Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of African National Human Rights Institutions (CCANHRI) and its Secretariat
3.00 – 6.00 p.m. on 12 April 2005, Geneva, Switzerland

CCANHRI members present at the meeting:

✔ Malawi Human Rights Commission
✔ Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l’homme (Morocco)
✔ National Human Rights Commission (Mauritius)
✔ National Human Rights Commission (Nigeria)
✔ South African Human Rights Commission – Secretariat of the CCANHRI
✔ Commission Nationale des Droits de l’homme (Togo)
✔ Uganda Human Rights Commission – Chairperson of the CCANHRI

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) present as observers:

✔ Commission Nationale des Droits de l’homme (Republic of Congo)
✔ National Council for Human Rights (Egypt)
✔ Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

Present as observer:

✔ National Institutions Unit, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

1. Opening and Communication from the Chairperson

The Chairperson of the CCANHRI, Ms Margaret Sekaggya welcomed the presence of the members and observers of the CCANHRI, as well as the National Institutions Unit and the members of the OHCHR Africa Unit who introduced themselves and their activities.

2. Apologies

No apologies were received by the Secretariat of the CCANHRI. In response to a query to strengthen the channels of communication considering the absence of some members, the Chairperson noted that the Secretariat had ensured that invitations were sent out to all members and reiterated the importance of interaction between all African NHRI.

3. Ratification of minutes of last meeting in Addis Ababa

The Secretariat read the minutes from the meeting of the CCANHRI, held on 21 October 2004 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the 1st African Union Conference of NHRI. The Chairperson extended her thanks, on behalf of the CCANHRI, to the African Union and OHCHR for enabling the holding of the Conference and noted that the minutes, which were subsequently endorsed by the members had been circulated to all participants.
4. Matters arising from minutes

The Chairperson informed the participants about the training workshop on torture prevention and detention monitoring for English speaking African NHRI, organized in November 2004 by the OHCHR, the Association for the Prevention of Torture and Fahamu and hosted by the Uganda Human Rights Commission. Participants were informed that a similar workshop will be organized for French speaking African NHRI. The NHRI of Morocco noted that bi-lingual workshops would benefit the interaction among African NHRI and eventual be more cost effective.

5. Report of the African NHRI Secretariat

The Secretariat provided a summary of its activities and a breakdown of funds received from NHRIs and OHCHR in 2004. It was noted that there was a need to agree on how much each NHRI should contribute to the Secretariat. The current funds in possession of the Secretariat would move to the next country chosen to host the Secretariat.

The Secretariat noted that no annual reports had been received from the NHRI (in line with the Rules of Procedures of the CCANHRI) and that no progress had been made on the recruitment of the Executive Director for the Secretariat despite previous requests from the CCANHRI, the main reason being the lack of funds.

6. Consideration of the hosting of the Secretariat

The Chairperson noted that since the 3 year term of the NHRI of South Africa hosting the Secretariat was coming to end in August 2005, a decision had to be reached on a new permanent host country. The drafting of the new statute would be required in line with the respective domestic law.

The Chairperson of the NHRI of Kenya offered to host the next Secretariat pending endorsement by all participants. The NHRI of South Africa noted that it would remain candidate for the next term though highlighting that the Secretariat should not be attached per se under the umbrella of any NHRI. A discussion followed among participants regarding the feasibility of establishing the Secretariat in Ethiopia, the host country of the African Union.

➢ After deliberations, the members agreed unanimously that Kenya should host the Secretariat (South Africa having withdrawn and Ethiopia having been ruled out) clarifying that it would not be under the direction of the NHRI per se but remain accountable to the CCANHRI as a whole. It was noted that this candidature was pending the accreditation of the NHRI of Kenya by the International Coordinating Committee of NHRI (ICC) and its Sub-Committee on the 14 April 2005.

➢ In the drafting of the new Statute of the Secretariat, participants agreed that experience should be drawn from other regional secretariats, such as the Asia Pacific Forum of NHRI.

Following a request from the NHRI of Morocco, the Chairperson invited the NHRI of
South Africa, in its capacity as the current host of the Secretariat, to provide figures regarding the total costs of its functioning and clarifications regarding the non-hiring of an Executive Director. The need to set up a new Statute of the Secretariat was highlighted in view of ensuring appropriate donor contributions. The Chairperson noted the possible assistance from OHCHR and the willingness of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) to contribute to the first 3 years expenses of the Executive Director. All NHRI were invited to fundraise at their national levels.

The Task Force (composed of Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda) including Kenya, constituted during the CCANHRI meetings in Ethiopia and South Africa, was requested to meet in view of initiating the drafting of the Statute of the Secretariat with attached Terms of Reference of the Executive Director (already available in the previous Statute). The assistance of OHCHR and the DIHR was requested by the Chairperson.

7. Discussion on the next Regional Conference of African NHRI

The Chairperson of the NHRI of Mauritius reported that due to lack of logistical resources and the approaching end of term of the Secretariat, it had not been able to host the regional meeting in February 2005 and as a result withdrew the offer.

Subsequently the NHRI of Nigeria, Egypt and Kenya offered to host the next Regional Conference.

- The members agreed by consensus that the next Regional Conference of African NHRI will be held in Nigeria while Malawi was chosen as a fall-back host in view of its previous candidature (Egypt and Kenya could not be considered at this stage due to their status as observers). The dates would be communicated in due course.

The Chairperson noted that contributions from UNESCO should be envisaged in view of the endorsement by all participants to maintain Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the agenda of the next Regional Conference.

8. Any Other Business

Following a suggestion by the NHRI of Kenya the Chairperson indicated that she will make reference in her speech to the Commission on Human Rights, on behalf of the CCANHRI, to the human rights situation in Darfur, Sudan, and encouraged other NHRI to do so.

The NHRI of Kenya informed the participants regarding the holding next year of a meeting for NHRI and NGOs on the issue of Human Rights and Corruption, to which the NHRI of Morocco offered to assist with a study undertaken in this area.

The Chairperson summed up as the recommendations as endorsed by all members:

- Kenya to host the Secretariat;
➢ Task Force and the NHRI of Kenya need to draw up, as soon as possible, the Statute with attached Terms of Reference of the Executive Director;

➢ Task Force mandated to interview and appoint a bilingual Executive Director;

➢ Need to look into NHRI own contributions;

➢ NHRI of Nigeria to host this year’s Regional Conference of African NHRI.

On a final note the Chairperson closed the meeting conveying her thanks to all the participants.

The Chairperson subsequently called on the Representative from UNESCO, Mr. Vladimir Volody, to present a project on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the African Continent. Mr. Volodyne recalled the commitments that NHRI made in Addis Ababa including the right to education, food, health and to benefit from scientific progress and cultural rights. He noted the importance of placing corruption on the agenda and challenged NHRI to take these issues up. He noted his office’s willingness to cooperate with the African NHRI in setting up a network and assist in the next Regional Conference.

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Adopted by the members at the CCANHRIs’ Business Session, on 8 November 2005, during the 5th Conference of African NHRI, Abuja, Nigeria.