FOURTH ANNUAL SEMINAR SERIES ON NHRIS
NHRIS’ ROLE IN CONFLICT AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS – A CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Hosted by UNDP, OHCHR and GANHRI

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Statement by
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865 words – 7 minutes
Excellencies, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-Generals, distinguished Chairpersons and colleagues from National Human Rights Institutions, representatives from Permanent Missions and civil society, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

As Chairperson of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), I warmly welcome our distinguished guests and everyone present to attend and participate in today's Seminar on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in conflict and fragile contexts.

Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson – we are extremely grateful that you honour us by accepting our invitation to address us in this seminar. Our utmost appreciation to you for having prioritised us ahead of your other pressing engagements.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Thomas Schieb and the German Permanent Mission for their co-sponsorship of today's seminar, and for Germany's long-term support of the roles of NHRIs.

Finally I wish to acknowledge our global tripartite partners, namely the UNDP represented by Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support Magdy Martinez Soliman. and the OHCHR, represented here today by Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Simonovic, who are joining us in this seminar in the midst of their hectic schedules.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Human rights violations in their multi-faceted forms play a major role in generating or aggravating most of today's conflicts. They are often both causes for, and consequences of, conflict, and are the world’s most accurate early warning signs of trouble.

It is precisely for this reason that National Human Rights Institutions (or NHRIs) have an important role to fulfill and thus can be key partners to the UN and its member states in preventing and resolving violent conflicts.

NHRIs are independent institutions with a broad state mandate to protect and promote human rights. In line with this unique mandate under the United Nations Paris Principles, NHRIs may conduct investigations, monitor and document abuses and report thereon at national, regional and global levels, and they support preventive efforts. For example, many NHRIs monitor the situation on the ground before elections: they monitor
demonstrations, they document pre-election violence and they engage with the government to end such violence and to hold accountable those responsible for human rights abuses. During violent conflicts, many NHRIs carry out fact-finding, monitor detention, and investigate the cases of disappearances or death.

To share their experience and to analyze common needs of NHRIs that operate in conflict-affected and fragile settings, NHRIs from all regions gathered in October 2015 at the invitation of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights and UNDP. The outcome Kyiv Declaration reaffirms NHRIs’ determination to fulfill their role in the daunting context of heightened fragility and conflict. The Declaration also highlights that whilst doing so, NHRIs themselves may require protection, and must not be subject to reprisals or intimidation, as is the case too often.

It is precisely the purpose of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, GANHRI, its four regional networks of NHRIs and our global partners - UNDP and OHCHR – to strengthen the capacity of NHRIs and to protect them from reprisals. As an example of our cooperation, you find the “Global Principles for the Capacity Assessment of NHRIs” in the back of the room.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The best way to deal with conflicts is to prevent them. This is why the 2030 Agenda is so important in the context of our discussion today, and particularly Goal 16. We need to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

NHRIs are indispensable allies for supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a human rights perspective, and are ideally placed to contribute to its review at national, regional and global levels. We have an intimate knowledge of the performance of domestic institutions and of the impact of their actions on peoples’ lives.

The adoption of an indicator on the “Existence of independent National Human Rights Institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles” under Goal 16 points to the value the international community attaches to the work of NHRIs, as does the adoption in December 2015 by the General Assembly of its landmark NHRI resolution which calls on all UN mechanisms and processes including the 2030 Agenda and the High Level Political Forum to enhance the participation of NHRIs to their work.
Whilst the participation of NHRIs in the High level Political Forum is yet to be formalised, GANHRI is confident that suitable arrangements will be developed to permit the Forum to draw on the rich expertise that NHRIs can bring to the discussions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2030 Agenda calls on us all to move from silos to synergy, to move from fragmentation to partnership.

GANHRI values its flourishing tripartite partnership with UNDP and OHCHR, and we look forward to expanding it further in support of NHRIs and their roles in the 2030 agenda with principled rights-based approaches to combat inequality and promote just and inclusive societies. And we count on member states and the entire UN system to support us in its delivery.

I look forward to the discussions and your valuable contributions throughout this seminar. Thank you.