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Panel Discussion
Sharing best practices and promoting technical cooperation:
Paving the way towards the second cycle of the Universal
Periodic Review

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OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Opening statement by
Ms. Navi Pillay
High Commissioner for Human Rights

Geneva, 21 March 2012
Excellencies,
Dear panel members, colleagues,

As you know from our annual reports, much of OHCHR work at country and regional level is devoted to providing technical cooperation assistance, at the request or with the consent of host countries. These interventions seek to strengthen national human rights promotion and protection systems in the context of national development. We do so in a spirit of partnership whereby initiatives are developed with national authorities and other stakeholders, such as the UN system, NHRIs, civil societies, concerned communities and development actors. The details of OHCHR’s country and regional activities, by all 58 field presences, are described in OHCHR annual reports.

This work is guided by the recommendations from treaty bodies and special procedures, and more recently from the UPR. The latter new mechanism has opened unprecedented opportunities to initiate or strengthen dialogue and cooperation on human rights at all levels, and with all countries. OHCHR is integrating the UPR process and outcomes in its workings, in order to respond to requests for assistance from States in a coherent, timely, efficient and cost-effective manner. The UPR has proved to be an opportunity for OHCHR to strengthen our action. It is also a source of considerable challenge, as our resources remain limited in view of the magnitude of the tasks and expectations.

**UPR: an opportunity to strengthen international human rights cooperation**

The UPR first cycle came to an end last week. Accordingly, all UN Member States have had their human rights record reviewed by the Council. All States participated in the proceedings, mostly at high level. It has opened up unprecedented opportunities for States, the UN, regional organisations, civil society organizations, NHRIs and development actors to foster international dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights. It is in this spirit that this panel discussion was convened and I look forward to a creative exchange.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**The challenge of the second cycle:**

The first cycle has demonstrated that the UN Charter’s ideal that the international community should work together to promote and protect human rights can be realized. In the second cycle, the UPR must live up to these expectations. It will be tested: deeds will have to match words, this new mechanism must not miss the chance to make change at national level, it must confirm its credibility. UPR is not a PR exercise – it is not only a reporting process in Geneva: it is an on-going process of dialogue and cooperation at home, where it first matters to make human rights become a reality. This is where its success will be measured: To succeed it must also continue to be based on dialogue and cooperation, be constructive, honest, fair, non-selective and truly universal.
This is why the HRC has emphasized that the challenge for States during the second cycle will be to implement accepted recommendations and other commitments made in the first cycle. This mechanism will be what all of us, States, NHRI, civil societies, UN, regional organisations, development actors, will make of it. Its success will be our success, its failure our failure.

For a successful second cycle, States may wish to prepare themselves, in line with existing good practices, such as the setting up of senior level coordination mechanisms for implementation of recommendations, or provision of mid-term reports or action plans.

Dear Colleagues,

OHCHR is developing its global policy with regard to supporting UPR follow-up. The challenge is vast and our limited resources and operational capacity are already stretched: there are 193 States and over 20,000 UPR recommendations, many of which will require huge efforts and resources to implement. We are thus defining our role in a strategic manner and use our resources as “seed investment” to support countries in their efforts.

In this spirit and in line with OHCHR’s priority to strengthen human rights mechanisms and the progressive development of human rights law, we have adopted a holistic approach to UPR follow-up, namely supporting the implementation of the recommendations of all UN human rights mechanisms, including the UPR.

This holistic approach is the spirit of our effort to operationalize these recommendations; our office is its engine; and our field presences, its vehicles. In countries with no field presence, we work through our regional offices or from Geneva and explore partnerships with key actors engaged in the UPR process.

Capacity development within OHCHR:

To implement this approach, we are reorganising our capacity to integrate the UPR into our workings, all in support to States and other stakeholders. In December 2011, I have requested our Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division to take the lead within OHCHR in this regard, so as to supporting the UPR process both at the Council and on the ground, in full cooperation with UN agencies and programs, regional organisations and development actors.

Practically, we are integrating the recommendations from these mechanisms into our planning and programming at all levels, in line with our mandate, objectives and priorities. We are developing our capacity to provide effective support to States by: (a) producing and disseminating information about the UPR process and outcomes; (b) producing tools to assist States and stakeholders in their UPR efforts; (c) documenting creative initiatives by States and other actors to implement human rights recommendations; (d) responding to requests for assistance and management of the UPR Trust Funds; and (e) supporting the participation of all stakeholders to the UPR at home and in Geneva.
A key challenge in this process will be, to assess the impact of the UPR at country level. I am looking forward to your ideas about how to go about this.

**OHCHR efforts to support UPR and its follow-up:**

To encourage and support Member States and other stakeholders to continue engaging with the UPR, we have been organising, or co-organising with others, including the UNDP, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International organisation of the Francophonie, international workshops to provide States and stakeholders with information, guidance, tools, to exchange good practices and reflect on their experience.

Our field presences are actively encouraging, advising and supporting national authorities, civil societies, UN entities and other actors in their efforts to implement UPR and other human rights recommendations. In the past two years, we have undertaken more than 133 UPR-related activities in 51 countries. Elsewhere, we are supporting States efforts through technical cooperation, either directly, or through other actors, such as UNCTs.

We have also made significant progress to mainstream human rights in the UN work, in order to provide countries with a more coherent source of support and optimise existing resources. We are strengthening our cooperation with UN agencies, in particular UNDP. In October 2011, we launched with UNDP the UNDG-HRM Multi-donor Trust Fund to strengthen the capacity of the UNCTs to support development of human rights capacities at country level. We have developed a joint strategy to deploy human rights advisers within UNCT Resident coordinators offices, to operationalize that process and expand opportunities for technical assistance to countries.

These activities are conducted by drawing from our general budget, our Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation, and UPR Trust Fund for financial and technical assistance established by the Council. In the past two years, we have supported in this way 22 projects in 14 countries. In 2012, the UPR Trust Fund will be funding UPR follow-up activities in several others countries or regions including in Central Asia, the Pacific, Africa and Latin America. The fund has thus far received 1,467,181 million US$ contributions, and as of February 2012 we have been funding such activities for a total of approximately 700,000 US$, with several other requests under review. I wish to thank the Governments of Germany, Morocco, Russian Federation, the UK and Colombia for their contributions, and strongly encourage other countries to support our work through the Trust Funds.

These OHCHR efforts are converging towards one end: to provide timely and quality support, through technical and other assistance, to States and stakeholders in their effort to implement their human rights obligations and commitments.

**OHCHR will continue to support States through this process, including through technical cooperation as one of the means to bring about greater compliance with the human rights standards.**
Ultimately, the purpose of the programme is to facilitate constructive change at country level, so that individuals and communities are able to exercise and enjoy human rights in their lives, and can fully participate in the development of a stable and peaceful society. Development efforts cannot be successful or sustainable without strong foundations of respect for human rights, good governance and the rule of law. Indeed they are part of an intrinsic whole, the aim of which is the building of peaceful, developed, just and creative societies.

I look forward to a fruitful exchange and hearing about new ideas and suggestions from you about ways to enhance our collaboration in support of your efforts to implement your human rights obligations and commitments.

Thank you.