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25th Annual Meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC)

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(15:00pm-16:15pm)
Room XVIII
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Excellencies, Commissioners and Colleagues,

It is with great honour that I represent UNDP at the 25th Annual Meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC). Unfortunately, Ms. Fraser-Moleketi, head of Democratic Governance in UNDP and who addressed this august network last year, was unable travel as planned due to the unexpected but rather critical corporate process where her leadership and direction was urgently required. I join Ms Fraser-Moleketi in thanking Ms Noonan and you for this invitation. UNDP recognises the responsibility placed on National Human Rights Institutions globally and the human rights community that you provide leadership to in your countries. As the Lead advisor on Human Rights for UNDP, I assure you of UNDP’s commitment affirmed by the Administrator of UNDP, Ms Clark and Ms Fraser-Moleketi, both of whom addressed you these past two years.
Madam Chair, Madam High Commissioner, Excellencies, Commissioners and Colleagues

I now read Ms. Fraser-Moleketi’s statement.

Last year, I addressed you not long after the Arab awakening with paved the path for a defined Social Contract which demanded greater recognition for expressions of human dignity. In addition, to the many challenges we already face, it is important to also note that the world is now home to 1.2 billion young people, the largest generation of young people ever, noting the outcomes of the most recent outcomes of the Youth 21 meeting. At the same time, greater calls for accountability from the business sectors are being demanded in addition for greater responses to addressing conflict, hunger all of which threaten peace and security. Governance systems, discrimination and exclusion, accountability, and desperate calls for processes and responses that are inclusive, responsive and respectful of international norms and principles are now rightfully demanded and must be urgently met.

As we do so, amidst strengthening the inextricable link between human rights and development, I reiterate the pivotal role that NHRIs play in ensuring human rights remain a central focus of the evolving political and development discourse for which processes of Rio + 20 and Post 2015 agenda provide opportunities for. These processes, I believe will now need more robust and innovative leadership from
National Human Rights Institutions in contextualising human rights that are consonant with international norms, standards and principles. We must also ensure that human rights are integrated into all processes relating to Democratic Governance. For the evolution of the social contract requires a strong national, regional and international human rights system in addressing structural inequality, discrimination and supporting both political and economic inclusion.

As we emphasized during the recent Human Rights Council Panel discussion on Human Rights Mainstreaming within the UN system, the NHRI s play a major role in serving as an effective bridge between the governments, UN system, and civil society, and as such are central to national systems for the realization of rights.

Since awareness of human rights and strength of national system and partners vary significantly across the regions and that national systems operate in highly uncertain and changing environments in which existing strategies quickly become outdated and ineffective, the NHRI s are in better position to provide more contextualized regional and/or country specific and cost-efficient support. In deepening the culture of human rights, significant long term investments where respect for the fundamental dignity of each individual is recognized as essential to the functioning and advancement of society. This will also require an independent
judiciary, effective parliamentary oversight mechanisms, fair administration of justice, dynamic civil society and free and responsible media.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process at the country level, in particular, has already created that opportunity and the space, and we should explore all available means to sustain that momentum, further supported by the international human rights architecture and all the concerned partners. We will, once again, emphasise this point during tomorrow’s panel discussion at the Human Rights Council.

**Excellencies, Commissioners and Colleagues**

UNDP continues to support the NHRI’s in over 90 countries through various systematic and institutionalized capacity development initiatives that aim at creating an enabling environment for NHRI’s to fulfill their functions, including through identifying human rights and development trends and synergies. But the challenges faced by the NHRI’s across the world outweigh all the support that they receive from all partners and at this time of crises and global development challenges, independent, effective and efficient NHRI’s are now needed more than ever.
Since the last ICC annual meeting in May 2011, noteworthy steps have been taken in further strengthening UNDP’s engagement with the NHRI’s, under the UNDP/ICC/OHCHR tripartite framework of co-operation concluded in March 2011. Under this partnership, our main objective is to support various catalytic and innovative processes that would contribute to creating an enabling environment for NHRI’s to fulfil their functions more efficiently and effectively. However, there was consensus that, whilst the overall mandates of the NHRI’s were clear, there remain several areas that still require additional support from the internal architecture of NHRI’s, sometimes internal governance influenced (directly and/or indirectly) also by external political challenges, allocation of resources, scope of mobilizing resources, and implementation of mandates all of which have bearing on the effective and efficient implementation of NHRI mandates. It is also in recognition of the role NHRI’s play, that UNDP supported the development of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan (2012-2014) for NANHRI.

The relevance of strengthening NHRI’s institutional capacity through capacity assessments remains a priority for UNDP with the long term objective that seeks to enable a more rigorous internal self-assessment of the NHRI, having regard to the internal and external dynamics as well as current processes and opportunities. As such, UNDP have prioritised the review and consolidation of the gap analysis and capacity assessments for this year.
We would like to, once again, commend the outgoing ICC Chair, Ms. Rosslyn Noonan, for her tireless efforts and leadership in this regard.

**Excellencies, Commissioners and colleagues**

Another major topic discussed at the partnership meeting was Knowledge Management. Not surprising, this was also a dominant theme at UNDP’s Global Community of Practice meeting in November last year, which brought together over 70 practitioners from 50 UNDP Country Offices and senior OHCHR staff, all of whom emphasized the need to document good practices within and across NHRIIs, as well as at the regional and global levels and promote greater engagement in knowledge sharing and sharing of experience with regards to the engagement with NHRIIs. We are currently commencing this process internally and hope to report on progress at our upcoming meetings.

On the same point, I also alert you to the an inter-agency e-discussion taking place next month, through the UNDP- hosted UN Human Rights Policy Network (HURITALK) that has a membership of over 1200 human rights and development practitioners (UN and non-UN). This e-network which serves as a forum for
exchange of information, good practice and lessons learned, will be host an e-
discussion “UN Engagement with the Universal Periodic Review - Opportunities
and Strategies for UN and National Programming”. One of the critical questions that
will be discussed is the role of NHRIs in the second cycle of the UPR and again we
look to the NHRIs supported as far as possible UN agencies/UN Country Teams to
reinforcing human rights in development processes so that these processes no longer
remain separate as they form part of the follow-up on the recommendations
emanating from the UPR. We have already engaged with the ICC Chair to ensure
contributions from the NHRIs into the 6-week long discussion. We hope this will
serve as the foundation for a much more enhanced knowledge sharing and
management.

With those remarks, madam Chair and distinguished participants, allow me to
conclude by thanking once again Ms Noonan for her support and her role in
solidifying UNDP’ engagement with the ICC. I would also like to congratulate Dr.
Mousa Burayzat, whom I briefly met together with other colleagues of the ICC
during the recent Commission on the Status of Women meeting in New York and
with whom I hope to advance further discussions during the course of this week.
Thank you for your time and wishing you well during your deliberations this w