PRESS RELEASE

HRC 36 | GANHRI Working Group on SDGs raises NHRIs’ instrumental approach in integrating UPR recommendations with the SDGs, contributing to gender equality

“With the adoption of the Mérida Declaration in 2015, NHRI from across regions emphasised the potential of using international human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), to guide and assess Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation. This includes Goal 5 on gender equality”, said the GANHRI Working Group on SDGs during the Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms.
This year’s Human Rights Council annual discussion explored the potential role the UPR mechanism can play in advancing the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular its Goal 5, at the global, regional and country levels.

“The universality of the UPR gives it a crucial role as a forum for making recommendations, sharing good practices and reporting on progress in upholding human rights. There is strong potential for deeper linkage between the UPR and the UN’s development framework and capacity” stressed the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

“Neither human rights nor the 2030 agenda can be realised without achieving gender equality – rather gender equality can be a catalyst for realising both” said Eva Grambye, Deputy Executive Director at the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and Chair of the GANHRI Working Group on SDGs, speaking as one of the panellists.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) is using an algorithm that can relate UPR recommendations to Sustainable Development Goals and targets to identify how the UPR can guide SDG implementation. “We estimate that when we finish, a total of 65-75% of the UPR recommendations can meaningfully be linked to specific goals and targets” pointed out the Deputy Executive Director of the DIHR.

She also provided suggestions for concrete uses of UPR for SDG-gender implementation and follow-up, including:

- Prioritisation, as UPR recommendations can help identify priorities for SDG implementation;
- Consensus basis, as UPR recommendations that are accepted by government guarantee national commitment;
- Adoption of concrete measures, as UPR recommendations point to concrete measures to overcome inequalities; and
- “recycle reporting”, given that states are already reporting to human rights mechanisms, they can to a large extent make use of it in reporting on SDGs.

The GANHRI Working Group, comprised of the NHRIs from Argentina, Denmark, Germany, Ghana, and Indonesia, also shared some examples of the work NHRIs are doing in “taking an instrumental approach to integrate UPR recommendations with the SDGs and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of both UPR and SDGs in the process”, such as:

- The Defensor del Pueblo de la Nación in Argentina has mapped overlapping issues between UPR recommendations and SDGs and initiated more than 50 studies, which are all explicitly linked to the SDGs, including SDG 5.6 on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. The results will annually be sent to the relevant national authorities and to the United Nations system. Based on UPR recommendations on gender equality, the Defensoría
has implemented concrete measures to address gender inequality, such as creating a Femicide Observatory.¹

- the New Zealand Human Rights Commission has developed an online tool that aligns the National Human Rights Plan of Action (NPA) with UPR recommendations in order to monitor the Government’s implementation UPR recommendations. The Commission is planning to integrate the SDGs in its next NPA, prior to New Zealand’s third UPR cycle².

The GANHRI Working Group also provided best practices of NHRI working for women’s economic participation, including:

- the National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) has carried out research on trafficking in women and children and formulated an Integrated Plan of Action to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking with Special Focus on Children and Women in cooperation with agencies and ministries;
- the Samoan Office of the Ombudsman has launched the country’s first Family Violence Inquiry; and
- the German Institute for Human Rights (GIHR) has conducted a field study on severe forms of labour exploitation with a focus on female workers. The study resulted in a proposed strategy for the German government and the insights fed into a contribution of the European Network of NHRI (ENNHRI) to the UN CEDAW Committee.

Both panellists and states commented on the role of NHRI to operationalise their expertise on the human rights system to support the realisation of SDGs.

“NHRI takes a very valuable role in including the international recommendations in the existing human rights mechanism” at national level, stressed Dorothy Nyasulu, the UNFPA Assistant Representative, Malawi Country Office, United Nations Population Fund.

The GANHRI Working Group on the 2030 Agenda has been established in 2015, following the 12th International Conference of NHRI with a focus on SDGs, as a vehicle for collaboration among, and a global voice of, NHRI on these matters. The GANHRI Working Group will continue to provide support and share knowledge and experiences among NHRI in their engagement with the UPR, the 2030 Agenda and gender equality.

You can download the full GANHRI Working Group statement in English and other statements here:


¹ Defensor del Pueblo de la Nación
² New Zealand Human Rights Commission