

ICC Strategic Plan 2014 - 2016

For the 3 year period 1 January 2014 – 31 December 2016



**INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF
NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ICC)**

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1. Introduction

The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) was established in 1993 and is a membership-based association of independent national human rights institutions (NHRIs) from across the world. NHRIs have come to be recognized as having a unique role to play within the human rights environment often creating a “bridge” between the international and regional human rights systems and the domestic arena. Within their independent mandates, NHRIs can assist in promoting and monitoring the implementation of the States international human rights obligations and related recommendations received from an international level. NHRIs also assist in bridging the divide between the state and civil society often facilitating in bringing these parties together. Together with their legislatively entrenched mandates to promote and protect human rights they are well placed to monitor and hold governments accountable.

The ICC provides leadership to its members and is an important stakeholder at the international level in the promotion and protection of human rights. It assists in the coordination of NHRI activities and participation at an international level of NHRIs established in conformity with the Paris Principles; and, promotes the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in conformity with the Paris Principles.

This is the ICC third Strategic Plan and has been developed for the three-year period 1 January 2014 until 31 December 2016. The development of this Strategic Plan has been facilitated through the ICC Strategic Planning Task Force and has included a process of broad consultations amongst the ICC membership; the ICC Bureau; Regional Chairs; Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) through its National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section (NIRMS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Strategic Plan aims to advance the work of the ICC in meeting its objects and functions, while responding to the needs and priorities of its members and developments that impact NHRIs at an international level.

The ICC Strategic Plan will outline the associations mission, vision and principles; its organizational structure; provide a brief situational analysis and then set out and then set out the strategic goals . The Strategic Plan will be supported with an annual Implementation Plan and Budget and will be subject to a monitoring and evaluation process that will assist in assessing progress and identifying challenges that require to be addressed.

2. Vision, Mission, Functions and Principles

This section of the Strategic Plan outlines the vision and mission of the ICC for the three-year strategic planning period. For the sake of completeness, this section sets out the ICCs functions and principles upon which it operates as they are enshrined in the ICC Statute.

2.1. Vision

“The vision of the ICC is to develop as a strong international body able to gather and associate the NHRIs of the world, coordinate actions to its consolidation as a collective organization as well as improving the cooperation in the promotion of values, principles and practices around human rights at the national, regional and international levels. It is also intended to strengthen the inner functioning of the association and its visibility, recognition, credibility and effectiveness, whilst deepening its full integration into the human rights system of the United Nations.”

2.1 Mission

In terms of article 5 of the ICC Statute, the ICC is an international association of NHRIs, which promotes and strengthens NHRIs to be in accordance with the Paris Principles and provides leadership in the promotion and protection of human rights.

2.3. Functions

The functions of the ICC are set out in Article 7 of the ICC Statute as follows:

1. To coordinate at an international level the activities of NHRIs established in conformity with the Paris Principles, including such activities as:
 - Interaction and cooperation with the United Nations, including the OHCHR, the Human Rights Council, its mechanisms, United Nations human rights treaty bodies, as well as with other international organisations;
 - Collaboration and coordination amongst NHRIs and the regional groups and Regional Coordinating Committees;
 - Communication amongst members, and with stakeholders including, where appropriate, the general public;
 - Development of knowledge;
 - Management of knowledge;
 - Development of guidelines, policies, statements;
 - Implementation of initiatives;
 - Organisation of conferences.

2. To promote the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in conformity with the Paris Principles, including such activities as:
 - Accreditation of new members;
 - Periodic renewal of accreditation;
 - Special review of accreditation;
 - Assistance of NHRIs under threat;
 - Encouraging the provision of technical assistance;
 - Fostering and promoting education and training opportunities to develop and reinforce the capacities of NHRIs.

3. To undertake such other functions as are referred to it by its voting members.

2.4. Principles

Article 7 of the ICC Statute sets out the associations principles that will guide its work in fulfilling its functions. These are as follows:

- Fair, transparent, and credible accreditation processes;
- Timely information and guidance to NHRIs on engagement with the Human Rights Council, its mechanisms, and United Nations human rights treaty bodies;

- The dissemination of information and directives concerning the Human Rights Council, its mechanisms, and United Nations human rights treaty bodies to NHRIs;
- Mandated representation of NHRIs;
- Strong relationships with the OHCHR and the Regional Coordinating Committees that reflect the complementarity of roles;
- Flexibility, transparency and active participation in all processes;
- Inclusive decision-making processes based on consensus to the greatest extent possible;
- The maintenance of its independence and financial autonomy

3. Situational Analysis

The ICC's Strategic Goals are influenced by a number of internal and external factors. During the past years, this environment has changed dramatically. Internally, there has been the establishment of the ICC governance structure, a growing membership and a strengthened accreditation procedure. Externally there have been new opportunities to engage with international human rights mechanisms and partners. The following section highlights the most significant factors that have influenced – and will continue to influence – the ICC's fulfillment of its vision and mission.

3.1. Internal factors

A key strength of the ICC is that it functions as a global network, encompassing human rights expertise and knowledge from independent NHRIs and RCCs worldwide. With an established governance structure and a UN recognized, independent accreditation process, its reputation and credibility are such that it is increasingly being called upon to represent NHRIs as a collective at the international level.

There is a strong willingness on the part of members and partners to contribute time and resources to strengthen the ICC, leading to a greater sense of ownership within the association. Mutual support can be provided when a member is under threat. The leadership role of the ICC Chairperson and the Geneva-based activities has had a positive impact on the visibility, recognition and strength of the ICC and NHRIs at the international level.

Nevertheless, there remains room for addressing some internal gaps faced by the ICC as it embarks on the next phase of its maturity as an organization. A more strategic approach to determine priorities, continuity of priorities and follow up could foster and sustain the benefits of ICC activities. The roles of the various office bearers, functionaries and members within the ICC and their corresponding regional counterparts require further clarification. The staffing requirements of the ICC Geneva Office and the ICC more generally in order that it may operate effectively and efficiently needs to be addressed in order to determine if the current staffing is adequate. There is a need for greater sharing of responsibilities and ensuring open lines of communications, both internally and with external partners. There is a need to evaluate the impact of key partnerships, ensure that there is sufficient role clarification and explore new key relationships and develop the necessary communications strategy that supports this area of work. The ICC lacks sufficient processes and tools to share knowledge.

The ICC has grown in recent years and has gone from being a loose association to a formalized structure, recognised in terms of Swiss law, with operating with two staff members for during the past 18 months in an environment of increased recognition and demands being placed on it. The ICC needs to urgently develop its internal corporate governance structures in order to remain accountable and transparent to its members and ensure that it operates efficiently and effectively. The ICC urgently needs to address its

human resources capacity and ensure that it has a sustainable income. This will call for creativity and increased participation by members in the daily functioning of the ICC. The role of and relationship with OHCHR NIRMS requires clarification within this context.

There have been a number of significant steps taken by the ICC to ensure greater engagement and recognition of both the ICC and NHRIs within the UN human rights system. ICC advocacy, with joint efforts and dedication of time and resources in both Geneva and increasingly New York, has greatly assisted in these processes, as has support from the OHCHR and particularly the High Commissioner. The ICC has effectively assisted individual NHRIs to engage with the UN and regional human rights frameworks.

Currently, NHRI engagement in the international human rights framework is generally low, in part due to limited resources available to NHRIs. This is also due to a lack of knowledge by members and the corresponding need for NHRI training, capacity building and practical tools to assist in guiding NHRI involvement at an international level.

NHRIs operate within the context of limited resources and ensuring that these resources are directed towards their domestic beneficiaries. The ICC needs to operate creatively and effectively in ensuring that there is greater sharing of knowledge and best practices that will maximize the promotion and protection of human rights at a domestic level.

The ICC has grown significantly in recent years both in terms of size and recognition; and with this growth comes opportunities and challenges. There is a clear need to address measures to ensure good governance for greater accountability and transparency whilst at the same time supporting effectiveness and efficiency. There is also an urgent need to take measures to ensure that institutional knowledge and memory is not lost with the ICC Chairpersons office moving from region to region every three years.

Finance

One important factor that continues to impact on the capacity of the ICC to address these issues is its limited financial resources. The ICC is a membership based organization that is currently reliant on the relatively low fees paid by NHRIs. The ICC must become financially viable and sustainable in its own right.

The ICC's funds come mainly from subscription fees paid by members with 'A' status. Less than 10% of funding comes from other sources such as the annual UN Grant that is channeled via the NIRMS Unit. Currently, just less than 50 NHRIs pay subscriptions in the amount of 5 000CHF per year. Approximately 70% of the organisations budget can be attributed to fixed costs related to the running of the Geneva office, staff and professional salaries. Due to the nature of the institution; namely being comprised of independent state institutions, alternative funding sources need to be considered carefully in order to ensure that the independence of the ICC and its members is not compromised. The ICC has not increased membership fees given the increased requests for fee waiver requests from members. Given the current funding situation the ICC membership need to take strategic and creative decisions in terms of the role and functions of the ICC; its Geneva office; the daily administration of the institution and the key thematic priorities.

Accreditation

An area where best practice is being recognized is in the ICC accreditation process; however the benefits of this process could be fostered through more systematic follow-up of the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation's recommendations.

The ICC accreditation processes lies at the core of the legitimacy of the ICC as the association which facilitates UN accreditation in conjunction with the OHCHR. The integrity of the process is critical to ensuring that NHRIs are recognised, respected and allowed to participate meaningfully at the international level. This in turn strengthens NHRIs independent standing and effectiveness at a domestic level and ensures that the UN has an effective partner at the domestic level providing a bridge between the international and the domestic.

NHRIs are being increasingly recognised within the UN system. In conjunction therewith, NHRIs roles and responsibilities are being further developed so too must the accreditation system reflect these changes. In turn, NHRIs require assistance in preparation for the accreditation process and the reaccreditation process that takes place every 5 years. The ICC Sub Committee on Accreditation which is comprised of members from each ICC region who serve on the Committee and fund their own participation in the Committee's activities, are responsible for administering accreditation processes needs to continue adapting and responding to the changing environment in which NHRIs operate. The ICC Sub Committee on Accreditation needs to continually review and seek to strengthen the accreditation process. The ICC also needs to develop further systems and processes to ensure that recommendations arising out of the accreditation process are monitored and followed up on

3.2. External factors

The ICC operates in an overall favorable external environment. There are increasing opportunities to be the collective voice of NHRIs in strategic engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as with external partners such as OHCHR and the UNDP.

There is a need to vigorously pursue the right of A-status NHRIs to attend and speak at all relevant international and regional human rights fora. The ICC will be assisted in this by a strengthened recognition of the ICC accreditation in international human rights frameworks. Interaction between NHRIs and regional and international human rights mechanisms, including recognition of the ICC accreditation process by regional networks, is developing and is supported by OHCHR; however, clear and formalized working methods with international and regional bodies require attention.

The ICC will need to develop and implement strategies to cooperate with alternative networks and to increase its capacity to respond to the fast-changing and often unpredictable international human rights environment.

The strengthening of the relationship between the ICC and UN human rights mechanisms and the progressive formalization of this cooperation will ultimately impact on the ICC and its work. There is a need to underline the importance of this interaction and the mutual benefits and synergies that can be attained. As NHRIs receive greater recognition at an International level the expectations of and responsibilities assigned to NHRIs increase. One of the biggest challenges facing the ICC is to determine how with limited resources it can continue to promote the important role of NHRIs at a domestic level though participation at an international level.

The Regional Coordinating Committees have developed in recent years with some having permanent Secretariats. This assists the ICC in carrying out its work at a regional level and in turn requires the need for role clarification in order to avoid duplication of activities and maximize results.

In order to increase the effectiveness of NHRIs at a domestic and international level there is a need to ensure that the Paris Principles; the importance of compliance therewith and the role of NHRIs are more widely and better understood especially amongst external role-players.

The ICC has made considerable progress in building partnerships and engaging with external stakeholders. Of note is the Tripartite Partnership Agreement between UNDP, OHCHR/NIRMS, and the ICC. There has also been initial discussions and cooperation with the International Ombuds Institute (IOI). The ICC has gone some way in ensuring that ICC meetings and conferences are inclusive and that a wide range of stakeholders including UN agencies, international experts and non-governmental organisations are invited. This has provided ICC members with important opportunities to build new partnerships and strengthen other relationships.

The ICC enjoys a dynamic relationship with the Regional Coordinating Committees of NHRIs from Africa, Asia, Europe and the office of the Americas Chair. The ICC through its relationship with the OHCHR NIRMS has provided support and been involved in the strengthening of the Regional Coordinating Committees and fora. During 2013, the Secretariat of the European Regional Coordinating Committee was established. There is a continued need for the ICC, where possible to continue supporting the strengthening of the Regional Coordinating Committees, where needed, and to develop a consensus across regions on the roles of Regional Coordinating Committees, Regional Chairs and the ICC. This will improve integration of regional and international work. However, as the ICC and the regions grow and evolve there is a continuing to need evaluate these relationships and determine effective relationships and clarification of roles.

4. Strategic Goals

This section of the Strategic Plan outlines the four Strategic Goals and the intended results that will guide the ICC in its work during the three year strategic planning period. These Strategic Goals are:

1. Enhance engagement with the United Nations and regional mechanisms
2. Build partnerships and engage external stakeholders;
3. Maintain and strengthen ICC accreditation process;
4. Develop a sustainable and well managed ICC; and

Strategic Goal 1 – Enhance engagement with the UN and regional human rights mechanisms

This Strategic Goal will focus on the ICCs relationship with the UN and regional human rights mechanisms and also the ICCs facilitation role of ensuring NHRI participation at the UN.

This Strategic Goal will aim to have the following expected results / outcomes:

- Greater visibility, awareness and understanding of the role of the ICC and NHRIs;
- More effective, focused and coordinated engagement by the ICC and its members with international and regional mechanisms;
- The ICC is more responsive to needs of ICC Members who in turn are better supported and informed about intervention opportunities;

- The ICC is more responsive and can effectively contribute to developments at an international and regional level;
- The ICC and NHRIs participate in more UN forums.

Strategic Goal 2 – Build partnerships and engage external stakeholders

This Strategic Goal will focus on the ICCs relationship with other external stakeholders. This will include its relationship with its two key partners, NIRMS and UNDP; the Regional Coordinating Committees, civil society and other international independent bodies.

This Strategic Goal will aim to have the following results / outcomes:

- Recognition and understanding of the ICC and its accreditation process is increased;
- Enhanced cooperation between the ICC and the Regional Coordinating Committees / fora of NHRIs;
- The needs and priorities of ICC members are more effectively integrated into ICC work through more effective engagement with the Regional Coordinating Committees / fora of NHRIs;
- ICC Partnerships have clear roles and responsibilities;
- ICC facilitates greater regional cooperation.

Strategic Goal 3 – Maintain and strengthen ICC accreditation processes

This Strategic Goal focusses on the accreditation process of NHRIS, one of the core functions of the ICC.

This Strategic Goal will aim to have the following results:

- NHRIs are supported through the accreditation processes creating a more transparent process;
- ICC accreditation recommendations are followed up and monitored.

Strategic Goal 4 – Develop a sustainable and well managed ICC

This Strategic Goal focusses on the need to take the ICC to the next level as an organisation and ensure that it functions effectively and efficiently.

This Strategic Goal will aim to have the following results / outcomes:

- A financially sustainable ICC that has adequate human resources to meet its members growing expectations and achieve its Strategic Goals;
- Corporate governance framework with policies that govern management, administration, finance, human resources and risk management;
- Improved communication and retention of institutional memory within the ICC and with partners through better access to information sharing through improved use of technological resources;
- A financially sustainable ICC that has adequate human resources to achieve its Strategic Goals;
- ICC membership is increased and maintained through assistance being provided to new members and NHRIs under threat.

5. Thematic Priorities

The thematic priorities will be determined through a consultative process with ICC Bureau members as representatives of the regions and the ICCs key stakeholders NIRMS and UNDP.

Where appropriate, an ICC Working Group will be established or an ICC Member will be designated as a lead institution due to its recognized expertise in the particular area of human rights to lead the ICC in

the area of work. A Terms of Reference or Plan of Action will be developed to guide the ICC in its activities on the chosen thematic priority. Activities will aim to develop and share knowledge and strengthen capacity amongst members.

The thematic priorities will be reviewed and regularly updated.

6. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

6.1 Implementation

It is the responsibility of the ICC Chairperson and the ICC Bureau to ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan through the development of an Implementation Plan. The ICC Chairperson may with the consent / in consultation with the ICC Bureau form committees/task teams or request individual ICC members to carry out specific activities contained in the Implementation plan.

The Implementation Plan will set out the activities, outputs, timelines and dependencies. A Budget will also be developed each year for the Implementation Plan.

The ICCs Annual Budget will run from 1 January until 31 December each year. The annual Implementation Plan will run for the same period. The ICCs Annual Budget will be prepared by the ICC Chair in consultation with the ICC Finance Sub Committee and the ICC Bureau.

The Implementation Plan and annual Budget will be regularly reviewed by the ICC Bureau and updated where necessary. Together with the relevant ICC reports, a framework will be created to determine whether the outputs achieve the desired results. *In time, the ICC needs to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system with relevant indicators.*

6.2 Review of Implementation Plans

Strategic planning is a continuous process that is responsive to change. The Implementation Plans and Annual Budget will be subject to review by the ICC Bureau at each meeting. ICC members will be invited by the ICC Chairperson through the Regional Chairs to provide input prior to ICC Bureau Meetings.

6.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The ICC Bureau is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, Implementation Plans and Budget expenditure of the association and to propose decisions on changes and amendments thereto. The Strategic Plan, Implementation Plan, Annual Budget and audited financial statements will be made available on the ICC website and distributed to all ICC members in order to promote and strengthen transparency in the management of resources.

ICC office-bearers, staff members and designated members will report to the ICC Bureau and ICC General Meetings on progress achieved, challenges experienced and suggested solutions in relation to the implementation of the ICC Strategic Plan and Implementation Plans.