

OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THE 19th REGULAR SESSION THEMATIC DEBATE ON “THE ROLE OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (NHRIs) IN THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OIC COUNTRIES”

Jeddah 24th May 2022: The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held a thematic debate titled: “*The Role of NHRIs in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the OIC Countries*” during its 19th Regular Session on 24th May 2022. IPHRC Chairperson Dr. Haci Ali Acikgul inaugurated the debate and the Assistant Secretary General of OIC Dr. Ahmed Sengendo delivered the keynote address on behalf of the OIC Secretary General. Representatives of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Chairpersons of NHRIs from Morocco, Qatar and Indonesia participated as panelists. A large number of the representatives of the Member and Observer States, as well as their NHRIs also participated in the debate and contributed to the discussion.

Based on the comprehensive discussion, the Commission adopted the following as the Outcome of the thematic debate:

Underscored that the inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights of all human beings and the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and inter-relatedness of all human rights, as well as bearing in mind the national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds, as prescribed by Islamic principles and expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and the Cairo Declaration of OIC on Human Rights, are prerequisites for achieving global peace, security and sustainable development.

Recalled that NHRIs are independent human rights organs established by States to promote and protect human rights within their national jurisdictions. They are uniquely situated as state sponsored institutions - yet not governmental - with broad human rights mandate and expertise, and great potential to assist their governments in mainstreaming national human rights policies to meet the needs on the ground and to strengthen their effectiveness for the promotion and protection of all human rights.

Highlighted that NHRIs are globally recognized as important partners in the protection and promotion of human rights. They complement rather than replace international, regional, and national mechanisms for the promotion of Human Rights Education (HRE) as well as monitoring and investigating human rights violations. NHRIs have also the advantage to focus on specific human rights issues and standards particular to their relevant national context. Collaboration and cooperation of NHRIs with relevant UN and other global and regional human rights mechanisms also serves to strengthen the international human rights system, to the extent provided in their respective charters.

Emphasized that NHRIs have become a crucial component in complementing governmental efforts to strengthen national human rights systems. Based on their independent and

permanent character compared to governmental institutions, NHRIs are considered more capable of adopting a strategic perspective in human rights field, including comprehensive assessment of national plans and long-term planning.

Highlighted that in the context of the 2030 Development Agenda, NHRIs are making a very significant contribution in increasing integration of a human rights-based approach in policymaking at the national and local level. They have a particularly important role in achieving SDG 16, which aims at “promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. As such, the critical role of independent and fully functioning NHRIs has been recognized in the 2030 Agenda as an indicator of progress by States for SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Stressed the importance of strengthening NHRIs, including the assurance of their legal, technical and financial independence, as an effective means of promoting and protecting human rights and the realization of the 2030 Development Agenda. NHRIs are uniquely placed to play a bridging role between various stakeholders and promote transparent, participatory and inclusive national processes of implementation and monitoring of policies, and to address all forms of exclusion and poverty and to prioritize and mainstream a human rights perspective in all aspects of public policy in their States.

Highlighted that NHRIs occupy unique position between government, civil society, and international organizations to monitor government practices, contextualize and play a major role in the implementation of international human rights standards and foster a human rights culture that can serve as a "deterrence" against potential human rights violations, which makes NHRIs essential partners for protecting and promoting human rights at the national and regional levels.

Recognized the challenge to establish the independence and accountability of NHRIs is crucial for their legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness. To overcome these challenges and to enhance the role of NHRIs in promoting human rights respecting societies, it is recommended that OIC Member States should:

- (i) ensure an enabling environment based on democratic principles, rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of their NHRIs;
- (ii) ensure that structure and composition of their NHRIs reflect the diversity of society's social, ethnic and linguistic composition with gender balance;
- (iii) safeguard independence of NHRIs through constitutional provisions defining their structures, mandate and powers through statutory law adopted by their respective legislatures;
- (iv) provide adequate financial and human resources allowing them to build strong institutional capacities, and to define, without any interference, their priorities and to independently carry out their mandates and activities;
- (v) empower their NHRIs with broad competencies to harmonize legislation and make proposals and recommendations in conformity with the State's international human

rights obligations as well as the implementation of relevant recommendations of Treaty Bodies.

Encouraged Member States to provide NHRIs with the legal and organizational capacity to respond to, conduct inquiries into, and investigate allegations of human rights violations as well as to facilitate access to justice, including in relation to discrimination and inequality that can erode the trust between the State and the people. The ability to engage with various stakeholders makes NHRIs indispensable human rights bodies to facilitate changing attitudes and behaviors to promote a human rights culture across all sectors of society.

Emphasized that NHRIs are well positioned to deal with sensitive human rights issues in an impartial way, as independent and trusted brokers, and to mediate between human rights victims and relevant State institutions in the process of reconciliation, transitional justice and reparations, national recoveries and resilience plans.

Further emphasized that while the Paris Principles remain an important framework to guide the development of strong and functional capacities of NHRIs, there is an equally crucial need to develop parallel indicators based on which the performance of NHRIs in term of their impact on the promotion and protection of human rights may be systematically evaluated and enhanced.

Encouraged capacity-building, sharing of experiences and best practices, as well as knowledge management with and among NHRIs in OIC countries and beyond, and to mobilize resources to that effect. In this regard, **advocated** for the independent participation of NHRIs, and their international and regional coordinating networks, in relevant UN mechanisms and processes, including in the Follow-up and Review Processes of the 2030 Development Agenda, such as the High-Level Political Forum.

Urged the OIC General Secretariat to create a coordination forum for NHRIs with the purpose to facilitate networking, enhance cooperation at regional and multilateral forums and to encourage exchange of experiences and best practices on the promotion and protection of human rights within the OIC framework, prioritizing working with pro-family institutions and NGOs to hold conferences and seminars to promote family values. Such interaction can be beneficial to the setting of internal indicators at the OIC level to measure and enhance the performance of NHRIs based on best practices that work in different environments.

Further urged the OIC organs and individual NHRIs in OIC Member States, in line with their respective mandates, to collaborate in mutual capacity building and sharing of experiences, and to consider the practical functions they can assume to contribute to a human rights-based approach to implementation of OIC resolutions in the political, economic and social fields. Such functions and activities include but are not limited to the following:

- (i) undertake workshops on human rights issues of mutual interest and develop joint action plans that will identify and address capacity needs of NHRIs;
- (ii) provide advice to national and local governments, rights-holders and other actors, to promote a human rights-based approach to implementation and measurement of

- public policies, including by assessing the impact of laws, policies, programmes, national development plans, administrative practices and budgets on the realization of all human rights for all; and
- (iii) develop and strengthen partnerships for promoting transparent and inclusive processes for participation and consultation with rights-holders and civil society at all stages of the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda, such as the development of national and sub-national strategies to achieve the SDGs, including reaching out to those who are furthest behind.

Encouraged NHRIs to engage with duty-bearers, rights-holders and other key actors, including government agencies, parliaments, judiciary, local authorities, civil society, media, research institutions, universities, trade unions, the UN and other international and regional institutions, to raise awareness and build trust, to promote dialogue and make concerted efforts for a human rights-based approach to implementation and monitoring of all public policies and programs.

Highlighted that the growing capacities of NHRIs worldwide have enabled them to support the work of many international and regional bodies by providing independent and reliable information and analysis on best practices and experiences to promote and protect human rights. In this regard, **encouraged** NHRIs to continue strengthening their cooperation with the relevant UN human rights mechanisms, with a view to improving the human rights situation in their respective countries.

Urged NHRIs to enhance their contribution to grassroots actions, such as raising awareness, promoting Human Rights Education (HRE) and training in collaboration with other human rights stakeholders in their respective societies. Use of HRE can be particularly beneficial to raise awareness, prevent discrimination and to promote a strong culture of human rights protection. NHRIs can provide training and facilitate exchange of experiences in the field of human rights across different sectors of society, particularly, between State institutions and broader civil society organizations and communities.

Recognized the important role that NHRIs play in areas falling within the IPHRC's mandate and reiterated its strong commitment to strengthen cooperation with NHRIs for the constructive pursuit of common objectives. In line with this approach, IPHRC has already adopted its "Working Arrangements for Interaction with NHRIs" that convey its keen interest in cooperation with NHRIs in all OIC Member States towards achieving the common goal of strengthening promotion and protection of all human rights for all.

Urged all NHRIs from OIC Member States to increase their participation in IPHRC activities as well as to jointly explore areas of common interest for collaboration that can help achieve concrete results. To strengthen this cooperation in specific areas on ground, IPHRC has also started signing Memorandums of Understandings with interested NHRIs and **reaffirmed** its readiness to further expanding its working relationships with all interested NHRIs.
