handling mechanism for violations pertaining to human slavery, traffic of migrants and slavery
- ensure consultation and dialogue with all relevant national and international actors
- draft, submit and present national reports under regional and international treaties
- ensure the implementation and follow-up of international human rights commitments
- follow-up ratification process of international human rights treaties
- ensure the harmonisation of national law and regulations in conformity with ratified international standards
- ensure constructive engagement with international human rights mechanisms
- The Commission has also missions pertaining to humanitarian action.

The intersectoral technical committee charged with preparing reports, implementing, and following up on recommendations

Mauritania has an intersectoral technical committee charged with preparing reports, implementing, and following up on recommendations. The Committee is part of the Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and relations with Civil Society. The Committee members are representatives of the concerned ministerial department and government sectors, in addition to representatives of the National Human Rights Committee (the NHRI) and the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture. The Committee includes an observer from the OHCHR country office.

The decree establishing the Committee contains a provision allowing it to seek the assistance of experts or anyone who would contribute to its work. Mauritania is engaged in more than fourteen international and regional human rights mechanisms and nine UN mechanisms. There is also the Arab Commission on Human Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Committee of Experts on Child Rights and Welfare.

Mauritania is progressing towards adopting an information system to help the country follow treaty bodies' recommendations. It is currently working on developing a national action plan to follow up on the implementation of all the recommendations, which is expected to be adopted soon. When talking about the recommendations, Mauritania distinguishes between the recommendations issued by the members of the treaty committees and those issued by the universal periodic review mechanism. For Mauritania, Treaty committees' recommendations are smart, applicable and specific. At the same time, the UPR recommendations are complex and dominated by diplomacy and sometimes by politics, making it difficult to implement and follow them.

MOLDOVA

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Presenter: Ms Svetlana Mirca, Senior Consultant, Human Rights and Social Dialogue Department, State Chancellery

Establishment and mission of the National Human Rights Council

The Council is a consultative body at the level of the government. The decision to establish the National Human Rights Council ('the Council') was based on a government decision of 2019 (Decision No.65 of 11 February 2019) and recommendations from the National Action Plan on Human Rights of Moldova (2018-2022). Previously, the National Commission for the Elaboration of Initial and Periodic Reports, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, was responsible for coordinating the preparation of reports and for the follow-up to treaty body recommendations and decisions.

Its mission is to ensure an efficient mechanism for elaborating and evaluating human rights policy documents, efficient implementation of international human rights treaties, and monitoring compliance with the commitments undertaken. More precisely, the Council is responsible for the following functions:

- coordination of the implementation of state policy in the field of human rights
- proposals to the government aimed at ensuring respect for human rights, as well as the implementation of international recommendations
- supervision of human rights policy documents development, implementation and evaluation
- assessing the degree of respect for human rights
- interaction with international human rights mechanisms
- monitoring the competent public authorities and institutions in the fields of application of international human rights treaties
- monitoring compliance by the public authorities concerned with the recommendations of international mechanisms for the protection of human rights
- approval of the reports on the implementation of the international treaties in the field of human rights to which the Republic of Moldova is a party
- approval of the observations and answers of the public authorities to the reports prepared as a result of the evaluation visits carried out in the Republic of Moldova by the international special rapporteurs, holders of special and thematic procedures mandates.

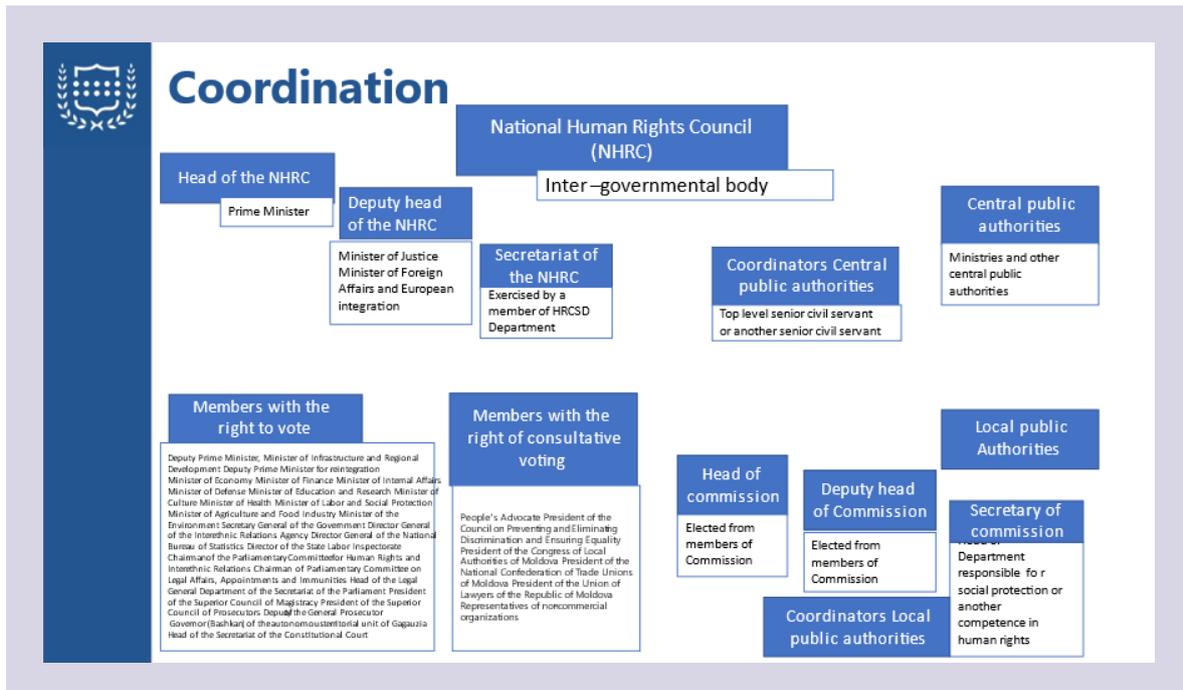
In other words, compared to many NMIRFs in other countries, the Council has a broad mandate, not limited to the reporting and follow-up to international and regional bodies. Its primary mission is to develop and coordinate the implementation of state policies on human rights, particularly coordination of state policies on human rights, particularly the National Human Rights Action Plan. It coordinates the process of implementation of UN and Council of Europe recommendations.

Organisation of the Council

The Council itself is composed of:

1. Prime Minister
2. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration
3. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development
4. Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration
5. Minister of Justice
6. Minister of Economy
7. Minister of Finance
8. Minister of Internal Affairs
9. Minister of Defence
10. Minister of Education and Research
11. Minister of Culture
12. Minister of Health
13. Minister of Labour and Social Protection
14. Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry
15. Minister of the Environment
16. Secretary General of the Government
17. Director General of the Interethnic Relations Agency
18. Director General of the National Bureau of Statistics
19. Director of the State Labour Inspectorate
20. Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Interethnic Relations
21. Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs, Appointments, and Immunities
22. Head of the Legal General Department of the Secretariat of the Parliament
23. President of the Superior Council of Magistracy
24. President of the Superior Council of Prosecutors
25. Deputy of the General Prosecutor
26. Governor (Bashkan) of the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia
27. Head of the Secretariat of the Constitutional Court
28. People's Advocate
29. President of the Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality
30. President of the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova
31. President of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova
32. President of the Union of Lawyers of the Republic of Moldova
33. Representatives of non-commercial organisations

Some have voting rights, while other members have consultative status. The Council is supported by a Permanent Secretariat and is complemented by subnational human rights structures and specialised commissions (as represented in the below box).



The Permanent Secretariat of the Council

The Permanent Secretariat sits within the Human Rights Coordination and Social Dialogue Department under the Moldova State Chancellery. The Council’s secretariat is comprised of 6 persons. In terms of attributions, the Permanent Secretariat:

- Ensures the operational activity of the Council
- Coordinates the process of elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of NHRAP
- Coordinates the activity of public authorities for the preparation of reports on the implementation of international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party
- Coordinates the process of implementation at the national level of the recommendations formulated by the international mechanisms
- Ensures the creation of specialised commissions and expert groups in certain fields and coordinates their activity
- Develops and strengthens relations with development partners and civil society representatives in the elaboration and monitoring of the implementation of state policies in the field of human rights
- Monitors the activities of the Council’s local structures in implementing national human rights policies
- Informs the public about the evolution of achieving the objectives included in the human rights policy documents
- Collaborates with international organisations, non-profit organisations and the media.

Focal points and local structures in charge of human rights

There are 27 national human rights coordinators and 21 local coordinators under the Council who are key to implementing recommendations on the ground. They are appointed as focal points. Thirty-three ‘municipal and district human rights commissions’ have been created to implement national plans and monitor the situation at the local level.

Municipal and district commissions for human rights are responsible for the following:

- The implementation of national policy documents for the protection of human rights
- The elaboration of local plans and programs regarding the application of national policy documents in the field of human rights protection at the local level
- The monitoring the respect of human rights at the local level
- The elaboration of half-yearly reports on the respect of human rights at the local level and their submission to the Permanent Secretariat.

Specialised Commissions within the National Council for Human Rights

Specialised commissions support the Council. Their aim is to coordinate and monitor at the national level the implementation of international treaties along the lines of the Council of Europe and the UN to which the Republic of Moldova is a party and their recommendations, including the recommendations of international special rapporteurs, holders of mandates of special and thematic procedures. The following table captures the different specialised commissions organised according to the entity in charge of their coordination.

State Chancellery	Ministry of Justice	Ministry of Education and Research	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
Universal Periodic Review	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	European Social Charter
Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	European Convention for the prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	The European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, (Lanzarote)	The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul)
	Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø)		United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, on women, peace, and security	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
	Resolution Res(2002)8 on the statute of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance			Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
				Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
				Convention on the Rights of the Child

In terms of objectives, these Specialised Commissions:

- Ensure discussion platforms with different government actors, human rights institutions and civil society representatives on the challenges faced by the authorities in the process of implementing international treaties and recommendations
- Plan, coordinate and monitor the activities and measures necessary for implementing the Conventions
- Facilitate the more active involvement of authorities with sectoral responsibilities in implementing international recommendations
- Respect the deadlines and follow the calendar regarding the elaboration of implementation reports of the Conventions
- Coordinate and monitor the accumulation and systematisation of the information to be presented to the Committees of the Conventions

- Identify solutions for overcoming difficulties or impediments in the process of ensuring the functionality of institutional mechanisms in various areas recommended by international treaties
- Monitor initiatives and projects of normative acts developed to implement the Conventions
- Ensure the institutional memory and the necessary materials for the elaboration of Periodic Reports from the Republic of Moldova
- Grant support to the National Human Rights Council.

Specialised Commissions are composed as follows:

- Chairperson at the Minister/Secretary of State level
- Deputy chairperson at the level of Secretary of State or titular national correspondent designated for the mechanisms of the Council of Europe
- The members of the commissions at the level of heads of subdivisions with competencies in the field appointed by the ministries and the State Chancellery
- Members nominated by non-commercial and international organisations.
- Members appointed by human rights institutions (the People's Advocate and the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality)
- The secretarial work is ensured by the secretary of the Commission, appointed from within the authority that holds the responsibility to coordinate the Commission
- The State Chancellery's representative participates in the Commission's meetings and cooperates with the secretary of the Commission to ensure the transparency of the work of the Commission.

Reporting and follow-up

One of the first actions undertaken by the National Human Rights Council was the creation of a calendar of expected reports. It sets deadlines for ministries to contribute inputs for reports. Deadlines are compulsory for ministries, and knowing these deadlines in advance has been helpful for them to set plan data collection and set aside the necessary resources.

For the preparation of a report, all actors involved send information to the Permanent Secretariat, which analyses inputs and may send requests for clarifications or further information. Consultations with civil society may be organised – as was the case during the preparation of the last UPR report. The Secretariat then compiles the report presented to the National Human Rights Council. Any line ministries and other actors, including civil society represented, can make final comments to the draft. It is subsequently presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which submits the report.

For follow-up, the Permanent Secretariat clusters recommendations and identifies measures to be implemented. These features in an online public platform launched in 2018 (monitor.drepturi.md), which is accessible by all and informs the degree of implementation of the action, as well as comments by civil society or the national human rights institutions. It is informed annually by the Permanent Secretariat.

MOROCCO

INTERMINISTERIAL DELEGATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Presenter: Mr Abdelouahed Elatir, Chargé de Mission, Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights

Establishment of the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights

The Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights (IDHR) of the Kingdom of Morocco was created on 11 April 2011, by decree, upon the recommendation of the Advisory Council on Human Rights (then Morocco's National Human Rights Institution) and in response to the recommendations of civil society organisations. The objective is to provide a coherent, modern and efficient national institutional framework in the field of human rights, and to meet the needs in terms of coordination, preparation and monitoring of the implementation of public policies in the field of human rights and the fulfilment of State's international obligations in this regard.

The choice to create a governmental structure in charge of human rights came within the framework of the political and institutional reforms that Morocco has engaged in the field of human rights since the beginning of this century, and in particular in order to:

- Address the lack of interaction with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and delays in the submission of national reports to the treaty bodies, the absence of a permanent interlocutor entrusted with tracking the implementation of Morocco's international obligations, and the absence of an institutional memory for human rights
- Address the lack regarding Morocco's interaction with reports, requests for information issued by international organisations or individual communications
- Address the challenges resulting from the multiplicity of stakeholders and the need to support public policies, especially the integration of the human rights-based approach
- Align with the directions of the National Action Plan in the field of democracy and human rights, the first version of which was adopted in 2010.
- In 2017, the IDHR was attached to the Ministry of State for Human Rights and since October 2021 the IDHR is attached to the Ministry of Justice.

Mandate of the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights

As per the decree of its creation, the IDHR is a permanent governmental mechanism for institutional coordination in the field of human rights, and a space that interacts and coordinates with all competent government sectors and other national human rights bodies and institutions by carrying out the following mandates:

- Promote ratification or accession by Morocco to international human rights instruments, review reservations, as well as monitor the effective implementation of their provisions
- Prepare periodic national reports and monitor the implementation of recommendations issued by the relevant international bodies; Monitor and respond to communications and reports issued by Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations
- Develop cooperation with national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights

- Contribute to strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations working in the field of human rights and facilitate their participation in international forums related to human rights
- Provide an opinion to governmental departments on the harmonisation of national laws with international human rights standards, and support government action in this area
- Coordinate government action in promoting human rights culture, education and training
- Organising and participating in activities, seminars, conferences and committees specialised in human rights nationally and internationally.

The IDHR works to carry out its mandates by adopting an approach based on three pillars: coordination, involvement and consultation with the various actors concerned with human rights, as follows:

- For governmental departments: by ensuring institutional coordination between governmental departments and institutions in the field of human rights. In addition to providing opinions, supporting the departments when needed, and accompanying the integration of human rights in public policies.
- For institutions and bodies including constitutional bodies: by strengthening cooperation and strengthening the involvement of these institutions in IDHR projects and programs according to their mandates and fields of action.
- For civil society: through the development of partnerships with civil society, especially in the field of strengthening capacities, interaction with the international human rights system and supporting projects related to the promotion of human rights.
- For universities: by developing legal knowledge and expertise.
- As for the media: through programs to spread the culture of human rights.

NIGER

NATIONAL MECHANISM FOR REPORTING AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TREATY BODIES AND THE UPR

Presenter: Ms Guisso Lailata Alfari, Director for International Norms, Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Protection; Member of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up of the Recommendations from Treaty Bodies and the UPR

Niger is a party to several international and regional legal instruments for of protecting and promoting human rights. This has contributed to significantly improving its legal framework as well as to promoting and disseminating state reporting by enlightening the various stakeholders on the significance of the process and its implications.

Prior to the establishment of a national mechanism in 2010, reports to treaty bodies were prepared by consultants on behalf of the relevant sectoral ministries. Niger was experiencing acute delays in submitting its initial and periodic reports, both at the international and African levels.

Creation and responsibilities of the first NMIRF (Interministerial Committee)

In 2010, Niger set up an Interministerial Committee attached to the Directorate General for Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice. The Director-General for Human Rights was its chairperson. The Committee was tasked to make up for the delays in Niger's drafting and submission of reports to national and international treaty bodies. Decree No. 2010-908/PRN/MJ of 28 December 2018 on the organisation of the Ministry of Justice attached the interministerial committee directly to the Cabinet of the Minister of Justice.

The responsibilities of the Interministerial Committee included:

- The preparation and drafting of the UPR report
- The preparation and drafting of initial and periodic reports to regional and international treaty bodies
- The tracking of the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the reviews of the various initial and periodic reports
- The development of national action plans for the implementation of recommendations on human rights issues
- Implementation of certain recommendations (training of key actors on certain legal instruments)
- Management of the funds made available to it.

Missions of the Permanent Secretary

A Permanent Secretary heads the activities of the Committee. It has the following missions:

- The preparation, convening and chairing of Committee meetings
- Coordination of the Committee's activities as regards the preparation, drafting, coordination and presentation of reports to regional and international human rights mechanisms
- The collection of information and other statistical data relating to human rights about the concerned ministries, specialised public bodies, the National Human Rights Institution and civil society
- The constitution of a documentary fund relating to human rights
- The update of the data contained in the various reports submitted
- The monitoring of relations and commitments made vis-à-vis the Committee's partners
- The drafting of the minutes and their transmission to the Minister in charge of Human Rights.

Composition and functioning of the Committee

The composition of the Committee is as follows:

- Chairman: The Permanent Secretary
- Vice President: A representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Rapporteur: A representative of the Ministry of Justice
- Members:
 - A representative of the Prime Minister's Office
 - A representative of the General Secretariat of the Government
 - Three representatives of the Ministry of Justice
 - Two representatives of the Ministry in charge of the Promotion of Women and Child Protection

- Two representatives of the Ministry in charge of Education
- A representative of the Ministry in charge of Health
- A representative of the Ministry in charge of Labour
- A representative of the Ministry in charge of Agriculture
- A representative of the National Institute of Statistics
- A representative of the Ministry of the Interior.

The Committee may call upon any person whose competence it considers useful for accomplishing its mission.

National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up to Treaty Body and UPR Recommendations

By Decree No. 2022-181/PRN/MJ of 24 February 2022, the Interministerial Committee became the 'National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up to the Recommendations of Treaty and UPR Bodies' (NMRF) intending to integrate other key national institutions involved in the protection and promotion of human rights in Niger. The President of the NMRF was appointed by Decree No. 2022-422/PRN/MJ of 12 May 2022. He is assisted by a Permanent Secretary who has not yet been appointed. The NMRF has the same responsibilities as the Interministerial Committee.

Drafting of reports to treaty bodies and the UPR

The process of drafting reports to treaty bodies and the UPR involves the following steps:

- Orientation and scoping workshop: The objective of this workshop is to train and familiarise the members of the NMRF with the content of the international instrument, the guidelines and the recommendations of the treaty body in question. At the meeting, tasks will be assigned to distinct members of the NMRF, and a deadline for inputs will be set
- Compilation workshop: This workshop usually lasts three days and aims to compile all the answers provided by the members of the NMRF and prepare the first draft of the report. The report will be corrected and supplemented as necessary by the Permanent Secretariat of the NMRF. It should be noted that the Chair is assisted by United Nations Volunteers made available to the mechanism by UNDP
- Validation workshop: The validation workshop brings together all members of ministries, institutions (National Assembly, National Human Rights Commission), civil society, and technical and financial partners
- Adoption by the Council of Ministers: The report is submitted to the Government's General Secretariat for discussion in the Cabinet Council before its adoption by the Council of Ministers.

Partnerships and prospective developments of the NMRF

The National Mechanism has several main partners, including UNDP, OHCHR, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the German cooperation agency, and the CSO Save the Children.

The NMRF envisages the following developments: establishing its own headquarters for the NMRF, providing it with substantial material, human, and financial resources, and developing partnerships with other sister institutions to share experience.

UZBEKISTAN

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Presenter: Ms Dilnoza Muratova, Deputy Director, National Centre for Human Rights

Establishment and general overview

The National Human Rights Centre was established in October 2016 in view of implementing the recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms and in order to coordinate the cooperation of state bodies in the implementation of international human rights obligations, as well as broad interaction with international and regional human rights mechanisms, by UN General Assembly Resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993. In December 2018, Uzbekistan created the National Reporting and Follow-up Mechanism to create an effective system for fulfilling the Republic of Uzbekistan's international human rights obligations by strengthening the status of the National Centre for Human Rights.

The National Centre for Human Rights is a state agency that ensures the interaction of state bodies and other organisations to fulfil the international obligations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the preparation of national reports in the field of human rights, and the expansion of cooperation with international organisations. The Centre exercises its powers independently of all state bodies, and their officials. The Centre is financed by the state budget of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Ministries, departments, and other State bodies involved in the implementation of Uzbekistan's international human rights obligations determine the structures and officials responsible for constant interaction with the Centre by providing relevant information and statistical data in the field of human rights.

The Centre annually submits to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Chambers of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan information on the state of compliance with the international obligations of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of human rights.

Main tasks of the National Human Rights Centre

The main tasks of the Centre are the following:

1. Assistance to the effective implementation of the state policy in the field of human rights, the activities of state bodies to fulfil the international obligations of the Republic of Uzbekistan in this area
2. Study and analysis of the state of observance of human rights and freedoms, monitoring the implementation of recommendations of international and regional structures for the protection of human rights
3. Preparation and submission of national and periodical reports on the observance and protection of human rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan, development of national action plans ('road maps') for the implementation of recommendations of international and regional structures for the protection of human rights
4. Preparation of proposals for the improvement of normative legal acts, ensuring the implementation into national legislation and law enforcement practice of international treaties of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of human rights

5. Provision of advisory functions and practical assistance to state bodies, civil society institutions and other organisations on the protection and implementation of human rights
6. Promotion of legal awareness of the population in the field of human rights; and conducting scientific research on the observance of human rights
7. Implementation of cooperation with international and regional organisations and structures, national institutions of foreign countries in the field of human rights
8. Cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as national human rights institutions in the field of human rights.

Ratification of human rights treaties and reporting

Uzbekistan's commitment to human rights is manifest in the number of international human rights instruments to which it has subscribed. Uzbekistan is a State Party to 80 international human rights-related treaties, including seven of the nine core international human rights instruments and four optional protocols. Last year we ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Now we intend to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

Uzbekistan has a good record of meeting reporting obligations under international human rights treaties. The Centre has submitted 41 timely periodic reports on the implementation of the main international human rights treaties and on the follow-up to the recommendations of the treaty bodies' reports.

Engagement with international human rights bodies

The National Centre maintains an active and constructive dialogue with the UN Charter and treaty bodies, specialised agencies and special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council. Uzbekistan strongly supports the UPR process due to its universal and transparent nature, which allows each State to inform the international community of measures taken to improve the situation in the field of observance and protection of human rights and the progress achieved in this area. Uzbekistan successfully conducted its three UPR reviews in 2008, 2013, and 2018. The Government has prepared national action plans to implement all recommendations of the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies and other human rights instruments.

We have made significant progress in our interaction with the OHCHR and the special procedures. Over the past short period, visits of three Special Rapporteurs were carried out. Uzbekistan invites the High Commissioner and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to pay a visit.

The election of Uzbekistan to the Human Rights Council for 2021-2023 is a clear confirmation and evidence of our country's firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and strict compliance with its international obligations in this field. Finally, based on the "Leaving no one behind" principle, Uzbekistan has developed national indicators for implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Human rights strategies and education

Uzbekistan remains fully committed to human rights promotion and protection and, in June 2020, adopted a National Human Rights Strategy. It provides for implementing the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies.

Human rights education is important in promoting respect for human rights in every citizen. Uzbekistan actively participates in the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education. A National Action Plan for implementing the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training is being implemented. On the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, we held the Global Forum on 'Education on Human Rights' in Samarkand on 5-6 December 2022.

This year, the 'House of Human Rights' was established at the National Centre for Human Rights. Its goal is to become a resource centre for human rights information and resources. It is planned to collect advanced human rights literature. The National Centre has been continuously conducting master classes, seminars, training, courses on Human Rights Education, and online lessons to educate public servants, legal professionals, representatives of civil society institutions as well as mass media members.

Last, the National Centre has launched human rights research on several pressing human rights issues. The Scientific Council for Human Rights Protection has been established. We believe it is necessary to establish collaboration in the field of human rights research.



WORKSHOPS

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES ON THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF NMIRFS

GROUP 1: COORDINATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION WITH OTHER MINISTRIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

Moderation: Ms Virgínia Brás Gomes, former Chairperson of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, former ministerial representative at the Portuguese NMIRF

Expert framing

In her framing presentation, Ms Virginia Brás Gomes drew on the earlier presentations of NMIRFs, as well as on her experience as a former Member and Chairperson of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and as the former ministerial representative at the Portuguese NMIRF, to make two key proposals.

Proposal 1: It is time to stop presenting NMIRF as performing only reporting and follow-up. NMIRFs should seek to implement treaty obligations.

NMIRFs that have been working for years on the ground understand that these mechanisms can go far beyond reporting and follow-up on recommendations. This has also been recognised in the regional consultations and the latest HRC resolutions, which added 'implementation' to the NMIRF acronym.

NMIRFs can have substantial input on human rights implementation. It is therefore important to recall that reporting and follow-up are a means to a broader aim: States establish national mechanisms to ensure comprehensive, more efficient and sustainable approaches to reporting, engagement and follow-up to comply with human rights obligations and the increasing requirements for implementing treaty obligations. The objective is to impact human rights on the ground.

Proposal 2: The coordination capacity of NMIRF is key to human rights implementation.

NMIRFs have four key capacities, according to the OHCHR 2016 Practical Guide. These are engagement, coordination, consultation, and information management capacities. The coordination capacity of NMIRFs may be exercised in different ways. First, NMIRFs gather, organise, coordinate, and disseminate information and data from government entities and other State actors, such as the national office for statistics, parliament and the judiciary, reporting and follow-up.

Second, NMIRFs coordinate national human rights action plans. There are two broad models for NHRAPs: a public policy model based on national consultations and inputs from line ministries on what they could do to enhance human rights implementation in their respective field of competencies; or a recommendations implementation model, more focused on following up on recommendations and decisions of treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, the UPR and other regional human rights bodies. In both cases, it could be called a National Human Rights Action Plan.

Third, NMIRFs should carry out structural cross-cutting projects that bring together the expertise of various public institutions to strengthen human rights implementation. Reporting and follow-up are important, but since the NMIRF represents an opportunity to have all line ministries sitting in the same room and meeting in a regular and structured manner, there is a potential to use this expertise and representation to carry out projects that give some 'meat' to the mechanism. It helps implementation, but also injects dynamism into the work of the NMIRF: if you just meet, report, and follow up, then it becomes repetitive, and that can lead to a loss of vitality. For instance, the NMIRF of Portugal works on indicators for economic, social and cultural rights tailored to our national context. It has developed a list of indicators on the right to education, the right to health, liberty and security of persons and gender-based violence.

There are challenges to NMIRFs work which need to be addressed. These include:

- Retaining high-level participation of line ministries. Ministers and State Secretaries are busy and tend to be represented by their advisors – who are subjected to high turnover when political leadership changes. The Portuguese NMIRF mitigated that challenge by having a two-tier system of representation of line ministries – two representatives, one at the political/senior management level and the other at the technical level. The latter meet periodically
- Working with limited human and material resources
- Dealing with the repetitiveness of routine tasks: there is a need to maintain a dynamic and visible intervention, which can be done by developing targeted or cross-cutting projects
- Contributing to guarantee rights on the ground. This is the overarching challenge.

The experience of the Interministerial Delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco

Coordination work is key, as human rights are of a transversal nature that cuts across all fields of government and needs engagement and expertise from all sectors of society. The IDHR engages in what it calls an 'institutional coordination mechanism': this embraces specialised actors on human rights, as well as various actors involved in the field of human rights, including sectors that have basic functions and exercise key roles, by mandate or practice, for instance, law enforcement bodies. The mechanism is based on identifying focal points in all relevant structures, mainly governmental departments, institutions, and Parliament. The mechanism also engages and consults with independent institutions involved in human rights and civil society, considered essential actors.

Security and law enforcement agencies are one of those actors, which can be taken as an interesting example. In the Moroccan experience, security institutions are always associated with the IDHR in cases related to implementing the law. Their participation is relevant in terms of regularity, respecting deadlines, and providing accurate data, as well as in terms of follow-up. Such close involvement is also instrumental in supporting a fundamental shift concerning the ownership of human rights by security institutions. This is the greatest expression of the state's willingness to prioritise human rights.

Its institutional coordination mechanism enables the IDHR to provide a stable and sustainable approach to tracking public policies and keeping pace with legislative actions. This coordination work takes many forms. It entails daily meetings in which

many actors participate. It also includes correspondence and direct communications, and so on. There are also structured processes that entail coordination:

- The first process with embedded coordination is the preparation of national reports. This is conducted in association with all the previously mentioned parties. The IDHR recently added a new type of actors, the territorial actors and local authorities, that play a crucial role in implementing human rights. We were keen to incorporate this new approach for the preparation of Morocco's 2023 Universal Periodic Review. The IDHR was able to present the UPR report to twelve regions across the national territory. Inclusive reporting is essential for the IDHR: national reports cannot be submitted to the treaty bodies or the Human Rights Council unless presented to the relevant actors. In addition, the IDHR values the direct work and role of civil society in international mechanisms and recognises the importance of civil society parallel reports. The creation of the IDHR allowed the government to conduct special trainings for civil society organisations covering various parts of the Kingdom to make them own these mechanisms and engage in this international dynamism.
- The second organised process relates to the follow-up to the recommendations. The IDHR has a recommendations implementation tracking plan and an electronic platform available to all parties concerned with the recommendations. It helps the IDHR track the implementation of the recommendations. All recommendations the United Nations addressed to Morocco are on this platform.
- Similar engagement of all actors applies to interactions with international bodies other than reports and dialogues. The IDHR is notably in charge of visits of special procedures. The creation of an NMIRF helped in that regard: between 2000 and 2010, three visits were organised, but after establishing the IDHR in 2011, the country received approximately ten. These visits play a key role in implementation purposes. They offer an opportunity to interact with procedures on how to implement received recommendations. For example, with the Special Rapporteur on the issue of torture, even after he issued his report, there were interactive dialogues to follow up. Another responsibility of the IDHR, which is of great importance, is the issue of individual communications. The Moroccan approach has shifted after the creation of the IDHR so that all actors have become involved in providing information, improving responses and follow-up on subsequent actions related to opinions and decisions issued, whether by special procedures or treaty bodies.
- Last, the IDHR also coordinates the implementation of the National Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy (2018-2021), which entails actions by all governmental actors. In addition to the Plan itself, the IDHR has developed an operational working plan. It identifies actors in charge of realising each activity, timelines for implementation and indicators to measure realisation. The IDHR has started to conclude contracts with regional authorities to ensure that they also contribute, within their competencies, to realising the national action plan.

Key elements are necessary to ensure efficient institutional coordination, including:

- Mutual trust of all the parties is key, and the availability of common space to meet sustainably and permanently is very important to cultivate it. It generates a shared vision and the creation of unity and harmony. Decision-making in our activities is based on consensus. There is always constant and continuous work and dialogue between these parties to achieve this consensus.
- NMIRFs can foster dynamism and use efficient tools. Before the creation of the IDHR, recommendations remained scattered. Also, the relevant sectors did not

have an organised mechanism or a matrix that would enable them to know what recommendations interested them to engage in their follow-up. The creation of the Delegation has created more visibility and encouraged all actors to engage in the dynamism of human rights. In that regard, the platform to follow recommendations is very helpful too.

- Political will is a key factor. When the political will is present, there is more attention to human rights issues and enhanced synergies amongst actors. Following Morocco's 2000s transitional justice process and the inclusive work of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, recommendations were issued in the field of human rights. His Majesty the King was clear on the matter of taking the recommendations seriously and making progress on human rights. One recommendation led to preparing a national action plan in the field of human rights and democracy that started in 2007. The 2011 Constitution also enshrined a strategic political orientation for human rights as a sovereign matter of the state. This gives a general sense of commitment. Political support is important because it can help activate all relevant sectoral actors and ensure their cooperation and synergies on concrete initiatives. For instance, in 2013, His Majesty the King issued directives to prepare a national policy on immigration and asylum. The IDHR was tasked to oversee its preparation, involving all the sectors. Meetings were daily, all day long, and included all actors. Three bills were prepared. The cooperative effort to draft them and the political prioritisation led to better implementation by relevant ministerial departments.
- Last, research and documentation constitute the hallmark of diligent and serious work and are necessary to cultivate trust and consensus. Whether for reporting purposes or implementation activities, the IDHR resorts to the expertise of Moroccan experts to develop and ultimately internalise skills and capacities. Researchers can also correct misconceptions and provide a clearer picture of reality. The IDHR cultivates relationships with universities and scholars to enable a better understanding of reality and the identification of solutions. In 2022, the IDHR organised a symposium on human rights with all key universities and researchers, which proved essential. Such cooperation helps diffuse fears and complexities. The IDHR is now engaged in a partnership with Moroccan universities to strengthen the needed national expertise on human rights.

The experience of the National Human Rights Council of the Republic of Moldova

The National Human Rights Council of Moldova, headed by the Prime Minister and associating all actors, is supported by a Permanent Secretariat sitting in the Moldova State Chancellery. Its mission is to ensure an efficient mechanism for the elaboration and evaluation of human rights policies, the efficient implementation of the international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party, and the monitoring of compliance with the commitments undertaken. In other words, the Council has a broad mandate, not limited to reporting and follow-up to international and regional bodies. Its primary mission is to develop and coordinate the implementation of state policies on human rights, particularly the National Human Rights Action Plan.

Before 2018, several secretariats covered interministerial committees and councils on child rights protection, combatting human trafficking and labour rights. All those

secretariats were gathered in one subdivision when the State Chancellery was re-designed in 2018. Some consultative bodies are still linked to specific line ministries and not to the State Chancellery, such as the councils on the rights of persons with disabilities and on gender equality. Although supported by line ministries, those councils also report to the National Human Rights Council, which unites everybody and ensures a comprehensive articulation of all themes and actors.

From experience, when creating an NMIRF, it is important to draw on the experience already there thematically. It is also crucial to determine with precision the terms of reference for each structure if they are separate from one structure. This can be challenging. Indeed, some regional regulations (e.g., from the European Union or the Council of Europe) request very specific structures, which may have to stand alone with a specific legal basis. One needs to define competencies clearly and avoid overlaps.

Similarly, if a treaty obliges a State Party to establish a focal point for reporting and/or implementation in a certain ministry, we do set it up in the relevant ministry – it is easier and more efficient – but we also articulate, if possible with the National Human Rights Council. For instance, under the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, we have a committee for implementing that Convention, set up as a specialised commission of the National Human Rights Council, led by the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior heads the commission per the law that ratified the Convention, whereas the second person in the commission is the focal point for the Convention itself. So, in case there are requests from Lanzarote Convention's Secretariat, the requests go to the focal point, the specialised commission, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to respect diplomatic channels.

The fact that the State Chancellery is leading human rights coordination work is important. The State Chancellery is the entity that supports government work and is an umbrella for all ministries. Previously, the Ministry of Justice coordinated the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan. However, because all ministries are at the same level, there were challenges to cooperation and collaboration between them. That is why a decision was made to put coordination efforts at a higher level than a particular ministry. It is essential that a high-level leader can gather ministers and instruct the implementation of certain activities when needed, as well as monitor the timely realisation of the activities.

Having a higher authority as an institutional anchorage for the NMIRF means no challenges. Political changes may slow down the work, and in practice, it has yet to prove possible to organise the bi-annual meetings of the Council, as should be the rule. It has the authority to convene the Council on an ad hoc basis to get a draft report approved, for instance. That works in practice.

In addition to preparing international reports, the Secretariat of the National Human Rights Council prepares an annual report on the implementation of National Human Rights Action Plans. According to the law, that report must be submitted every year before 1 April. It includes 16 areas divided into sections. It measures progress made towards realising the actions provided for in the action plan. The Secretariat prepares a draft based on all parties' information, which can then review the draft report before

submission. Civil society may also consult the draft and develop opinions and inputs at that moment. Civil society may have new data or results that need to be included. This is a good practice, worth replicating in other countries.

When we get recommendations from treaty bodies, the Secretariat prepares a list of 'implementation tools'—a plan that sets the actions necessary to implement the recommendations in motion. Depending on the treaty, reporting on implementation may happen every six months or every year. It is put on paper, and we then wait until the next National Human Rights Council meeting to approve those reports. The Secretariat initially considered having one integrated plan to implement recommendations. But reviews and recommendations follow their own timelines and are therefore issued at different times. Realistically and with experience, we have come up with this efficient practice: On one hand, there is one overarching national human rights action plan, valid for four years, approved by parliament that sets obligations for various actors (executive, legislative, judiciary, local authorities...), with an annual reporting obligation; in parallel, the sets of 'implementation tools' or instruments to follow-up on recommendations are more flexible and more short-term. Many recommendations are actions that can be ticked as done or not – they may be more concrete than the ambitious objectives of the national action plan. As such, more short-term action plans may work better for their implementation. Of course, when we prepare the new national action plan, we also look at the received recommendations. For instance, we are currently evaluating Moldova's third National Human Rights Action Plan (2018-2022) and deciding on the next human rights policy framework. It is obvious that the next policy will also reflect upon the UPR recommendations that the country has just received.

It is still possible, and in fact very beneficial, to consult with external stakeholders – including the NHRI and CSOs – to identify measures to follow up on recommendations. We have realised that the broader the consultation (not in time, but in the number of CSOs involved), the more efficient the implementation measures. In its first three years, the National Human Rights Council has compiled an evolving list of CSOs and all actors interested in certain topics. This is a simple but efficient tool, and we can involve them better. The results are very visible. We get much better and faster feedback from civil society: they usually have extra information, can cover new angles, and suggest ideas. This helps implementation, and reversely, CSOs can also better understand the efforts we make.

Coordination of implementation is based on the administrative authority and encouragement but not on sanctions. The Secretariat is not there to punish non-compliant line ministries. It would be possible to make notes to the political leadership if certain things did not work well to make other actors accountable. However, this has yet to be necessary in practice as all actors understand the terms of our international obligations and commitments.

Discussion

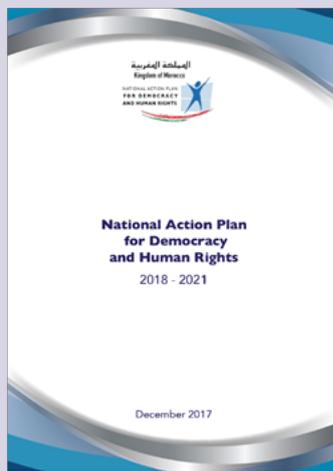
Participants returned to the question of motivation and activation of NMIRFs members from line ministries. In the early years of NMIRFs, the focus is on ensuring that line ministries are more aware of international obligations. Prior frictions that can exist due to ad hoc structures, lack of predictability in reports due, lack of access to data, or

confusion regarding international reporting templates, tend to be resolved. In due time, reporting becomes smoother, the challenges and confusions surrounding the first reports are overcome, and templates are accepted. Reporting has become a standard procedure and less time-consuming. It also becomes simpler with the clustering of recommendations. Instrumentally, it becomes easier to follow up too.

But the downside is that it also becomes repetitive. It would be best to have a new energy, a unifying project that brings everyone on board. Ideally, what is needed is a project geared towards impact and implementation, as NMIRF members understand that rights are not only about reports and international engagement: they are about concrete achievements for the people. If NMIRFs can find common projects carried out between ministries that engage with each other, it better serves implementation and boosts the dynamism of focal points and the NMIRF. Of course, finding time for new projects is difficult, especially when NMIRFs face many deadlines and focal points may have many responsibilities. Some participants suggested ensuring a dedicated budget for coordination activities and pilot projects.

Moreover, NMIRFs should not only coordinate the implementation of dedicated human rights plans and activities by line ministries: they also have a crucial role in explaining how human rights must be mainstreamed into all sectoral policies. Human rights are not a distinct and additional layer of activities: they are part of any sound public policy – and all public policies must contribute to fulfilling human rights.

The NHRAPs of Morocco and Moldova can be found in English (click on images):



All NHRAPs adopted since the 1993 Vienna Declaration are part of the inventory compiled by Sébastien Lorion and David Johnson, accessible at: <https://www.humanrights.dk/research-project/national-human-rights-action-plans-inventory>.

GROUP 2: CONSULTATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ACTORS IN THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM (CIVIL SOCIETY, NHRIS, PARLIAMENT, ETC.)

Moderation: Mr Miloon Kothari, President of UPR-Info, member of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel, and former UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing

Expert framing

In his framing presentation, Mr Miloon Kothari drew on the earlier presentations of NMIRFs, as well as on [his 2021 study reviewing lessons learned and good practices on NMIRFs' engagement with the Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) and the 2022 UPR-Info report: '[Beyond Reporting: Transformative Changes on the Ground](#)'. He addressed the need for consultations in reporting and follow-up processes and the importance of broad engagement around other implementation responsibilities of NMIRFs at the national level, such as the implementation of national human rights action plans.

Consultations in reporting and follow-up processes

The UPR process is an interesting entry point to discuss the consultation capacity of NMIRFs. The UPR has galvanised and supported the establishment of NMIRFs, and the need to involve all national actors beyond line ministries. In this workshop, the consultation capacity of NMIRFs will be addressed in connection to key stakeholders that should play a role in UPR processes, including a wide range of actors beyond the government: CSOs and human rights defenders, NHRIs, parliamentarians, academia, the media, UN agencies, faith-based organisations, indigenous and minority groups, judges and lawyers, trade unions, etc. While some of these stakeholders may have parallel avenues to contribute to the UPR processes, for the NMIRFs, to be truly successful, consultations with these groups are essential if participation and follow-up to the UPR are to be a genuine national effort.

NMIRFs can consult national actors at different steps of the reporting and follow-up process. First, states under review are 'encouraged to undertake a broad consultation process at the national level with all relevant stakeholders to gather this information' ([UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/5/1](#)). Consultations provide an objective and accurate picture of the situation on the ground and reflect the experiences and concerns of various rights-holders. They increase the legitimacy and credibility of the report: reports that emerge from these consultations can ensure comprehensive coverage of human rights issues in the concerned countries. Such an inclusive process can also be used to assess the status of the implementation of UPR recommendations.

NMIRFs-led consultations of all actors during the drafting process can be organised through public hearings, written consultation processes based on the online publication of a draft report, and invitations to NMIRFs meetings, including 'validation meetings'. National consultations should take place at least one year before the review in different cities and regions of the country (as was done, e.g., in Thailand by the National Human Rights Committee or by the IDHR in Morocco) and include a broad range of civil society including NHRIs, CSOs, academics, trade unions, etc.

This work may be completed with the NMIRF conducting capacity-building activities for national actors, as was done, e.g., by the interministerial committee of Botswana. Countries may encourage the establishment of civil society coalitions for engagement with reporting processes. For instance, the UPR Committee of the Danish Human Rights Council consists of 20 CSOs, that prepare a joint report in consultation with the Danish Institute of Human Rights (the NHRI of Denmark). This helps the NMIRF in its consultation processes too. In addition, the UPR can also be an opportunity for increased attention to international human rights commitments in the media. In general, NMIRFs can engage in human rights education.

CSOs and NHRIs, as well as other national stakeholders, shall also be involved in the follow-up and tracking of the implementation of the recommendations. In the specific case of the UPR, this can happen around the mid-term reports prepared by states to track follow-up to recommendations. In Denmark, the NMIRF received contributions from the NHRI and the Danish NGO UPR Committee for the mid-term report. In Montenegro, consultations on the mid-term report were held bi-annually and included the office of the protector of human rights and freedoms (Ombudsman) and the UN system. It is furthermore important that NMIRFs put in place matrices and tolls to track the implementation of recommendations, which ideally entail a publicly accessible platform that allows for the general public to be informed about recommendations, implementation steps identified, and progress made. Indicators to track progress can also be developed collaboratively.

The fact that NMIRFs should consult largely for reporting and follow-up purposes does not exclude the fact that CSOs and NHRIs have additional avenues to participate in UPR/treaty bodies reviews in their own rights. Specific procedures exist for CSOs and NHRIs to submit their own alternative reports or mid-term reports. The submission of CSOs and NHRI reports, either individually or collectively, has brought critical, independent perspectives into the mid-term reporting process. In Singapore, a joint report from CSOs, the media and the national coalition of human rights defenders was presented for the 2nd cycle of the UPR. The stakeholders' coalition in Kenya developed a mid-term report during which it received technical support from the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights, OHCHR and UPR-Info Africa. The Public Defender's Office in Georgia submitted a mid-term report critically assessing the implementation status of 2nd cycle UPR recommendations. In no cases do these independent voices substitute for the need for NMIRFs to consult with NHRIs and CSOs in the reporting and follow-up phases.

Last, the special role of parliaments should be emphasised. 60 to 70% of UPR recommendations require parliamentary approval for implementation as they have either budgetary or legislative dimensions. It is thus welcomed that national parliaments are becoming more involved in the UPR process, which NMIRFs can facilitate. Parliamentarians may also collaborate with NHRIs and CSOs. For instance, in Togo, Members of Parliament participated in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on the occasion of the country's second UPR review. At the dialogue, organised by UPR-Info, parliamentarians resolved to establish a Network of Parliamentarians for the UPR. Members of Parliaments also contributed to the CSOs coalition's mid-term report. In Mongolia, the parliament played an active role in the monitoring and implementation stages. The Mongolian human rights NGO forum also held meetings with the head of the human rights subcommittee of Mongolia's parliament and the heads of political parties.

Consultations in national policies and implementation frameworks – the case of National Human Rights Action Plans (NHRAPs)

More and more countries are adopting NHRAPs. NHRAPs focus on the importance of building national capacity to ensure the implementation of international human rights commitments. They also stress a comprehensive approach, thematically and geographically, in gathering the content of action plans. In many countries, NHRAPs may fall under the responsibility of the NMIRFs, as many NMIRFs have wider responsibilities in animating national policies on human rights beyond reporting and follow-up to international bodies.

It is crucial that CSOs and NHRIs are consulted in developing, implementing and evaluating NHRAPs, whether NHRAPs are based on national political processes or international recommendations. For instance, in Thailand, all parties concerned were encouraged to participate in creating the NHRAP: the public collectively prepared an NHRAP first at the local level, followed by the national plan. In the Netherlands, consultations were held with the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, the Ombudsman, the Children’s Ombudsman, Amnesty International-Netherlands and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research.

Reflecting on developments and practice of NMIRFs in consultations, Mr Kothari suggested revisiting NMIRFs’ effectiveness. He proposed that criteria for successful NMIRFs could include:

- Continuous involvement at all stages of CSOs
- Continuous involvement at all stages of NHRIs
- Continuous involvement of Parliaments/Parliamentary Committees
- Full Integration of the SDGs
- Increased involvement of UN agencies at the national and international levels
- Increased attention to international human rights commitments in the media
- Increased human rights education
- Increased integration of regional human rights issues (within the countries)
- Increased involvement of bilateral actors (embassies, donor agencies)
- Increased engagement with academic bodies.

The experience of the Interministerial Delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco

As civil society organisations are considered key actors in Morocco, the Interministerial delegation for human rights (IDHR) has adopted various approaches to interact, cooperate, and partner with these organisations. These approaches include an open channel of dialogue and communication with CSOs to discuss the human rights situation and identify the efforts made in this field. The IDHR also adopts a participatory approach by involving CSOs in formulating public policies on human rights. For example, CSOs are included in preparing and updating the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights and the mechanism in charge of monitoring its implementation.

Moreover, the IDHR aims to strengthen the capacities of CSOs in human rights through a special training program. This program is developed to enhance the interaction of CSOs with the United Nations’ human rights system. It covers the various regions of the country based on a needs assessment carried out with the involvement of CSOs.

The IDHR responds to civil society organisations' requests, complaints, and grievances. The IDHR examines these complaints and grievances, refers them to the concerned authorities and follows up on the feedback, particularly those containing allegations of violations or abuse.

The IDHR also recognises the importance of involving the National Human Rights Institution and the Parliament in preparing national reports addressed to the UN Human Rights Council within the framework of the UPR mechanism and to the treaty bodies. This approach ensures that all stakeholders are involved in promoting and protecting human rights in Morocco.

The IDHR recognises civil society organisations' crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights. By involving them in policy-making, providing them with training programs, and addressing their complaints and grievances, the IDHR strengthens their capacities and promotes a collaborative approach to human rights protection. The IDHR recognises the importance of involving all stakeholders, including the National Human Rights Institution and the Parliament, in promoting and protecting human rights in Morocco.

The experience of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up of Niger

The NMIRF of Niger has always had relations with the NHRI (the National Human Rights Commission). Once a draft report was available, the previous NMIRF (Interministerial Committee) systematically invited the NHRI to the validation meetings. The NHRI could make comments and observations. With the new Mechanism established in 2022, new opportunities could arise. The NHRI could become a permanent member of this Mechanism and be associated with all stages of the reporting and follow-up process.

The members of the NMIRF also support building CSOs' capacities in preparing an understanding of international law and alternative reports. The NMIRF values alternative reports but notes that civil society capacities are sometimes insufficiently developed. While NMIRFs members have access to multiple training opportunities organised, e.g. by the UNDP and others, it is not the case for civil society organisations. NMIRF members are striving to accompany CSOs in raising their capacities and be at the same level as officials so they can present qualitative alternative reports.

Regarding relations with the Parliament, the NMIRF organises specific days with the parliament (*journées parlementaires*) to help members of parliament understand the internal human rights treaties and mechanisms. For instance, special days have been organised for each UPR review. There is a need to repeat those events since parliamentarians change regularly. This is important that members understand their role vis-à-vis international law and its implementation: for instance, the NMIRF and the Ministry for Women Protection have used these events to accompany their advocacy for a withdrawal of reservations entered by Niger upon its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. There are other ways to sensitise the Parliament: for instance, through participation in official delegations sent by the state to conduct interactive dialogues with treaty bodies or at the UPR. For instance, for the 2018 consideration of Niger's report under the International Covenant

on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the second key state representative (after the Minister of Labour and Social Protection who was the head of the delegation) was the first Vice-President of the National Assembly of Niger. The National Assembly will become a permanent member of the NMIRF and be associated with all stages of the reporting and follow-up process.

There is a need to consider the whole spectrum of actors to be engaged with to implement recommendations. For instance, the NMIRF of Niger engages with the following:

- All the actors that form part of the criminal justice system: judges, prosecutors, lawyers and bar association are all the subject of recurrent recommendations made by treaty bodies and need to be sensitised to the standards and provisions that emanate from ratified treaties
- Trade unions have an important role to play when it comes to labour rights. There is a need for dialogue and awareness-raising regarding trade unions' role, even regarding informal labour. Indeed, many migrants work in the informal economy and do not have access to social protection. The NMIRF conducted a study to understand how informal sector workers are taken into account by trade unions. This helped dialogue with unions and identify the need to create alternative avenues for informal sector workers to direct their grievances. This point is key, e.g., for the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- The labour inspectorate is a key factor in implementing labour-related rights. He has been the target of training on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, organised by the NMIRF. The NMIRF conducted a study to understand their role in implementing international law.

Last, it is important to note the importance of international cooperation for the work of the NMIRF. The latter receives support from the UN agencies, such as the UNDP and the UN Children's Fund, and has bilateral cooperation with, e.g. the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The German cooperation agency (GIZ) has been helpful, especially in focusing on implementing recommendations. For instance, following the review of Niger by the Committee on the rights of migrant workers, the GIZ supported Niger in developing its first national policy on migration, adopted in September 2020. This includes follow-up to recommendations by the treaty body. Germany has accompanied Niger in implementing this policy, especially in disseminating relevant provisions to all stakeholders, including civil servants, labour inspectorates and judicial actors. These trainings have extended to security and defence forces and those working at the borders.

Regarding trainings of civil servants, it is key to also enter partnerships with the official schools in charge of training them, for instance, the National Police Academy, the National Gendarmerie Academy, the National Guard School, the National Judicial Training School, or the National Administration School. None of those, for instance, had modules dedicated to the rights of migrant workers. With Germany's support, the NMIRF developed modules to serve and train officials structurally. This approach ensures that all actors are trained as part of their primary training. Future police officers or judges will all know the international standards we adhere to and the national laws implementing them.

The experience of the National Centre for Human Rights of Uzbekistan

The National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan closely cooperates with all national human rights institutions, which include the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Children Ombudsman, the Business Ombudsman, and the National Prevention Mechanism. The Centre has a close relationship with civil society as well.

The relationship includes cooperation as regards implementation, reporting and follow-up. For example, CSOs prepare national and mid-term reports by collecting and using data, information and reports from CSOs. CSOs are also drafting the report through national consultations bringing together state agencies and civil society. Once prepared, the draft report is presented to the Parliament.

The treaty bodies' recommendations and observations are included in preparing implementation action plans. In this process, the Centre also consults CSOs and institutions: the plan is prepared with them. They are further involved in the monitoring implementation of the recommendations. The Centre also cooperates with CSOs on human rights education to raise legal awareness about the human rights of civil servants and civil society representatives. The Centre organises special courses for the benefit of CSOs, officials, members of parliament and mass media on human rights education. Trainings can be for instance on how to write shadow reports for CSOs and NHRIs.

Regarding relations with Parliament, Uzbekistan created two years ago a special Parliamentary Commission on compliance with international obligations on human rights, following advice from the Interparliamentary Union. It is composed of representatives from both chambers of Parliament. That commission provides opinion on the national reports before they are presented to the treaty bodies. The Parliamentary Commission is a member of the country delegation to Geneva and adopts a national action plan to implement the recommendations. In addition, Uzbekistan's legal basis establishes that all parliamentary draft bills impacting human rights must be submitted to the Centre to provide its opinion on whether it is in line with the national human rights commitments. The Centre also participates to parliamentary hearings and commissions when it is relevant. Special trainings and courses are organised by the Centre for Members of Parliament, too, to increase their legal awareness on international human rights obligations.

Last, cooperation with mass media is a useful tool that the Centre uses to increase awareness of the human rights of the general public.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF ITALY

The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights of Italy (CIDU) works with the parliamentary commissions devoted to human rights of both chambers of Parliament. It does so through periodic public hearings by the President of the CIDU and the submission of our annual report. This annual report is a legal requirement requested by 1999 legislation. The parliamentary commissions are also involved in CIDU's work concerning the UPR. For the third cycle of the UPR, the Presidents of the human rights commissions of the Chambers of Deputies and the Senate were part of the official

delegations. CIDU can also be requested to provide opinions on draft legislation that may impact human rights.

Regarding civil society, CIDU works with them, including CSOs but also trade unions, and academia. CIDU increasingly works with those actors. For instance, CIDU co-drafted with them the third and fourth National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security and the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. CIDU has established a standing open-ended working group with CSOs on resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). Depending on the treaty body, CIDU consults relevant civil society before Italy holds its interactive dialogue. Regarding the UPR, consultations are more extended: there were seven consultations before and after Italy's consideration under the third cycle of the UPR, for instance – both in Rome and Geneva.

CIDU cooperates with independent institutions, such as the National Preventive Mechanism, in the field of torture. CIDU welcomes alternative reports to the treaty bodies.

Last, NMIRFs should further explore how they engage with local and regional authorities. CIDU annexed to its implementation of recommendations to the action plan (PIR) 2021 a specific annexe devoted to good practices at local and regional levels. Trainings are important in that regard, so local and regional authorities know better international standards and their role in implementation and reporting processes, for instance, at the UPR.

Perspectives from National Human Rights Institutions

During the workshop and the Seminar's plenary, three invited NHRIs addressed the question of interactions between NHRIs and NMIRFs, or more generally NHRIs' contributions to implementation, reporting and follow-up, from their perspectives. They are reported upon in this section as they connect.

Intervention by the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms of the Comoros Islands

Participants in the Seminar need to be reminded that the state report prepared by the NMIRFs is one of many reports prepared, and the consultation process should not lead to believe that it is a common joint report with NHRIs and CSOs. NHRIs and CSOs need to be able to submit alternative reports. NHRIs mission is to protect and promote human rights, as per the Paris Principles, and put forward a distinct vision from the government's. NHRIs must develop their report independently and present it independently in Geneva. NHRIs and NMIRFs should never develop or present the state report together. This does not prevent NHRIs from commenting on the draft state report to nudge the government into addressing address certain issues that deserve attention.

The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms participates in the Comoros Islands' NMIRF as an observer; it advocates for certain issues to be addressed in the state report but develops and submits its own alternative reports with independence.

There is an important need to keep supporting the establishment and the independence of NHRIs and to strengthen their capacities to undertake their documentation and reporting functions independently.

Intervention by the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) of Qatar was established in 2002, and it was amended in 2010 by the Emiri decree to give it more independence and autonomy. It is a government organisation responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in Qatar. It operates based on the Paris Principles, the international NHRIs standards.

It has various roles to fulfil, which include being a consultative body to the government on human rights matters, providing legal advice, monitoring the human rights situation in the country, acting as a watchdog for human rights violations, and coordinating with other human rights stakeholders at the national, regional, and international levels. Additionally, it has a capacity-building role, which includes educating the public and government officials on human rights and building the capacity of civil society organisations to promote human rights.

As part of the national prevention and protection mechanism, the NHRC monitors the human rights situation in the country and provides remedies for human rights violations. It also promotes accountability and transparency, including advocating for implementing human rights laws and policies and ensuring violators are held accountable.

The NHRC collaborates with civil society organisations to promote social responsibility and has conducted prison visits to ensure that human rights are respected in detention centres. Its various roles, including consultative, legal advisory, watchdog, coordination, capacity building, and partnership, have helped strengthen Qatar's human rights.

Intervention by the National Human Rights Council of Morocco

The importance of national reports lies in establishing a comprehensive assessment of legal and policy frameworks and practices in the field of human rights, as well as focusing on strengths and weaknesses to propose recommendations and proposals for improving human rights systems at the national level. NHRIs play several roles in the preparation of the national reports, such as providing their comments and recommendations on the government report, preparing alternative reports, contributing to the preparation of the list of issues that the treaty bodies address to the government, participating in treaty body sessions during the presentation of the national reports and participation in the dissemination and monitoring of the implementation of recommendations.

According to its legal framework, the National Human Rights Council of Morocco contributes to preparing reports submitted by the country. The Council also encourages all ministerial departments and public authorities to implement the final recommendations submitted by human rights bodies. This is achieved through

participation in consultations organised by the government but also through the submission of writings that detail points or aspects that the government may have omitted in the report. Thus, since 2019, the Council has contributed, in form and substance, to national reports on CEDAW, enforced disappearances and the fight against racism. In these contributions, the Council insisted that the reports implementation focus on the implementation status of previous recommendations. The Council also recommended the use in the reports of qualitative but also quantified indicators to accurately illustrate the challenges faced by the country in the implementation. The Council also recommended catching up on the country's delays in submitting several reports and ensuring that reports are submitted on time, strengthening an inclusive approach and applying the simplified procedure during preparation. Yet it is fair to notice that sometimes the delay could be due to the congestion of timetables at the level of the treaty bodies themselves.

The National Human Rights Council also submits alternative reports and participates in the interactive dialogue between the country and the treaty bodies. Regarding the UPR, the Council presented its shadow report, which included an assessment of Morocco's implementation of the recommendations as its recommendations for the Council's final report. The Council also contributed to the UN Human Rights Council's consultations on good practices regarding the UPR.

As part of its contribution to the preparation of reports, the National Human Rights Council noted the need for a coordinated methodology at the level of the treaty bodies. Therefore, the Council recommends simplifying the reporting processes by adopting common rules on the form and content of alternative reports submitted by NHRIs. For example, more space could be given to issues that are a specific priority or challenge for the country. Regarding the format, it is recommended to have a limited number of pages for alternative reports to build the capacity of those preparing them to improve their quality.

NMIRFs must implement their mandates with an inclusive and consultative approach with the various national human rights system actors. While the preparation of national reports remains the government's responsibility, implementation requires the involvement of all nations' human rights actors at the national level, particularly parliaments, as many of the recommendations concern adopting or improving legislative frameworks. Also, the justice sector plays an important role in the implementation of recommendations, in particular, the application of human rights through judgments that must be aligned with the provisions of human rights conventions and treaties. Finally, civil society remains a central actor in advocating for the implementation of the treaty body and UPR recommendations. For this, it is necessary to ensure its involvement as the involvement of young people in all stages relating to preparing reports and implementing recommendations.

GROUP 3: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND INDICATORS (‘NATIONAL RECOMMENDATION TRACKING DATABASES’, ETC.)

Moderation: Mr Domenico Zipoli, Project Coordinator, Geneva Human Rights Platform and Research Fellow, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

Expert framing

In his framing presentation, Mr Domenico Zipoli drew on the Geneva Human Rights Platform on digital human rights tracking tools in recent years. The Geneva Human Rights Platform's extensive work on recognises the significance of this issue and has taken steps to provide a platform for discussion, such as during its [2022 annual conference](#). On that occasion, representatives from 15 different digital human rights tracking tools and databases met during an [expert roundtable](#), discussing the different tools' main functions and exchanging best practices and challenges specific to the operation of these tools. The Platform will in 2023 publish an online resource page and organise a second expert roundtable.

Monitoring the Impact of UN Human Rights Mechanisms at National Level

The Geneva Human Rights Platform has been on researching the impact of recommendations issued by Geneva-based human rights mechanisms at the national level. The research team observed that a key challenge in monitoring the impact of UN human rights mechanisms is the need for coordination among government ministries and other implementing actors. Implementation gaps, inconsistent messaging, and low engagement with the international human rights system are some of the issues actors and national actors face. To address these challenges, digital human rights tracking tools have become increasingly important in recent years. These tools aim to provide an objective, consistent, and norm-based approach to tracking the implementation of recommendations made by international and regional human rights mechanisms.

However, there are several challenges in monitoring the impact of these mechanisms at the national level that must be addressed:

- **Implementation gaps:** There are often gaps in the implementation of treaty bodies' recommendations at the national level. This may be due to a lack of political will, limited resources, or other factors. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort from all actors, including governments, civil society, and international organisations.
- **Government ministries and implementing actors working in siloes:** One major challenge in monitoring the impact of UN human rights mechanisms at the national level is the tendency of government ministries and other implementing actors to work in isolation, leading to a lack of coordination and collaboration. This lack of coordination can result in inconsistent messaging and gaps in implementation. Government agencies and other national actors need to work together in a coordinated manner to ensure the effective implementation of UN mechanisms.
- **Duplication of activities:** One major challenge is the duplication of activities, where different actors may be implementing similar activities, leading to a waste of

resources and duplication of efforts. To avoid this, actors need to coordinate and collaborate to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

- Inconsistent messaging: In some instances, different actors may be communicating inconsistent messages, leading to confusion and a lack of understanding of the recommendations made by the UN human rights mechanisms. This can result in the ineffective implementation of the recommendations. To address this challenge, it is important for actors to communicate consistently, using a common language and set of messages.
- Low levels of engagement with the international human rights system at the domestic level: In some cases, there may be limited understanding and commitment to implementing the recommendations made by UN human rights mechanisms. Addressing this challenge requires increased efforts to engage with communities, civil society, and other actors at the national level.

The Digital Human Rights Tracking Revolution

The digital human rights tracking revolution refers to the introduction of innovative tracking tools and online databases that enable a more holistic approach to monitoring and following up on human rights recommendations. In response to these challenges, several initiatives have emerged in recent years to introduce innovative tracking tools and online databases for monitoring the impact of UN human rights mechanisms.

These tools and databases aim to:

- Track and cluster recommendations and decisions made by international and regional human rights mechanisms
- Identify responsible government ministries and/or agencies for implementation
- Develop follow-up plans, including timelines with all relevant domestic actors, to facilitate coordinated monitoring of implementation
- Manage information regarding the implementation of treaty provisions and recommendations
- Link specific recommendations to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

National Human Rights Digital Tracking Tools

Some of the digital tracking tools currently in use include:

- [SimorePlus Paraguay](#): This platform is a permanent inter-institutional mechanism that facilitates the monitoring and follow-up of recommendations made by international and regional human rights mechanisms in Paraguay that seven other Latin American countries have also adopted
- [UWAZI](#): This platform, designed by HURIDOCS, a Geneva-based CSO, is a flexible open-source database application designed for human rights defenders to capture and organise collections of information, with a focus on the implementation of recommendations made by UN human rights mechanisms
- [IMPACT OSS](#): This open-source software is created to assist states with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of human rights and the SDGs and communicate implementation progress to the public. A notable example of IMPACT OSS use by NMIRFs is [SADATA](#), specific to human rights tracking in Samoa
- [National Recommendations Tracking Database \(NRTD\)](#): This platform, hosted, developed and maintained by the OHCHR, is an interactive web application designed to help states plan and track the realisation of their human rights obligations and the SDGs.

The use of digital human rights tracking tools has several benefits, including objectivity, consistency, mainstreaming, and normativity. The use of these tools provides information on the progress made towards implementing human rights recommendations, making the work of monitoring bodies more efficient. Indicators linked to human rights compliance help set priorities, establish accountability, and ultimately assessing impact. They also express values and serve as communicative instruments, making them politically useful. The report concludes with a discussion of the role of different stakeholders in establishing digital human rights tracking tools and databases. The panel highlights and uncovers, including through live demonstrations, three digital tracking tools of recommendations: the Moroccan National Recommendation Tracking Platform, SimorePlus, and the OHCHR National Recommendations Tracking Database.

The use of digital tracking tools and indicators provides several benefits, including:

- **Objectivity:** The use of digital tools provides objective data that can be used to monitor the implementation of recommendations made by the UN human rights mechanisms
- **Consistency:** Digital tools can provide consistent data, allowing for the tracking of progress over time and facilitating comparisons between countries
- **Mainstreaming:** The use of digital tools can help to mainstream human rights into national policies and programs, promoting a more holistic approach to human rights
- **Normativity:** Using digital tools can promote the normativity of human rights, encouraging a culture of human rights at the national level.

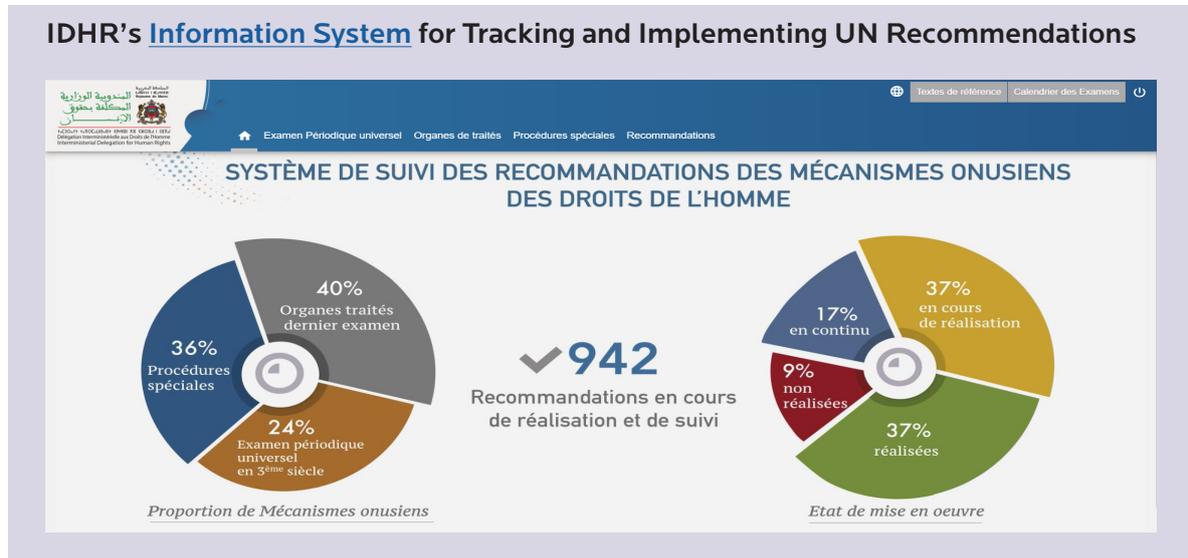
The experience of the Interministerial Delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco

To facilitate its coordination work, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights has developed an information system for tracking and implementing the UN mechanisms' recommendations in the human rights field. This system is one of the many tools and mechanisms developed by the delegation to ensure a comprehensive approach towards human rights. The system is designed to be inclusive and involves all relevant ministerial institutions and sectors in receiving, analysing, and implementing recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms.

The Interministerial Delegation has also prepared a guide related to interactions with international human rights mechanisms and preparing reports. This guide serves as a reference for government sectors and institutions in implementing human rights commitments and integrating them into public policy and programs. The guide is available in both [Arabic](#) and French and provides comprehensive guidance on the national experience and methodology adopted in preparing reports.

The Interministerial Delegation adopts a holistic approach in its work. It considers all stages involved in UN reporting, from the preparation of national reports submitted to human rights bodies and treaties to the processing and tabulation of recommendations received from various sectors and institutions. This approach also includes the programming and implementation of these recommendations at the final stage, ensuring that all concerned parties are involved in the various paths related to these recommendations.

The purpose of this information system is to streamline the process of preparing reports submitted to the various mechanisms and to track progress in implementing these recommendations. The information system is useful for the governmental departments and institutions to integrate human rights into their plans and programs.



The information system goes beyond just collecting recommendations. It is a comprehensive database that includes reports submitted to UN mechanisms, recommendations made, written records of dialogues and speeches of delegation heads, data and testimonies from civil society organisations and the NHRI. The information system is intended for specialists, those responsible for implementing recommendations, and not the general public.

The information system follows a four-stage methodology, starting with preparing reports and ending with tracking and implementation. The Interministerial Delegation takes immediate action on the recommendations made by UN mechanisms after the national delegation returns from interactive dialogues or after visits from special rapporteurs. Recommendations are classified into main and sub-themes based on topics. The information system also provides a clear outline of the implementation process, including preparing reports, receiving recommendations, programming, planning and tracking.

The training and set up of a focal points structure have been completed to ensure the dissemination, definition, and proper follow-up of these recommendations within the different sectors of the government. The focal points ensure that the recommendations are integrated into sectoral plans and programs, both locally and nationally. In coordination with focal points, the Delegation works to incorporate recommendations into policies and programs, and track their implementation.

The Interministerial Delegation is also working on preparing reference documents that focus on integrating human rights in sectoral programs and policies. These documents also intersect with the recommendations and the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights. Most of the recommendations received by the delegation are

included in the national action plan, making of integrating human rights into sectoral programs and policies an integral part of the delegation's work.

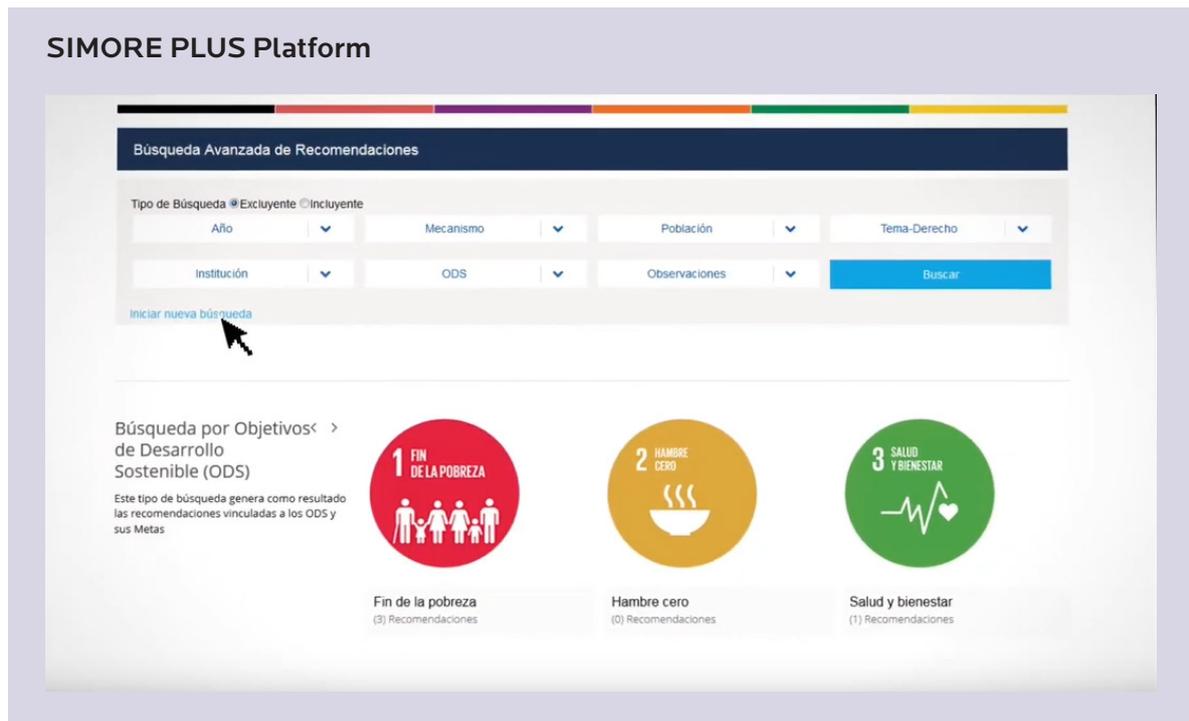
The Interministerial Delegation is committed to continuous and sustainable tracking of reports and statements related to human rights, which is reflected in the ongoing dynamic interaction between sectors and delegates. The information system for tracking and implementing UN recommendations in the field of human rights is an essential tool developed by the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights. It is part of a comprehensive approach towards human rights that seeks to involve all relevant sectors and institutions in implementing the Kingdom's commitments. The system is designed to ensure a coordinated and effective implementation of UN recommendations and to keep pace with the developments and changes in the field of human rights.

The experience of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay: SIMORE PLUS

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay has taken a significant step in promoting the implementation of international human rights recommendations and sustainable development by developing its information management system, SIMORE PLUS. This mechanism is designed to help monitor and track the progress made by the State to implement these recommendations and serves as a platform for various stakeholders involved in the implementation process.

SIMORE PLUS comprises two main components, the technological component and the human component. The technological component is the software that runs the system and is managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informatics department, with support of consultants from the UNDP. Efforts are being made to optimise the mechanism, but there are still challenges that need to be overcome.

The human component of SIMORE PLUS is made up of about 170 focal points from around 70 institutions across the three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judiciary, and other entities as well. The system is regulated by a decree that establishes SIMORE Plus as a permanent mechanism coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, which mandates that all institutions appoint a focal point, which is provided of incentives and trainings to promote awareness of the importance of reporting and implementing recommendations.



The software has three access points – one for the administrator and focal points, one for the public, and one for civil society organisations. The latter must register to interact with the focal points regarding recommendations. Improving interactions between civil society organisations and focal points through the system remains challenging for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The system includes recommendations from international mechanisms such as the treaty bodies, the UPR and the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council. Paraguay is committed to providing information on its human rights related efforts and regularly updates system. It has, for example, uploaded the recommendations from its latest UPR examination. The system's search function organises the recommendations by year, institution, mechanism, SDGs, population, and topics. The information is first classified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then discussed and decided upon by the focal points in regular meetings. These focal points link the recommendations to relevant institutions, SDGs, groups, and select topics.

The follow-up process for implementing recommendations is challenging, but for this purpose, the system has 7 matrices organised by rights clusters and vulnerable groups: women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, etc. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the focal points work together to ensure the recommendations are properly implemented.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay has demonstrated its commitment to making SIMORE PLUS a successful and effective tool for monitoring international human rights recommendations and sustainable development. With its search function and dedicated focal points, the system provides a platform for tracking the progress of recommendations and ensuring their proper implementation.

The initiative of the OHCHR: ‘National Recommendations Tracking Databases’

The National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD) is a tool developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to facilitate implementing and tracking recommendations made by different UN human rights mechanisms to Member States as well as the preparation of reports to it. The database serves as a platform to retain institutional memory and ensure coordination between various actors involved in implementing recommendations and preparing the reports. The NRTD contains the recommendations that various United Nations mechanisms address to Member States addressed. The NRTD is available in five UN languages and Portuguese, and can cater to different countries and their official languages. The database also allows States to translate the interface into their official languages.

The National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD)

Description

3 Recommendation(s) 1/3 Activities completed

Add attachment
Add attachment

Recommendations 3 Activities 3

ADD ACTIVITIES CREATE ACTIVITY

Lead institution Implementation status

Select Select Type keyword

Reset

3 activities EXPORT SORT BY NAME

Finalize National Plan on the expansion of health coverage

Implementation status: Not Started Lead institution: Ministry of Health

Implementation of the 2022 Health Care Program for Migrants and Refugees

Implementation status: In Progress Lead institution: Ministry of Health

Training of Health Personnel

Implementation status: Lead institution:

The NRTD is directly connected to the Universal Human Rights Index, an online database of human rights recommendations made by different UN mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies and special procedures.

Once the NRTD is transferred to a member state, it becomes their own tool, which they can customise including with their own logos, and personalise to fit their specific needs to track the implementation of recommendations in their country. The NRTD provides an opportunity for Member States to take ownership of the recommendations addressed to them and to track the progress of their implementation.

Information on the NRTD database is available through a dedicated website under the nrdt.ohchr.org, which provides answers to frequently asked questions. The database is free, and the OHCHR provides technical support and assistance to states that request it.

It is important to note that while the NRTD database is a valuable tool, it is not enough on its own to effectively monitor the implementation of recommendations. States will

need to establish a system of training and support, designate focal points, and feed the database with information on actions planned and implemented as well as indicators to monitor implementation the recommendations it receives. The NRTD is one part of the larger effort to strengthen national mechanisms for human rights protection.

The online demonstration of the NRTD showed that the database is user-friendly and straightforward. Upon accessing the recommendations section, users can view all the recommendations made to their country, sorted by mechanism. The dashboard is equipped with multiple features, and for example, it shows the different themes related to the recommendations, which are extracted from the Universal Human Rights Index. The users can also view the details of each recommendation, including the mechanism that issued it and the date it was issued. The NRTD also provides a status update on the implementation of each recommendation, as information on actions taken is updated by users.

The system allows to create and manage activities related to the implementation of recommendations, including adding relevant information such as dates, descriptions, and links to other activities. It is important to note that some fields are necessary to start an activity, as some information is required to ensure that activities can be properly tracked and recorded.

In addition to creating and managing individual activities, users can also link their activities to existing actions related to the same recommendation. The system also allows users to create clusters, which are groups of related recommendations, and link them to existing national plans. This helps to connect the different activities and recommendations, making it easier to see the overall picture and track progress.

One of the key features of the NRTD is its ability to keep institutional memory. All updates to the system are tracked, so users can see who has made changes and when. Additionally, users can add comments to activities, for example, if they are leaving their role and want to leave a note for their successor. This helps to ensure that important information is not lost, and that progress can be tracked over time. The tool also has a repository function where key documents can be stored.

The system features an indicators field, which will provide a way to measure progress and ensure that the activities being tracked are having the desired impact. Additionally, a reporting module integrating the working methods of the treaty bodies and UPR is being developed. This will allow users to easily export information on activities recorded in the system to prepare a report.

The NRTD is designed to provide a centralised platform for tracking the implementation of recommendations made by international bodies. It helps to ensure that activities are properly recorded, tracked, and linked to existing national plans, and provides a way to measure progress and keep institutional memory.

The NRTD can be a central tool for Member States in their efforts to implement and track the recommendations made by human rights mechanisms. By providing a platform for retaining institutional memory and ensuring coordination among various actors, the NRTD is a valuable resource for Member States as they work towards fulfilling their human rights obligations.

Discussion

The representative of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of Burkina Faso acknowledged the significance of a digital system for tracking and following up on recommendations, which is essential to enable various actors to better monitor these recommendations. In Burkina Faso, efforts have been made to establish a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of human rights recommendations. This mechanism, called the 'Mechanism for Monitoring Burkina Faso's Commitments and Recommendations in the Field of Human Rights', is used by the focal points in various ministerial departments and the Directorate overseeing International Agreements. It centralises activities related to the implementation of recommendations and provides real-time information on the status of implementation. However, the mechanism is still imperfect and there is room for improvement. One suggestion was to open the mechanism up to CSOs, who play a crucial role in lobbying and advocating for the implementation of recommendations.

The representative of the Ministry of Justice in Senegal highlighted the efforts made by the Senegalese government to promote human rights, both domestically and internationally. The National Consultative Council for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, established by presidential decree, is a key institution in this effort. The Council is chaired by the Minister of Justice and comprises representatives from all relevant government departments, civil society, parliament, media, and religious leaders. Its role is to implement recommendations from international organisations such as the United Nations and the African Union.

The Ministry of Justice of Senegal has been using digital tools for database management, such as Excel, Word, and open-source collaborative platforms to fulfil its obligations and stay up-to-date with its reports to the United Nations. The Ministry of Justice is committed to becoming more efficient and effective in its work and is considering obtaining ISO 9001 certification for its mechanisms for compiling reports. It is important to keep learning more about the information systems used by other countries and the potential for interface between these systems and treaty body recommendations; more discussions about the potential for a mobile version of these systems and the cost associated with them would be of interest. Last, knowledge on human rights includes a better understanding the public's perception of human rights, which requires more effective studies.

In conclusion, participants underlined the need for collaboration among developers of digital human rights tracking tools is paramount. The multitude of users for these tools, in the thousands, highlights the importance of this space for discussion. With the rapid advancements taking place within various stakeholder organisations, including national human rights institutions and civil society organisations, it is crucial to bring together the knowledge and experiences of those working towards digitalising the implementation and reporting of international human rights recommendations.

PLENARY

REFLEXIONS ON POTENTIAL AVENUES AND MODALITIES FOR REINFORCING EXCHANGES BETWEEN NMIRFS

Moderator: H.E. Mr Ambassador Omar Zniber, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organisations in Switzerland

As shown in the qualitative exchanges held during Day 1, there is a great potential for mutual learning when NMIRFs can meet and discuss their experiences. They can notably discuss their common challenges, such as the increasing number of recommendations received, and how to operationalise them. Yesterday's sessions were only one step towards more consistent interactions or possibly networking initiatives. At the very least, participants have already expressed a willingness to meet in one form or another on a regular basis in the future.

Day 2 of the Conference is devoted to further discussing how NMIRFs wish to enhance opportunities for direct exchanges and experiences in the future, and what would be the preferred modalities, topics of discussions, and so on. The outcomes of those exchanges could be captured in a final statement to be prepared at the end of the day, in addition to a detailed report on the seminar. The objective of the first plenary session is to frame the Day 2 discussions. It aims at understanding the state of play of the OHCHR's efforts and upcoming initiatives to support NMIRFs, as well as draw on other existing attempts to connect NMIRFs, either in Geneva through the 'Group of Friends on national implementation, reporting and follow-up' or through activities supported by the think-tank 'Universal Rights Group'.



NETWORKS AND HUBS: STATE OF PLAY AND PROSPECTS FOR THE VIRTUAL HUB FOR NMIRFS

Presenter: Ms Marie-Eve Boyer-Friedrich, Human Rights Officer, Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Resolution 50/33 adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022 reiterates the need for exchanges between NMIRFs and tasks the OHCHR to establish and maintain a virtual knowledge hub for national mechanisms, in collaboration with states and relevant stakeholders, as well as to organise global seminars on NMIRFs in Geneva in 2023 and 2024. Those efforts aim at cultivating interactions, increasing the visibility on NMIRFs and further developing a community of practice. These initiatives do not appear in a vacuum: they draw on a series of initiatives and attempts to spur the development of a community in practice, with efforts spearheaded by the OHCHR's Treaty Body Capacity-Building Programme (TBCBP). This presentation quickly presents past initiatives and provides a state of play of the virtual knowledge hub.

The Treaty Body Capacity-Building Programme

The TBCBP was created pursuant to Resolution 68/268 adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2014. It has a team in Geneva and has also focal points in 10 regional offices of the OHCHR. It aims at strengthening the capacity of states to report and follow-up on their human rights obligations. Indicators for the success of the capacity building programme's work include: 1. more ratifications of human rights treaties and protocols; 2. reports submitted on time; 3. more qualitative reports; 4. enhanced dialogues with treaty bodies.

The capacity building programme first and foremost focuses on governments and entities in charge of the reporting and follow-up. Nonetheless, since international human rights reviews are interesting because they also bring in the voices of other stakeholders, the programme also reinforces the capacities to engage with international bodies of civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions, which can submit shadow reports and also make interventions. The programme also manages the Special Fund of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, so we support the establishment of National Preventive Mechanisms. We also manage the Universal Human Rights Index and update it. We offer the National Recommendations Tracking Database to interested states as a digital solution to help them track the implementation of the UN recommendations they receive.

Since 2014, the programme has been more proactive in offering support to states that are lagging behind in terms of reporting – while at first it was mostly reacting to requests from states. Persistent delays in reporting may be the sign that there are systemic issues with reporting in a country. Finally, we adopted a new strategy this year to reinforce institutional capacities, in order not to limit ourselves to one-off trainings. Institutional reinforcement includes peer-to-peer exchanges and the detailed documentation of practices. Our success cannot be measured solely on the basis of the number of reports submitted by states, but also with regards to institutions it has helped establish and strengthen such as NMIRFs or National Preventative Mechanisms.

Past trainings and networking activities for NMIRFs

The TBCBP aims at fostering further peer-to-peer exchanges and the formation of communities of practice. Your event here is aligned with these efforts, which is a welcome complement to our activities. It is important to underline that steps have already been taken in the past, that we can draw on. In particular, the TBCBP has organised a series of Trainings of Trainers on treaty reporting from 2015-2017. Ten trainings of trainers in different sub-regions took place, as follows:

- Samoa for 12 states from the Pacific (2015)
- Barbados for 15 states from the Caribbean/English speaking Americas (2015)
- Amman for 15 states from the Arab region (2016)
- Bangkok for 16 states from South-East and North-East Asia (2016)
- Douala for seven states from Francophone Africa (2016)
- Johannesburg for 12 states from Southern Africa (2016)
- Nairobi for 13 states from the remaining Anglophone Africa (2017)
- Panama City for 10 states from Spanish speaking Central America and the Caribbean (2017)
- Colombo for 11 states from South Asia, Asia and the Pacific (June)
- Dakar, for 15 Francophone and Lusophone states from Africa (+ Haiti) (2017).

These trainings aimed at reinforcing the capacities of civil servants within NMIRFs or similar structures to engage in reporting and follow-up. All those who were trained are forming a roster of experts that we continue contacting when we organise similar activities, thanks to the 'training of trainers' dimension. These experts help us design, facilitate or co-facilitate and follow-up on new activities on treaty reporting, NMIRFs institutional building, setting up of recommendations' implementation plans, etc. This has always worked very well.

In addition, these trainings were also geared towards the creation of a community of practice, by connecting civil servants in NMIRFs. That dimension has revealed to be challenging. We have not really seen direct, bilateral interactions arising between civil servants of different NMIRFs. But it would be interesting to hear reactions and feedback from participants to this seminar who also attended past activities.

Human Rights Council Resolution 51/33: New opportunities to develop the community of practice

Building on the regional consultations of NMIRFs that were organised online in 2021, Resolution 50/33 adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022 offers new opportunities to reinforce interactions and a community of practice. It foresees:

- Two one-day global events, one in 2023 and one in 2024. These will take place in Geneva and in principle will be in-person meetings (not hybrid). The persons to be invited are mostly in-capital staff of NMIRFs. Precisions will follow. The OHCHR will make preparations with all states and in particular with Paraguay and Brazil who co-sponsored the resolution. All interventions made during the present Marrakesh seminar will also help us define what would be useful as next steps. The OHCHR will report on those two global events to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2024.

- The development of a virtual hub. We need something that stay after and in-between these events. At the age of the digital shift, an online platform maintained by the OHCHR seems useful. It will help sustain this momentum with more interactions and networking, but more importantly help you – the NMIRFs – do your work. For this reason, the virtual hub is very open, and we would welcome NMIRFs’ suggestions and contributions on what the hub should offer.

Prospects for the virtual knowledge hub

What the OHCHR can offer is the expertise and knowledge, the technical aspects too, but even more so the convening power: an OHCHR-hosted portal can be useful to gather all stakeholders’ inputs. Indirectly, thanks to the ‘Programme Budget Implication’ that should complement the Resolution, we can also provide financial support. The OHCHR is not doing this hub alone: it aims at associating Member States and interested stakeholders, including NHRIs, academia, experts. Whoever has an interest in it can contribute.

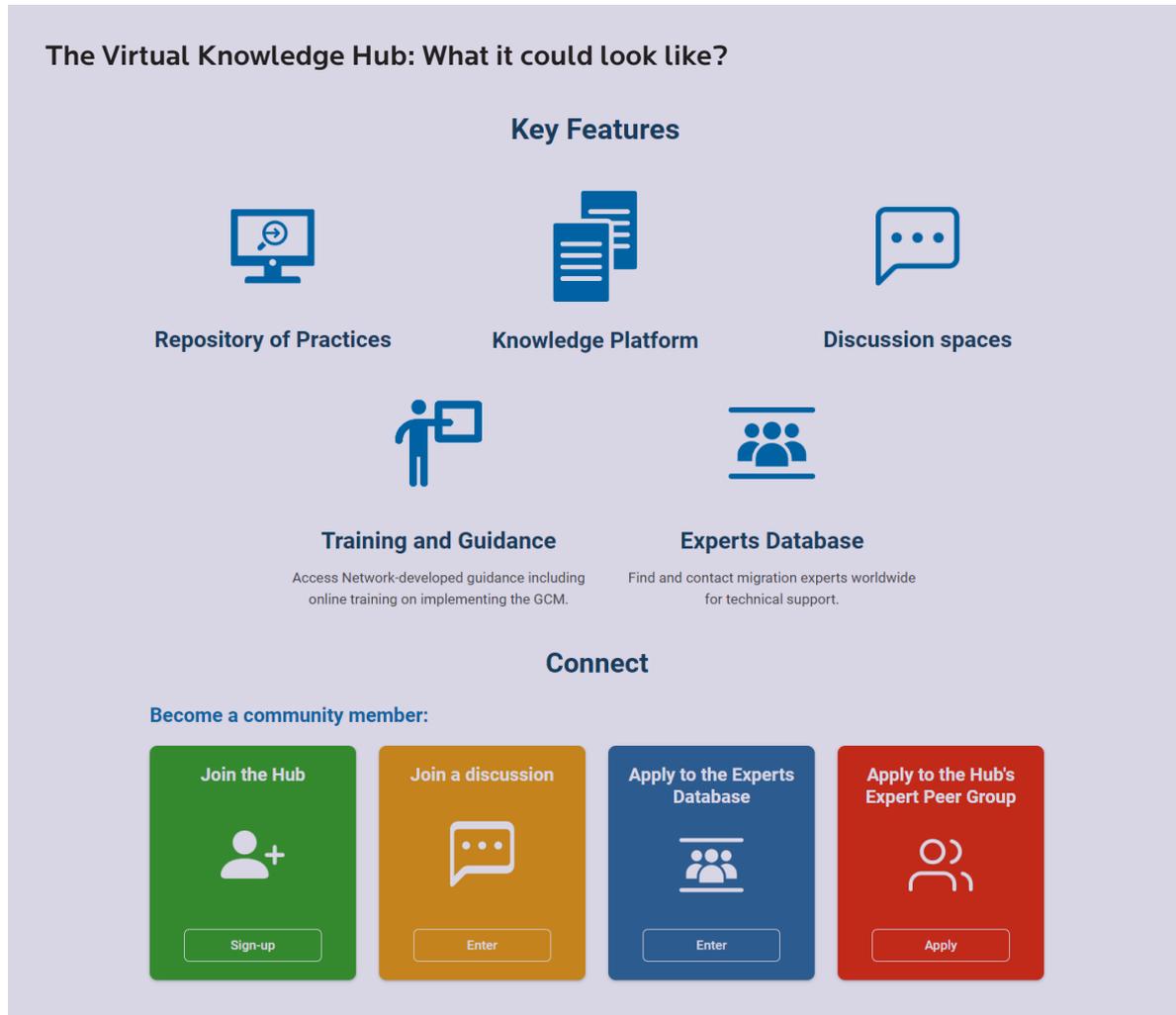
Here is what it could look like (see box below) – but again, these are just suggestions and ideas about what could feature on the hub. It is open for discussions this afternoon and definitely leaves room for creativity and inputs.

Features could include:

- A knowledge platform: Any publication that has been made on NMIRFs could feature there. OHCHR, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Geneva Academy, the University of Bristol, the Universal Rights Group, and others, have interesting research done on NMIRFs. It would be useful to have one place where all of those would feature.
- A repository of practices: As repeatedly said, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’. So it would be useful to feature a variety of practices that can inspire other countries.
- Discussion spaces: It is a possibility, if NMIRFs want it to go ahead. This would allow NMIRFs to engage with others through the hub. This functionality may be only open to specific users such as NMIRFs civil servants and other “authorized” users.
- Trainings and guidance space: Some NMIRFs do not need trainings, others do, and some states have not even started the process of establishing NMIRFs. The OHCHR has already developed quite a lot of those materials. It has what is called a ‘toolkit’, with for instance templates for checklists, examples of terms of reference for NMIRFs, examples of decrees throughout the globe in different languages, etc. All these types of things could find their way here.
- Experts database: We mentioned the past trainings of trainers, and many of the participants in the present seminar are also experts on NMIRFs. Such experts could have their names there, so that states that wish to set up a training or organise workshops, or study tours, could draw on this resource and identify experts, notably from other NMIRFs. This, in turn, could help enhance a sense of community.

It could also be foreseen that there are different degrees of access and interactivity within the platform. While some of it could be public, NMIRFs could have user credentials that would enable them to access restricted parts of the platform, for instance the list of experts or the discussion space. That, again, is open for discussion.

This period of time and therefore this present Seminar are dedicated to understanding the needs and potential contributions of states: What are the needs to fill through the virtual hub? What is the most challenging in the everyday work of NMIRFs? How would you like to contribute? The OHCHR wants to have a comprehensive stakeholders' mapping, so that everyone who wants to have a say can do so.



NETWORKING EXPERIENCES OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS ON NMIRFS

Presenter: Mr Eduardo Pinto da Silva, Head of the Human Rights Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, former coordinator of the Group of Friends on NMIRFs (2018-2021)

The National Human Rights Committee of Portugal was created in 2010, and it helped Portugal a lot in dealing with reporting, implementation and internal coordination (see yesterday's presentation). At some point, following a proposal by the Permanent Mission in Geneva, it was decided to use our own positive experience to promote the development of NMIRFs at the UN. So in 2017, in Geneva, we took the initiative to create a 'Group of Friends'. There are many such groups in Geneva or New York. They are informal groups gathering like-minded states which have a goal in common. This one currently gathers 27 Member States (that either have an NMIRF or are committed

to creating one) from all regions, but also civil society representatives, the OHCHR and think-tanks, like the Universal Rights Group or UPR-Info. The Group meets regularly in Geneva. These were online during the COVID-19 pandemic. We established some practices that we have been following since them.

Leveraging the UPR process

The Universal Periodic Review is a key UN mechanism to promote universal respect of human rights, and to share good practices and experiences. We incentivise members of the Group of Friends to make recommendations during the UPR working group for the establishment or the strengthening NMIRFs.

The UPR also allows for questions to be submitted in advance in written formats, in addition to the questions and recommendations made during the actual UPR working group sessions. We negotiated two standard questions that we submit to the OHCHR's UPR secretariat, and that are submitted to all countries. Those two questions are:

- “Could the State-under-review describe its national mechanism or process responsible for coordinating the implementation of accepted UPR recommendations and the monitoring of progress and impact?
 - Could the State-under-review elaborate specifically on how is the collaboration of its national mechanism with other stakeholders, such as National Human Rights Institutions, CSO, the judiciary and parliamentarians?
- Has the State-under-review established a dedicated 'national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up' (NMIRF) covering UPR recommendations, but also recommendations/observations generated by the UN human rights Treaty Bodies, the Special Procedures and relevant regional mechanisms, which, inter alia, clusters all the above, manages them in national databases, coordinates implementation actions across government, monitors progress and impact, and then streamline reporting procedures back to the UN? If so, could the State-under-review briefly share its experience on creating such mechanism, including challenges faced and lessons learnt, as well as any plans or needs to strengthen the NMIRF in the future?”

We see the UPR as a good vehicle to promote those mechanisms. States under review start their presentations to the UPR working group precisely by answering questions submitted in advance, so it has an impact. Nationally, the UPR gathers the attention of all public administrations, as well as attention at the political level. The UPR is therefore essential to advance the NMIRFs agenda.

Statements delivered during the UN Human Rights Council sessions

We aim at having a statement on behalf of the 27 members of the Group of Friends during one of the general debates of the regular sessions of UN Human Rights Council. There are currently no general debates during the June session of the Council, but either during the March or September session we always have a statement delivered normally during general debate item 5 – but sometimes it has been under item 3, or 2 during the dialogue with the High Commissioner, to make the latter aware of the importance of these mechanisms.

There are also resolutions on NMIRFs, led by Paraguay and Brazil, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council. We try to coordinate support to, and raise awareness on those resolutions in the work of the Group of Friends, so that all the members have an active supporting stance on the resolutions, e.g., by co-sponsoring them.

These are in a nutshell the main activities and experiences of the Group of Friends.

International support carried out by the Portuguese National Human Rights Committee

We also have support activities delivered bilaterally by our National Human Rights Committee to other countries. This is especially the case since the 2016 OHCHR study on NMIRFs, in which Portugal was one of the case-studies. Our Committee received more visibility internationally, and began to receive requests from other states to share its experience bilaterally. The first one was with Egypt: in 2016 there was a meeting with the Chair of our Committee, who was at the time also Secretary of State, going to Cairo to meet with the head of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights that was being created in Egypt.

In addition, in the framework of the Community of the Portuguese-speaking countries (CPLP), our National Committee went earlier this year to Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) to provide trainings on human rights issues, and provide advice on how to report and engage with treaty bodies, special procedures, and the UPR.

This year we also had the opportunity to engage bilaterally with the Commission on Gender Equality of Serbia, that was visiting Lisbon and asked to meet the Committee to understand our work and our focus on gender equality, and last month we had a visit from the National Preventive Mechanism on Trafficking of Human Beings of Cabo Verde.

We also provide trainings on NMIRFs. During the pandemic, we organised a number of online trainings for focal points of NMIRFs in line ministries and CPLP countries.

To conclude and look towards the future, there are many things that NMIRFs could do together. It is a good idea to have meetings like the present Seminar more regularly. We all know that NHRIs have a global alliance (GANHRI). Why not having something more structured and regular to exchange views on NMIRFs?

EXPERIENCES OF EXCHANGES BETWEEN NMIRFS ORGANISED WITH URG SUPPORT – NOTABLY AMONGST PACIFIC COUNTRIES

Presenter: Mr Louis Mason, Legal and Policy Analyst, Universal Rights Group

International discussions around NMIRFs largely began with the publication of the OHCHR's 2016 report and the establishment of the Group of Friends on NMIRFs in Geneva. However, many States had already established such mechanisms, including Paraguay in 2009, Portugal in 2010 and Morocco in 2011. This presentation complements the history of national-level developments and official intergovernmental processes with more informal elements to the puzzle by sharing

some of the Universal Rights Group's experiences. The Universal Rights Group (URG) is a human rights think-tank with offices in Geneva, New York, Bogota and Nairobi dedicated to strengthening international human rights policy through constructive multistakeholder dialogue and research-based policy proposals on institutional and thematic human rights issues.

Origins of NMIRFs

The international conversation around national reporting mechanisms can be traced back to the 2011-2014 treaty body review, and in particular, to a visionary 2012 report by the then High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, which encouraged states 'to establish or reinforce a standing national reporting and coordination mechanism,' that 'should be able to deal with all UN human rights mechanisms requirements with the objectives of reaching efficiency, coordination, coherence and synergies at the national level.'

The report went on to offer other important new concepts and ideas to promote national follow-up, including: linking 'SNRCMs' with the new (at the time) Universal Human Rights Index database (this collates all recommendations from each of the three human rights mechanisms; clustering recommendations from all human rights mechanisms, thematically and/or operationally); identifying relevant actors (i.e., across line ministries) responsible for following-up on UN human rights recommendations (i.e. focal points) and for leading 'periodic consultations with national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society actors, to cooperate on reporting and implementation processes.'

In 2015 the URG organised, along with Norway and Switzerland, the Glion Human Rights Dialogue (Glion II), a retreat for senior international human rights policymakers, on the 'The Human Rights Council at 10: improving relevance, strengthening impact'. An important focus of those discussions was the considerable challenges to timely reporting and closely linked, though perhaps subsidiary at the time, to the effective implementation of the enormous number of recommendations. Indeed, states typically receive over 1000 recommendations. In particular, many small delegations, notably small island developing states from the Pacific, shared their considerable capacity challenges and repeatedly requested capacity-building support.

Therefore, Norway, Switzerland and the URG again focused Glion III on what Kofi Annan called the implementation gap and strategies to build state capacities for implementation and reporting. During those discussions, a central point of debate was around the term coined by the OHCHR of NMRF (national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up), with many states pointing to the need to also focus on the implementation function of such mechanisms. Thus, the acronym of NMIRFs was born, adding an 'i' for implementation.

Principles and technologies for NMIRFs?

Glion III was also one of the first attempts to identify common standards or principles for NMIRFs, to complement those broad principles identified by the OHCHR in what we now know as the four capacities of national mechanisms, namely, engagement, coordination, consultation and information management. The objective was both to

help define the nature and operation of such mechanisms and eventually to help more states establish them, based on the experience of how the 1993 Paris Principles had helped guide the establishment of NHRIs, without precluding the exchange of good practices and contextual understanding of the specific needs and realities of states.

During those discussions, while many states repeatedly made the point that ‘there is no one-size-fits-all formula for domestic implementation and reporting mechanisms,’ others pointed out that ‘effective NMRFs [...] appear to share certain common characteristics’. For example, they tend to: be standing (permanent) in nature; be established with high-level political backing; be comprehensive in approach – covering all UN and regional mechanisms; receive and coordinate the implementation/ reporting of all recommendations from each of these mechanisms (which are usually clustered by theme and operational objective); have the capacity to track progress with implementation; work in a transparent manner (*vis-à-vis* the general public); and be inclusive in nature – open to ‘all relevant national stakeholders [...], including parliaments, NHRIs, CSOs, the judiciary and national statistical offices’.

The outcome report of this dialogue also recognised the value of developing ‘IT-based coordination and reporting systems centred on a single database, which automatically incorporate and cluster recommendations from the UPR, treaty bodies and special procedures, collate information on progress with implementation, and allow for streamlined national reports to international bodies’.

Experiences in the Pacific region

In 2017, the URG decided to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Impact Open Source Software (OSS) Trust Fund, to develop a free human rights recommendation tracking software based on the needs of states. This MOU led to the organising of a series of consultations to understand the particular needs of Pacific island countries and collaborated with software engineers of the OSS Trust Fund to develop Impact OSS.

During those consultations and experiments with early versions of the tracking software, it became clear that the technology itself was not a panacea and that there was a need for further guidance on state coordination processes to input information, monitor implementation and extract information to produce reports. There was much excitement at the time that such software could be used to generate reports with the click of a button automatically. Unfortunately, this software never materialised, though who knows what the future holds with advancements in Artificial Intelligence.

In this context, in April 2019, Fiji (supported by the United Kingdom, the Regional Rights Resource Team of the Pacific Community, and URG) hosted a first-ever regional consultation on NMIRFs, for the Pacific Island States. Following the meeting, Pacific states negotiated and adopted the ‘Pacific Principles of Practice’ on NMIRFs (see box below), launched a few months later (3 July) during a Council side event hosted by the Permanent Mission of Australia. The Principles, endorsed by Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu, intended to ‘contribute to the global conversation on effective implementation of human rights obligations and development commitments.’

The URG hopes that such regional efforts to elaborate principles for effective human rights implementation and reporting systems can be replicated to complement but certainly not replace the equally important exchange of good practices and bilateral and multilateral capacity-building exercises centred around the contextual realities of different states. The ultimate objective is to facilitate the negotiation of an international consensus on universal principles for NMIRFs, which can help orient capacity-building strategies around a best practice model. To facilitate this process, in 2023, the URG, Bristol University, the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, and Freshfields, will launch a report analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different models based on a survey of 60 States and presenting some good practice case studies. The key here is to be constructive and non-judgemental in the analysis, based on the objective realities of the States' experiences with their mechanisms.

Pacific Principles of Practice of NMIRFs (2020)

They are based on three broad principles and several sub-clauses:

1. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to NMIRFs;
2. NMIRFs should be permanent and be established by the executive or legislature; and
3. NMIRFs shall be given a structure, mandate and resources to effectively coordinate and track national implementation of human rights and other overlapping frameworks.

Seven sub-clauses help elaborate the third principle (above). These include guidance to States on:

- The composition of effective NMIRFs (e.g., including the participation of government ministries and agencies, statutory bodies, parliamentarians, the judiciary, civil society, national human rights institutions, traditional and religious leaders/groups, national statistics offices, and the private sector);
- The ideal mandate for an NMIRF, including a list of responsibilities such as: 'receiving, clustering, planning, tracking and centrally managing all human rights recommendations,' 'centralised collection of data and information management to continuously track progress and identify implementation gaps,' 'regular convening of all national implementing actors,' 'making all recommendations, past reports and implementation status publicly available in primary national languages,' 'regular reporting to parliament,' and public 'consultations on all draft reports and implementation plans;'
- How to connect human rights implementation with SDG implementation and reporting;
- The utilisation of technology to facilitate the aims and functions of an NMIRF and to simplify reporting;
- Working methods – including terms of reference;
- Secretariat support – 'a secretariat should be established and written into the terms of reference;' and
- Resources – 'an NMIRF should be provided with adequate resources to fulfil its mandate by the government.'

Read more on: https://hrsd.spc.int/sites/default/files/2021-07/Pacific%20Principles%20of%20Practice_0.pdf

PLENARY

LESSONS FROM OTHER EXPERIENCES OF NETWORKING BETWEEN GOVERNMENTAL FOCAL POINTS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Moderator: Mr Sébastien Lorion, Senior Adviser, Danish Institute for Human Rights

One of the questions that the NMIRFs addressed during the Seminar was their willingness and, if so, under which modalities to consolidate peer-to-peer interactions. One option could be establishing a more or less formal network. In order to generate ideas, this panel aimed to present the experiences and lessons of two existing networks in the field of human rights, which, contrary to NMIRFs, have a thematic focus rather than a comprehensive one. These are the Global Network of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Focal Points and the Network of National Contact Points on Responsible Business Conduct (NCPs). These networks have existed for years and have developed practices that can inspire NMIRFs, should they decide to organise themselves in an international network.

Two speakers with direct insights into the operations of these networks participated in the panel. They were invited to address two questions: How are the two networks organised, and what activities do they conduct? What is the added value of such networks, but also the challenges where networks are less able to contribute?



THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF FOCAL POINTS FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

Presenter: Mr Martin Mennecke, Associate Professor at the University of Southern Denmark and Academic adviser to the Danish Focal Point for Responsibility to Protect at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a norm agreed upon in 2005 through the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/1. It relies on three pillars. According to the first pillar of R2P, the state has a responsibility to protect its population against four specific atrocity crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. The second pillar of R2P is that states share a responsibility to assist each other in this regard through encouragement and assistance, for example by means of capacity building. According to the third pillar: if the state in question manifestly fails to protect its population, the international community has a responsibility to step in to protect it. Actions include sanctions, a referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court, or could ultimately lead to military intervention if authorised by the UN Security Council.

R2P Focal Points

In 2010, several states, led by Denmark and Ghana, together with the Global Centre for R2P, a key civil society organisation, agreed that the R2P norm needed a new, special mechanism to advance its implementation: individual, senior officials that would act as governmental Focal Points for R2P. This step was not enshrined in a new, legally binding instrument but presented to interested governments, which included the Focal Point idea in an informal meeting summary. Often based in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, R2P Focal Points facilitate and catalyse government work on R2P.

Sixty-one states and two regional organisations, the European Union and the Organisation of American States have appointed an official to act as R2P Focal Point. The Focal Points and their global network are the only implementation mechanism explicitly mentioned in relevant UN reports. The UN Secretary-General has called on governments to appoint an R2P Focal Point, as network members regularly encourage other states to join the initiative.

Global Network of R2P Focal Points

The R2P Focal Points together comprise the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. This informal network has since 2010 met annually in the capital of a state to discuss the role of the focal points and exchange good practices. Initially, the meetings focused on the links between R2P and other strands of work, for example, R2P and capacity building or R2P, human rights and the business sector. Gradually the meeting agendas evolved from these generic, thematic discussions to reflect a greater emphasis on the actual work of the R2P Focal Points. This work included sharing examples of how Focal Points could work with security actors on R2P trainings and how they could cooperate internationally to address specific country situations or implement R2P in UN organs.

The Global Centre administers the Global Network's Secretariat for R2P. Ever since the R2P Focal Points initiative's start, this CSO has been instrumental to its success – as its Secretariat, by advocating states to appoint an R2P Focal Point, informing R2P Focal Points about relevant developments or co-organising the annual gatherings of R2P Focal Points. In addition, a Steering Group of the Global Network was established in March 2019 to strengthen the Global Network by undertaking relevant activities at and in between the annual meetings. The Steering Group is comprised of several R2P Focal Points and the Secretariat.

Global Network's activities

The annual meetings, with a focus on case studies and workshops, constitute the main activity of the Global Network. During these annual meetings, R2P Focal Points discuss their role within their governments and substantive ways to prevent mass atrocity crimes and protect vulnerable populations. The annual meeting is an opportunity to share best practices and strengthen ties between members.

In addition to the annual meetings, the Global Network also organises webinars and occasional [regional meetings](#). It has also held annual informal gatherings on the side of the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York. Furthermore, in 2019, the Global Network and its Secretariat produced a manual for R2P Focal Points. It introduces new Focal Points to their role and translates the R2P norm into concrete actions that a Focal Point could take.

Last, the Global Network of R2P Focal Points members have started to view their group as a collective that can produce joint outcomes. In May 2019, on the initiative of the new steering group, over 50 members of the Network wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General, asking how the UN Secretariat sought to integrate an R2P lens into its prevention work. The following year, in May 2020, members of the Network published a statement on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Second World War to highlight new atrocity risks arising in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Global Network takes no country-specific action.

Reflections on the added value of the Global Network

The Global Network has proven to be important, as it has provided governments with space to discuss and develop the concrete meaning of R2P among peers, leading to guidance on its implementation. This approach leads to increased ownership and internalisation of R2P, which is key to its consolidation as a norm. The network also creates an international community, making it less likely to abolish the post domestically. The Global Network has also helped to identify willing, like-minded states and encourage them to designate a Focal Point where there is none.

Creating a safe space for exchange is key and partly depends on the exchange modalities. For instance, there are no political statements or discussions in the Focal Points' meetings. There are also no or very few talking points. There is a focus on informal exchanges, practice, peer-to-peer learning and sharing. It helps demystify what R2P is (it is not only about military intervention) and turns the Focal Points to more practical matters (it is not only politics, it is mainly about a series of tangible actions one can take).

The Global Network has also facilitated the creation of new links between capitals. The Secretariat also facilitates “Global Calls” to encourage direct (online) communication between R2P Focal Points in different countries outside of the annual meetings. Some R2P Focal Points now work collaboratively on joint advocacy, capacity-building projects within member countries, workshops and training. Without the Global Network, Focal Points would not necessarily have 1) the contacts, 2) the common terminology and 3) the collaborative thinking on these issues. That is indirectly helping Focal Points to address together concrete policy questions.

Having strong secretariat support is key for such a network. All R2P Focal Points are aware that institutional memory is key. This point is evident in the work of the hosts of the annual meetings held within the Network.

Reflections on the challenges faced by the Global Network

There are still several limitations that could be addressed. First, the downside to the annual meeting is that Focal Points may limit their activities as R2P Focal Points to that yearly gathering. Should the network entail a sense of accountability so that Focal Points show something in return for participating in the annual meeting? It is also important to consider whether the individuals assigned as R2P Focal Points have the necessary time and institutional support to conduct relevant activities outside the annual meeting. There is no accountability in the Global Network, including no public reports of Focal Point actions.

A second question pertains to the institutional anchorage of R2P Focal Points, which are usually placed in Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Those Focal Points may naturally be inclined to view R2P as a UN matter, which inevitably takes the attention from R2P’s first pillar, which focuses on the country’s responsibility to protect its own population against atrocity crimes. If an R2P Focal Point with a base in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does seek to engage with pillar 1 issues, it will soon encounter questions of competency, as other line ministries and domestic government agencies may push back on the foreign ministry raising issues concerning the protection of the population at home. A challenge is, therefore, to make the R2P Focal Points not only in charge of writing interventions at the UN but also think about what it means at home.

Third, the resources for R2P Focal Points and their Global Network’s Secretariat are limited. As things stand, resources behind the Global Network’s Secretariat are not sufficient. This issue is a constant challenge, representing the Achilles heel of the Global Network. No membership fee helps to run the network. A few countries have bilateral agreements with the Global Centre, which is used as Secretariat for the network. Plus, for the annual meeting, the co-host typically sets money aside to run the meeting and maybe help some Global South R2P Focal Points to attend.

Fourth, there are issues of rotation and retaining of expertise amongst R2P Focal Points. Whereas the Global Centre has provided continuity and accumulated experience, R2P Focal Points have been replaced regularly, as foreign ministries especially follow a staff rotation system.

Fifth and last, it is a very diverse network. The capacities of Focal Points are quite

different in terms of what they can mobilise in their respective systems and how much their government works on R2P. While 'senior officials' with some junior assistants are the ideal start for an effective Focal Point, some are rather junior.

For more information on the global network of R2P Focal Points



UN Office on Prevention of Genocide and R2P with its two Special Advisers: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/>

Global Centre for R2P: <https://www.globalr2p.org/the-global-network-of-r2p-focal-points/>

Article: Martin Mennecke, 'Never Again? The Role of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points in Preventing Atrocity Crimes', Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights, 39(2), 161–181. (Open access version: <https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/en/publications/never-again-the-role-of-the-global-network-of-r2p-focal-points-in>)

THE NETWORK OF NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT

Presenter: Ms Lena Diesing, Policy Analyst at the OECD Centre for Responsible Business Conduct, focusing on government policies to promote responsible business conduct

Responsible Business Conduct

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation in which governments work together to solve common challenges, develop global standards, share experiences and identify best practices to promote better policies for better lives.

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are recommendations addressed by governments to multinational enterprises operating in or from adhering countries. They provide non-binding principles and standards for responsible business conduct in a global context, consistent with applicable laws and internationally recognised standards. The Guidelines are the only multilaterally agreed, and comprehensive code of responsible business conduct that governments have committed to promoting.

The 2011 revision of the OECD Guidelines added a chapter on human rights aligned with the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights. The Guidelines are further aligned with the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy of the International Labour Organisation.

National Contact Points for Responsible Business Conduct (NCPs)

National Contact Points for Responsible Business Conduct (NCPs) are agencies established by governments. Their mandate is twofold: to promote the [OECD](https://www.oecd.org/)

[Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#), and related due diligence guidance, and to handle cases (referred to as 'specific instances') as a non-judicial grievance mechanism. To date, 51 governments have an NCP for Responsible Business Conduct.

As part of their promotional role, NCPs produce informational material, conduct trainings, workshops and events, and seek to foster policy coherence, i.e., that the Guidelines are considered and supported by relevant domestic policy developments. As part of their remedial role, NCPs handle 'specific instances'. Since 2000, NCPs have received more than 620 specific instances relating to company operations in over 100 countries and territories, concerning the various issue areas covered by the OECD Guidelines. Following the 2011 revision there has been a significant increase in complaints relating to human rights. The UN Guiding Principles further recognise the NCPs' potential to provide access to remedy for business-related human rights abuses.

While adhering to the OECD Guidelines is voluntary, all countries adhering to them have an obligation to set up an NCP and to achieve 'functional equivalence', meaning that while governments have flexibility on how to organise their NCPs, all NCPs should function with an equivalent degree of effectiveness. The Guidelines' Annex (called the Procedural Guidance) lays the mandate of NCPs and how they should operate. It provides NCPs with a reference document that spells out criteria whereby NCPs should operate, detail how NCPs activities and functions should be performed, and set out the procedural principles governing the non-judicial grievance mechanism. Generally, NCPs shall operate in accordance with core criteria of visibility, accessibility, transparency and accountability. They should handle specific instances in a way that is impartial, predictable, equitable and compatible with the Guidelines. They can ask the OECD Investment Committee to clarify the interpretation of the Guidelines, and shall also report on their activities on a yearly basis to that Committee.

NCPs Network

The OECD Guidelines themselves foresee that NCPs shall meet regularly to share experiences, and that NCPs in different countries shall co-operate if needs arise. NCPs first met in 2001, and the NCP Network now meets twice a year (in June and November). It is a peer-learning network, supported by the OECD Secretariat. The role of the latter is very important: it manages and drives the network. It has a strong role in organising the meetings, that usually take place in Paris. It suggests the agenda for the meetings.

NCP network meetings and other capacity building activities organised by the OECD Secretariat aim to support country commitments regarding the performance and organisation of their NCPs, consolidate achievements of the NCP network and address challenges. Long-term programmes in this regard have been recorded in three successive 'Action Plans to Strengthen National Contact Points', respectively for 2016-2018, 2019-2021 and [2022-2024](#). The Action Plans identify several activities to be conducted by the NCP Network with the support of the Secretariat, organised into different pillars representing overarching objectives to be attained by NCPs. The current Action Plan focuses on the following objectives:

- Visibility, stakeholders engagement and confidence
- Efficient and effective handling of specific instances
- Providing access to expertise in the network
- Peer review of the entire network.

As a transversal action to help NCPs build additional capacity, the Action Plan will support creating and strengthening **Regional Networks of NCPs**. These networks will enable NCPs from the same region to address together issues of joint interest and assist each other where needed.

In its meetings and activities, the NCP Network usually addresses 1) substance: any questions regarding norms and Responsible Business Conduct; 2) procedure for the implementation of those norms, e.g., how to handle specific instances; and 3) performance of NCPs and their Network: including questions of institutional set-up, conduct of peer reviews, and action plans.

NCPs Voluntary Peer Reviews

Peer reviews are the main mechanism by which individual NCPs can assess their performance and receive recommendations to progress towards functional equivalence. Peer reviews have shown to be the main lever for change as regards institutional arrangements and resources at individual NCPs. NCPs report that peer reviews are an excellent opportunity to increase the profile and visibility of the NCP within the government and with stakeholders. In June 2017, as part of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, NCPs committed to having all NCPs peer-reviewed by 2023.

The objectives of NCP peer reviews are to:

- Identify the NCP's strengths and possibilities for improvement on the basis of:
 - the OECD Guidelines (Procedural Guidance)
 - the core criteria for functional equivalence
 - the guiding principles for handling specific instances
- Recommend avenues to enhance the NCP's performance
- Serve as a learning tool for reviewed and participating NCPs.

Peer reviews are an exercise by 2-4 NCPs, who evaluate a specific NCP with the Secretariat's support. Peer reviews result in a public report with findings and recommendations of this evaluation, which the OECD Working Party discusses on Responsible Business Conduct, i.e., the body gathering all countries adhering to the Guidelines. Peer reviews are a learning opportunity rather than a hard accountability measure. As a result of peer reviews, NCPs have dramatically improved their performance. Through peer reviews, NCPs can achieve greater visibility towards the stakeholders and other parts of government. The resulting political support can help expand NCPs' capacity, staffing, funding, and activities. However, this is only possible because the OECD Guidelines and other supporting documents set clear procedural guidelines for how NCPs should work – these provide the basis for the peer reviews. In this sense, the reviews can be transparent and comparable. The procedure for conducting peer reviews is recorded in the [Core Template for Voluntary NCP Peer Reviews](#).

Reflexions on the opportunities and limitations of the NCPs Network

Opportunities created by the NCP Network largely outweigh its limitations. The main limitations are that the exchanges are non-binding and voluntary and that there is a great diversity of institutional set-ups and practices. On the other hand, these limitations are also the basis for the Network's opportunities.

The Network has 1) created a space to exchange with stakeholders (businesses, trade unions, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders are regularly invited to exchange with NCPs); 2) allowed for a plethora of diverse good practices to be shared with each other; and 3) created a space to advance functional equivalence and ratchet up performance.

NCPs can exchange in meetings twice a year, but also in between: the Secretariat has created an intranet where NCPs can share real-time questions. Whenever NCPs discuss an issue, the Secretariat tries to have a tangible outcome: an outcome document, a guidance document, some tools, etc., so that exchanges are not limited to discussions but result in something concrete that remains. For instance, there are now templates and guidance documents for the procedural steps NCPs must take to handle specific instances. For example, the OECD has published handbooks to support NCPs in their work on their promotional mandate vis-à-vis their national partners. Within the NCP Network, there are also possibilities to establish and implement training opportunities, with a key role played by the NCP Network in handling such processes.

For all information, resources and outputs for NCPs and the Network, see:

What are National Contact Points for Responsible Business Conduct ?

All 50 governments adhering to the OECD Guidelines have the legal obligation to set up an NCP with the role of 'furthering the effectiveness of the Guidelines'. Over time, NCPs' role and scope have evolved: when they were established in 1984, NCPs were primarily responsible for promoting the Guidelines and responding to enquiries. In 2000, NCPs were given the role of fostering solutions in relation to issues emerging from the implementation of the Guidelines by companies. They have embraced this role, establishing themselves firmly as remedy mechanisms and offering a unique dialogue platform.

Today, NCPs make up a network and a community of practitioners, dealing with a wide array of impacts involving companies either through their operations or their supply chains. To deliver on this broad mandate, governments have the flexibility to organise their NCP in the form and structure they deem most appropriate. While there is no prescribed model, NCPs must operate in accordance with a number of 'core criteria', namely visibility, accessibility, transparency and accountability. In addition, NCPs must handle cases in a way that is impartial, predictable, equitable and compatible with the Guidelines.

Find out more about [NCPs' structures and activities](#)
Listen to the podcast on [the role of NCPs](#)

20 YEARS
NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS
for Responsible Business Conduct

The year 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the mandate to NCPs for RBC to act as grievance mechanisms under the OECD Guidelines.
The report *Providing access to remedy - 20 years and the road ahead* takes stock of NCPs' contribution to access to remedy for RBC impacts over that period.

Find out more about this important milestone!

NCPs FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT

National Contact Points (NCPs) are agencies established by governments. They promote the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and related due diligence guidance, and handle cases - "specific instances" - as a non-judicial grievance mechanism. 50 governments have an NCP for RBC.

- UNIQUE MECHANISM**
NCPs for RBC are the only internationally recognised non-judicial grievance mechanism for RBC.
NCPs can handle cases involving companies operating in & from their territory.
- THEMES**
Since 2011 the 3 most prevalent themes were:
 - Human rights (58%)
 - General policies of the Guidelines (11%)
 - Employment & industrial relations (39%)
- SUBMITTERS**
Since 2011 the primary submitters of cases to NCPs have been:
 - NGOs (40%)
 - Trade Unions (26%)
 - Individuals (25%)
- RESULTS**
Since 2011, 42% of concluded cases by NCPs resulted in agreement and 31% of all concluded cases have resulted in a company policy change.
- GLOBAL COVERAGE**
50 Guidelines adherent countries account for over 70% of global FDI, which highlights the global reach of NCPs.
Since 2000 NCPs have handled over 500 cases in over 100 countries and territories.

20 YEARS
NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS for Responsible Business Conduct

Providing access to remedy 20 years and the road ahead

PLENARY

VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS ON MODALITIES FOR THE REINFORCEMENT OF COOPERATION AND NETWORKING BETWEEN NMIRFS

Wrap-up exchanges and discussions on days 1 and 2 were moderated by: Mr Abdelkarim Boujradi (Secretary General of Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco) and Ms Marie-Eve Boyer-Friedrich (Human Rights Officer, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights).

Throughout the Seminar, and in particular, during the plenary exchanges concluding both days, participants were invited to reflect on the overarching objective of the Seminar – i.e., the potential relevance and possible modalities for developing future cooperation and networking between NMIRFs. The final session aimed to gather feedback, views and suggestions from participants to assess needs and future steps and prepare the final declaration of the Seminar. It drew on morning panels presenting options for cooperation/networking and initiatives to create tools supporting NMIRFs.

Specifically, participants were invited to:

1. define topics that require sharing of experiences,
2. identify short- and medium-term follow-up activities,
3. discuss preferable modalities for structuring cooperation or networking, and
4. define expectations and suggest contributions to the OHCHR virtual knowledge-sharing platform.

This section of the report is based on the interventions made during those final discussions but also captures views occasionally expressed on those matters in other sessions of the Seminar for consistency.

INTERVENTIONS BY STATES

Burkina Faso's representative raised that NMIRFs should be supported and equipped with tools to reach out better and activate other national actors. The first key set of actors is line ministries. The NMIRF of Burkina Faso relies on focal points in line ministries. However, those are subjected to a high turnover. Capacity-building tools should target focal points of NMIRFs in line ministries, as the NMIRF find it challenging to keep them aware and engaged about their reporting and follow-up roles. Focal points in line ministries cannot act alone: there is also a need to sensitise the higher administrative and political leadership in line ministries. Second, NMIRFs also raise awareness of rights and further enjoyment of rights vis-à-vis the general population. Third, the NMIRF of Burkina Faso felt the need to involve the Higher Judicial Council and the Bar Association in its work, as it proved challenging to get information on relevant court decisions. Collecting data in the judicial field was challenging.

International human rights law must be duly reflected in judicial proceedings. So far, judges and lawyers are better knowledgeable about national legislation. There

is a need for international law to be better understood and invoked by judicial actors. NMIRFs should be better equipped to perform these functions; ideally, some tools should feature in the virtual knowledge hub.

There is also a high value in sharing experiences, particularly in organising bilateral cooperation between NMIRFs, particularly at the regional level. There is potential for more advanced NMIRFs to assist those seeking to enhance their capacities, e.g., as regards information management systems. Each NMIRF has its strengths and weaknesses and can get inspiration from each other. Successful experiences elsewhere can be of interest and then adapted to local systems and contexts. Exchanges can be done through networking and at least putting all participants in the Seminar in contact, and bilateral cooperation can work too.

Morocco's representative reflected on what would be helpful to share on the virtual knowledge hub and, notably, what existing NMIRFs can themselves share on such a platform, for the benefit of others. The first point to consider pertains to the establishment of NMIRFs. Some countries still do not have one and could find resources on the hub to support their creation. Countries with existing NMIRFs could usefully document and share how they were created: which legal basis (decree, law...) was adopted? How are they organised? What were the discussion points in the negotiations leading to their creation? These experiences do not have to be considered blueprints to follow but can inspire reflections on other countries.

A second point to consider pertains to the everyday functions and activities of NMIRFs. NMIRFs draft reports, prepare examinations, follow up on recommendations, respond to personal communications and other complaints – for recognised organs, coordinate with all governmental stakeholders and consult with NHRIs, parliaments, courts, and civil society. In this regard, two types of documentation could usefully feature in the knowledge hub: 1) NMIRFs themselves need to document their experiences – for instance, NMIRFs could document how they draft a report, prepare the UPR, exchange with governmental actors, parliaments, civil society, etc.; and 2) the OHCHR should also clearly spell out the expectations placed on states in the reporting and follow-up processes, as there are so far very generic norms (e.g. maximum word limits...): there is an effort to be done by the OHCHR to spell out better what is a 'qualitative report', a 'good answer' to a communication from a UN Special Rapporteur, a successful examination/dialogue, how to follow-up to recommendations, how to conduct consultations with civil society and other actors, etc. NMIRFs need more detailed guidelines and terms of reference from the OHCHR to professionalise their work. It is not to say that all NMIRFs shall do the same, but more guidance would be useful for NMIRFs to consider how to establish processes and develop their work methodologies.

Lastly, discussing how to measure NMIRFs' efficiency from an organisational perspective would be useful. It would be useful to define the indicators to measure NMIRFs' performance. Is the performance of an NMIRF to be measured, for instance, in terms of actual improvement of human rights on the ground? The OHCHR guide on human rights indicators is a sound basis, but further work on this would be useful to tailor it to the work of NMIRFs.

Gabon's representative drew on the experience of Gabon's national committee for drafting the report, established in 2007. It includes representatives from all ministerial departments, the bar association, the judiciary, the parliament, the Economic and Social Council, the NHRI and civil society. A key challenge is how to mobilise focal points in administrations. There is a high turnover amongst them, which impedes the work of the national committee, especially as regards data collection. Training focal points is especially challenging when they come from the ministerial cabinets and are not technicians.

Regarding indicators for measuring NMIRFs' performance, one should be guided by improving human rights enjoyment for rights-holders. Reporting is a concrete step, but if one was to show the national report to people, regardless of where they live in the country, would they feel represented by the report? That is the type of question that should guide reflections on indicators.

Regarding capacity-building activities by the OHCHR, one should avoid direct training with little follow-up afterwards but instead develop the training of trainers or other modalities that ensure sustainability. Gabon's experience is that trainings organised as 'training of trainers' have proven useful, including for focal points, civil society, or the NHRI staff: the latter can now serve as trainers, and we can focus on accompanying them on other issues. Last, as regards the future virtual knowledge hub, a section dedicated to existing IT tools for information management would be welcome. For instance, Gabon's national committee has established a team tracking daily any governmental activities contributing to implementing recommendations but does this work manually. The IT solutions presented in yesterday's workshop could be useful.

Mali's representatives drew on the work of the committee established in February 2009 by decree. It is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and includes all ministerial departments. It faces similar challenges as NMIRFs in other countries, notably those presented by the representatives of Burkina Faso, Niger or Gabon. A key challenge is turnover, not only at the administrative level but also at the political level due to governmental instability. There are regular changes, and each new minister comes with new senior staff for the department he/she leads. As a result, our committee has great difficulties in functioning – and even meeting – leading to reporting delays. To resolve this, Mali is considering establishing a 'national direction in charge of human rights protection and promotion'. The text is done, and its establishment is now expected.

Mali has great expectations regarding exchanging experiences between NMIRFs and the upcoming virtual knowledge hub. Mali's NMIRF is in place, yet it has great difficulties operating and needs reinforcement. It is recommended that the virtual knowledge hub remains quite flexible, with states contributing voluntarily: it should not establish new obligations per se. The OHCHR's suggestion to have two-tier access to the hub (some sections accessible to the general public, others only accessible to NMIRFs staff/focal points) is very welcome. Regarding exchanges of experiences between NMIRFs, they should be regular and focus on specific themes. The two seminars planned in 2023 and 2024 by the OHCHR as per the Human Rights Council's resolution are welcomed but should be seen as complementary to other regular meetings of NMIRFs, as organising meetings in Geneva often leads to country representation that takes into account other parameters and may not be accessible

relevant NMIRFs staff/knowledge hub users. One topic that could be a focus of future exchanges is how to implement recommendations in a context marked by a sharp increase in the number of recommendations received by states.

Mauritania's representative drew on the experience of the intersectoral technical committee, which is based at the Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Relations with Civil Society. The committee members consist of representatives from government sectors and national human rights institutions. There is also an observer from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The committee has the authority to seek assistance from anyone they deem useful in their meetings. The representative noted that the large number of recommendations the country received necessitates an information management system to track their implementation accurately. The country is progressing towards adopting such a system and is currently developing a national action plan to follow up on implementing these recommendations. The representative also highlighted the need to distinguish between the recommendations made by treaty committees and those made by the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. The recommendations made by treaty committees are considered to be more technical and specific, while those made by the Universal Periodic Review mechanism are often complex. The representative is also engaged in a dialogue with the Interministerial Delegation of Human Rights in Morocco and expressed hope for a real partnership between the two countries, especially in light of Morocco's experience in this field.

Paraguay's representative welcomed the creation of a virtual knowledge hub and indicated Paraguay's intention to contribute to it. It recalled that this should come hand-in-hand with capacity-building activities on how to apply methodologies, increasing the highly qualitative and fundamental work already done by the OHCHR in that regard. However, enhancing the reporting and follow-up system not only depends on NMIRFs: one should also aim at enhancing the quality of the recommendations coming from the different human rights mechanisms. In particular, committees, rapporteurs and independent experts need to formulate better questions, make better recommendations and make concrete and useful suggestions on how to implement those and improve rights enjoyment. States go to great lengths to send information and attempt to follow up on recommendations. Similar expectations of professionalism are to be placed on UN experts – at the least that they consult and consider information already shared by the state with the international system to prepare their questions. Last, NMIRFs and the universal system must engage in enhanced outreach vis-à-vis the citizens so that people know that the examinations and NMIRFs activities work for their benefit.

Lebanon's representative drew on the experience of the Lebanese NMIRF, established by decree in 2018. Its mandate is two-fold: draft reports and follow-up reports. Concerning drafting reports, Lebanon's NMIRF has reached a good speed in less than five years, despite several challenges – many common to other countries. It is inspiring to see how other countries have overcome similar challenges. A lot still needs to be done to follow up on recommendations. The NMIRF of Lebanon faces challenges and has pending questions regarding implementation, particularly concerning the relationship between the executive and legislative branches, both of which are involved in following up on recommendations. Guidance and exchanges of experiences on implementation would be useful.

One proposal for the virtual knowledge hub would be to include a section with tools, guidance and/or experiences regarding protecting human rights in times of crisis. When facing economic, institutional, political or social crises, NMIRFs and their leaders are responsible for safeguarding existing achievements, and even guaranteeing the permanence and activities of the NMIRF through the crisis. Indeed, when a country is in crisis, NMIRF members and focal points might encounter increased challenges in their line ministries despite all their commitments to safeguarding human rights. Ministries' leadership may argue that human rights are a luxury or less of a priority given other emergencies. The virtual knowledge hub should address how to maintain the centrality of human rights in times of crisis and the role of NMIRFs in guaranteeing this prioritisation.

During the presentation of its NMIRF, **Uzbekistan's** representative underlined that NMIRFs are a vital part of the country-level human rights protection system. By raising awareness, providing advice, monitoring and holding authorities to account, they have a central role in navigating the great contemporary human rights challenges. The Seminar and the Marrakech Declaration should hopefully serve as a roadmap for increasing and strengthening the role of NMIRFs. NMIRFs should seek to organise regular and constructive cooperation to promote the inclusion of human rights in legislation, policies and programmes. Guidelines and Principles for NMIRFs should be developed, like Paris Principles for NHRIs. Last, a Global Association of NMIRFs would be an important platform for a comprehensive dialogue and exchanges of the best practices and skills and a centre of attention and operation of all stakeholders operating with a common view for enhancing the NMIRFs' role in the protection and promotion of human rights.

Jordan's representative drew on the experience of the Government Coordinator in Jordan, which was established in response to a royal initiative to develop a comprehensive human rights plan. The representative also highlighted the importance of having a database for the success of national human rights mechanisms. This point was emphasised by the experiences shared by various representatives from different countries and the role a database plays in facilitating the follow-up, implementation, and evaluation of human rights plans and programs. The consensus was that a database is essential for the effective functioning of a national mechanism, regardless of its form and structure. The representative also affirms that the necessity for cooperation between nations in adopting methods and procedures for building digital databases was emphasised to facilitate the work of national human rights mechanisms. The Seminar confirmed the need for initiatives to unify national mechanisms' standards and enable them to effectively engage and interact with international human rights mechanisms.

Italy's representative underlined that sharing good practices and establishing partnerships across and amongst NMIRFs can help to reinforce their role and mandate. Partnerships with the OHCHR are important, but direct bilateral cooperation between NMIRFs is also essential – it can take several forms, including twinning projects. NMIRFs have a key role in connecting the dots between different stakeholders and relevant themes, and therefore an important area of work for NMIRFs is human rights education and training. There is a need to reduce weaknesses in the field of human rights knowledge at all levels of the systems. It could benefit everyone if NMIRFs could exchange experiences in this field. It is also important to consider the role of civil

society, as well as the role of local and regional actors. Human rights impact can be felt more strongly at those subnational levels, not just at the national level. NMIRFs are well-placed to connect actors and levels of intervention.

Senegal's representative highlighted the importance of digital tools supporting human capital and skills. The NMIRF has met all its reporting obligations, but so far, with rudimentary tools. Digital systems supporting the work of staff could enhance performance. This staff would go through capacity support and training but would also need to involve all stakeholders at all levels of society. The NMIRF's experience integrates work with civil society, academics, religious groups, and the NHRI regarding the Paris Principles.

INTERVENTIONS BY EXPERTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

UN expert Virginia Brás Gomes reflected on the usefulness of the knowledge hub, not only for NMIRFs themselves but also from the perspective of treaty bodies. In preparation for dialogues with states, it would be very useful for experts to look at the hub to see whether the reviewed states have an NMIRF, what kind of NMIRF it is, and their experience implementing recommendations. That kind of information would help experts understand the NMIRF in the reviewed states. Treaty bodies could also think of developing recommendations on NMIRFs. The virtual hub will be important in sharing experiences on concretely overcoming challenges and difficulties. For instance, one way to overcome NMIRFs' focal points turnover is to designate two focal points per ministry at different levels. Last, NMIRF is structured with an objective: it is about rights and how to improve their enjoyment. The virtual knowledge hub should, therefore, not only be about technical aspects, such as how to do a report, but also sections about the rights themselves. To implement rights, you need qualified public policy experts who understand what rights are about and how to make them real. This progress should be linked to capacity-building experts.

The **Geneva Human Rights Platform's** representative recalled that the Geneva Human Rights Platform is a mechanism lab that supports the international community in engineering solutions to ensure the sustainable functioning of Geneva-based human rights bodies, allowing them to address human rights issues effectively. The Geneva Human Rights Platform engages with NMIRFs through different initiatives, including research on human rights strategies, digital tracking systems, piloting in-country reviews, and a training hub developing trainings in Geneva and capitals, on international human rights systems and specific human rights issues. The training hub offers training options tailored to the needs and expectations of specific stakeholders, including NMIRFs.

The Geneva Human Rights Platform stands ready to collaborate with the OHCHR and all relevant stakeholders in the brainstorming and development of the virtual knowledge hub. The Geneva Human Rights Platform has experience (both in terms of successes and challenges) as regards the establishment of tools aiming at developing a community of practice, based notably on its work with UN human rights treaty body members. Its UN treaty bodies members platform has existed for years and is an occasion for informal meetings between treaty bodies members. The lessons learned from this experience and the concept note developed regarding the development of a treaty body members' community of practice will be shared with the OHCHR.

Regardless of the structure and purpose the knowledge hub will have, one recommendation is the importance of testing the hub with a group of friends – perhaps establishing a group of NMIRFs willing to partake in testing the hub in order to tweak the different functionalities. Keeping the structure as plain and simple as possible is also preferable. Before designing the hub, it is crucial to answering key questions regarding its objective: What functionalities are needed? Will it be a community of practice or a space to exchange practices and experiences? Will it hold online meetings and sessions, e.g. adding a zoom or teams plug-in? Will it be used to engage directly with treaty bodies – with the possibility to submit a report there – or only be used for engagement between NMIRFs? Who is the moderator for the hub? How to define membership of the platform – is it the NMIRFs who will send names, and given the turnover of staff and focal points, should it be personal email or generic accounts assigned with permissions to access the hub?

UN expert Miloon Kothari stressed the need to define criteria for a successful NMIRF. It is also important for UN experts: if a country indicates that it has an NMIRF, is that enough? Should UN experts assume that there is one and that it is efficient? The question of the ‘national’ in NMIRF is of particular importance: ultimately, an NMIRF should lead a national, collective process while preserving the independence of civil society and NHRIs. How to achieve this needs further clarification. A successful NMIRF should be a mechanism where everybody feels involved and that is geared towards implementation. Ultimately, the last important criterion to assess the success of any NMIRF is to enhance human rights enjoyment on the ground. There is a crucial and urgent need to document and share experiences on how to successfully bring together different actors at the national level and deal with politics at both the national and international levels because of impacting reality positively.

The **Universal Rights Group**’s representative emphasised that capacity-building activities and peer-to-peer exchanges should avoid addressing in silos questions of NMIRFs mandates (e.g. intergovernmental coordination) and conversations digital tools. Digital technical solutions are not a silver bullet; they are only as good as the inputs that go into them and as good as their implementation strategies and efforts. Tools need to reflect and assist the structure’s and its staff’s work. As such, bilateral cooperation focusing on transferring digital solutions must be accompanied by conversations on broader objectives and its tools’ actual use and impact, taking a holistic approach.

Second, the URG stressed that normative developments for NMIRFs are just as important as exchanges of practices for improving NMIRFs. There is a need to work on both streams at the same time and develop an aspirational model for NMIRFs: clearly, there is no one-size-fits-all, but at least some ideal dimensions can be agreed upon, such as the fact that NMIRFs should be permanent structures. There is a need to discuss and agree, through a bottom-up approach that coalesces through the region towards the international, some criteria for NMIRFs.

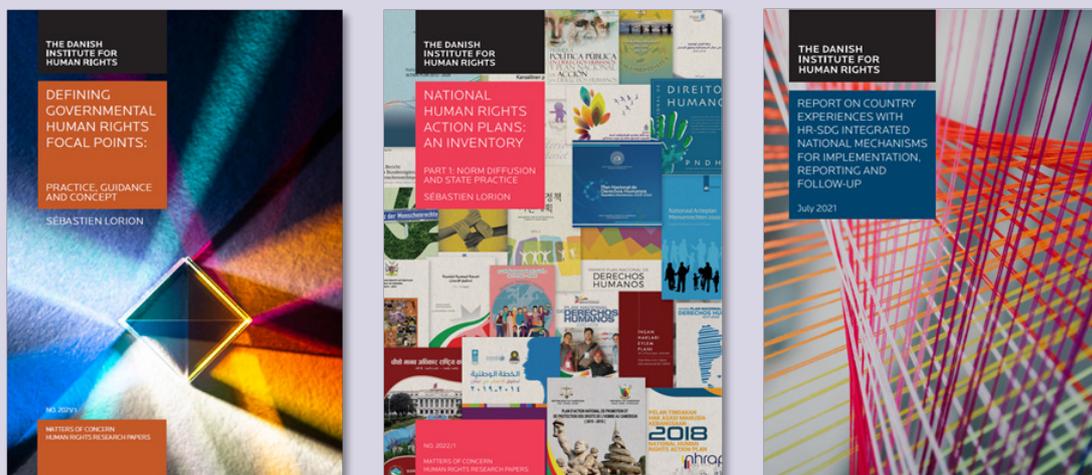
Without consensus on agreed standards, the virtual knowledge hub is a good initiative that needs precision. There is a need for precise information on country experiences, addressing the different challenges and how they were overcome, and going into quite a lot of detail if the hub is to be useful. To get precise information, one needs to carefully

craft the questions and be specific about the types of inputs expected from states to feature on the hub. Beta-testing is necessary regarding the framing of the questions. Beta-testing has to be in-person rather than at the political level. The Universal Rights Group avails itself to work on the framing for the hub: it will all depends on how the questions will be asked and what will be requested from states for the hub.

The **Danish Institute for Human Rights** representative recalled its work on NMIRFs and, in particular, its willingness to continue working bilaterally with various NMIRFs and contribute to the development of the virtual knowledge hub. The Institute has worked with some NMIRFs/governmental human rights focal points for over two decades and, together with them, has developed guidance and practical tools that could be useful for others. For instance, manuals have been developed with the Human Rights Ministry of Burkina Faso on methodologies to follow up and implement UPR recommendations. In addition, the Institute has a practice of documenting its work methodologies, based on its experiences with partners in the field, in an internal toolbox. It contains concept notes on various actors and their mandates and work methods on various aspects of our cooperation with them. For instance, the Institute has work methods on how governmental actors can adopt strategic plans for their activities, organise their reporting and follow-up processes, etc. The Institute also has its own online 'training hub' that has sections on different rights, mandate areas, and functions of key actors at the national level, including governmental ones. All this information and experiences could be useful for developing the virtual knowledge hub.

What is more, the Institute has been pioneering research on NMIRFs, through studies addressing general guidance and trends for NMIRFs and, more broadly, governmental human rights focal points or specific functions and aspects such as the development and implementation of national human rights action plans, or the linkages between SDGs reporting and NMIRFs' roles (see box below). The Institute is also preparing a new study investigating the relations and interactions between NMIRFs and NHRIs.

Danish Institute for Human Rights' research relevant for NMIRFs



For more, see: <https://www.humanrights.dk/research-project/governmental-human-rights-focal-points> and <https://www.humanrights.dk/research-project/national-human-rights-action-plans-inventory>.

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1: MARRAKECH DECLARATION ON NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING AND FOLLOW-UP IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 8 DECEMBER 2022

The city of Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, hosted on December 7 and 8, 2022, an international seminar on National Mechanisms for Implementation Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRFs), organised by the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights, in partnership with the Danish Institute for Human Rights, and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program. The seminar was attended by high-level participants, namely officials from ministerial departments and NMIRFs, alongside human rights experts, representing the different continents, as well as a significant participation of experts from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and qualitative participation of national, regional and international institutions working in the field of human rights.

After extensive in-depth discussions and constructive dialogues, which enabled sharing expertise, experiences, and best practices, as well as exchanging different perspectives and opinions, the proceedings of the international seminar concluded the following:

- Encourage the establishment and strengthening of NMIRFs, for which the mandate and attributions are defined by law;
- Provide the necessary political, technical and financial support to enable the NMIRFs to fulfil their roles and functions;
- Strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation and partnerships between NMIRFs;
- Commit to ensuring the holding of annual gatherings of NMIRFs;
- Establish an international network aiming to institutionalise the cooperation, partnership, dialogue and the exchange of expertise and experiences among NMIRFs. The network's final structure and governing principles will be agreed upon among this seminar's participating mechanisms, and its membership will stay open to NMIRFs;
- Elaborate a design proposition of this network, to be prepared by the national mechanisms of Paraguay, Portugal, and Morocco. The design proposition's elaboration will be coordinated by the Moroccan NMIRF, and will be presented for discussion and adoption during the next seminar;
- Promote the establishment and development of information systems to manage, process and analyse data related to the implementation of the recommendations of the UN and regional Human Rights mechanisms, exchange experiences and provide support and technical assistance thereon;
- Encourage the continuation and development of capacity building programs for NMIRFs and provide them with technical assistance;
- Continue the collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in their support and accompaniment of initiatives aiming to effectively implement this Marrakech Declaration.

ANNEXE 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Moldova	Alexandru	Iacub	General Secretary, and coordinator in the field of human rights on behalf of the National institutional mechanism	alexandru. iacub@social.gov.md

Category	Institution/ organisation	First name	Last name	Role	E-mail address
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	Ministry of Justice, Senegal	Souleye	Diouf	Director of Human Rights	souleyediouf. ddh@gmail.com
		Khady	Camara	Jurist	dykhvictor@ gmail.com
	Office of Commissioner for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Relations with Civil Society, Mauritania	Limam	Sidi Mohamed	Director of Human Rights	ddh@cdhahrsc. gov.mr
	Ministry of Justice and Promotion of Human Rights, Central African Republic	Salah	Dedy- Rodouan	Director General of Human Rights	dedyrodouan1@ gmail.com
	Reports Drafting Committee, Central African Republic	Faustin	Noudjoutar	Deputy Permanent Administrative Secretary	faustinnoudjou tar@gmail.com
	National Centre for Human Rights, Uzbekistan	Dilnoza	Muratova	Deputy Director	nhrc@mail.ru
	Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, Union of the Comoros	Moegni	Kassim	General Delegate for Human Rights	kassimoegni@ gmail.com
National Human Rights Institutions	The Danish Institute for Human Rights	Mette	Thygesen	Director, International Area	mett@ humanrights.dk
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ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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	The National Council for Human Rights, Morocco	Mohammed	Mustapha Laarissa	Director of Regional Office	
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	The National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms, Union of the Comoros	Sittou	Raghadat Mohamed	President	sittoumed@yahoo.fr
Intergovernmental organisations	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	Lena	Diesing	Policy Analyst	lena.diesing@oecd.org
	UN Experts	Miloon	Kothari	Member of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, former UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, President of UPR-Info	miloon.kothari@gmail.com
		Virgínia	Brás Gomes	Former Chair of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and former ministerial representative at the Portuguese NMIRF	vbrasgomes@gmail.com
	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Mahamane	Cissé-Gouro	Director	mahamane.cisse-gouro@un.org
		Marie-Eve	Boyer-Friedrich	Human Rights Office, Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme	marie.boyer@un.org
		Lyn	Eid	Human Rights Officer, Regional Office RO-MENA	lyn.eid@un.org

Category	Institution/ organisation	First name	Last name	Role	E-mail address
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Others	Danish Embassy in Morocco	Serena	Hebsgaard	First Secretary	serheb@um.dk

This report consists of the proceedings of the 'International Seminar on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRFs) in the field of human rights' organised by the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco in partnership with the Danish Institute for Human Rights, and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, in Marrakech on 7 and 8 December 2022.

The International Seminar gathered representatives of NMIRFs or governments from 20 countries, as well as experts, national human rights institutions and international/regional organisations. Its main objective was to provide an opportunity for NMIRFs to exchange experiences and discuss modalities for future exchanges, in line with recently resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council and in complement with OHCHR's efforts to strengthen NMIRFs.