ICC STATEMENT

On the occasion of the Human Rights Council General Debate on Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

GENEVA, 3 July 2012

The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (ICC) warmly welcomes the Secretary General’s report on national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and the ICC accreditation process.

The report provides ample evidence of the impact that cooperation between the OHCHR, the ICC and its regional networks has in terms of promoting and protecting human rights globally through effective and independent NHRIs.

Working together, the OHCHR and the ICC provide effective guidance to NHRIs striving to meet the requirements of the Paris Principles in terms of fulfilling their broad mandates, functions and guaranteeing their independence.

Strong and independent NHRIs in turn serve as key domestic partners to the UN and its mechanisms. They have a unique mandate and therefore responsibility to affirm and help progress the aspirations of people struggling to claim their rights.

This mandate, and its responsibilities, rests not on privilege nor is it a given once bestowed. NHRIs must continuously work to improve their compliance with the Paris Principles, and thus their credibility as human rights defenders.

As we take stock of the key achievements reflected in the Secretary General’s report, let us also acknowledge the challenges that demand the continued attention of the international community.

The ICC takes this opportunity to welcome the partnership with the UNDP in support of NHRIs and to call for UN system-wide coordination on NHRIs.

The ICC welcomes the Secretary General’s support for NHRIs’ independent participation in UN bodies and fora and will continue to advocate, as recommended by the SG, for recognition of NHRIs’ independent status.

In a year when a number of NHRIs have faced significant threats to their independence, their effectiveness and even their very existence, the ICC particularly welcomes continued capacity building activities and funding support for NHRIs by the OHCHR and its UN partners. It is equally important to recognise that the regional networks of the ICC are critical
to the ongoing strengthening of cooperation and knowledge sharing among NHRIs. They themselves require capacity building and funding support.

To further strengthen the ICC accreditation process, we welcome NGOs with country specific knowledge to make written contributions to the Sub-Committee on Accreditation.

In relation to the issue of reprisals, the ICC underscores that it will not be deterred in its mission by attempts to threaten and intimidate those who speak out against social injustices and human rights violations.

Finally may I thank the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their support for NHRIs and acknowledge the work of the NIRMS and many others within the OHCHR and within the UNDP who are working with the ICC and its regional networks to encourage the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in every country in the world.

Thank you.