Rapporteur Meeting

**Workshop on enhancing cooperation between United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms, 4 and 5 October 2016, Geneva, Palais des Nations**

**Panel 3: Cooperation in relation to promoting women rights**

The panel discussed the various risks that women human rights defenders face and those working on women’s rights or gender issues face due to their work.

The CEDAW Committee including through its individual complaints system, inquiry procedures and its broader interaction with NGOs and the experience of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) to mitigate the violations committed against women, including violence were discussed.

CEDAW and the GREVIO and the ACHPR have all contributed to increasing the visibility of violations against women human rights defenders and supporting developments towards the recognition of the gender specific risks faced by women human rights defenders through amongst others their concluding observations and in the recently released ACHPR report on human rights defenders

Other entry points with international and regional mechanisms includes sending information/reports/inputs, communication on individual cases, amicus briefs, contributions for thematic reports, country visits / reports and academic / non-official events participation and in the specific case of ACHPR, the opportunity for observer status and at the the level of the AU to access ECOSOC status.

The strategies used by CSO and NGOs for engaging with regional and international human rights mechanisms were also discussed using the African centre for democracy and human rights campaign on SOGI as an illustrative example on actions to take to create or foster change in policy, legal or societal environments in sensitive areas.

Cameroun and on the work of the Golden Grace Association was given as an example of engagement with national CSO. The association is made of young single women, who have personal experience of gender based discrimination.

The challenges faced by CSOs when engaging with regional and international mechanisms was raised, this is despite the commonalities between those working on human rights and those of the mechanisms.

Panellists noted work between international and regional treaty monitoring bodies needs to be strengthened, for example, currently, GREVIO, the body which monitors State compliance with the Istanbul Convention when reviewing countries always looks at information from all UN mechanisms including CEDAW, the most recent example being GREVIO review of Austria.

Recommendations/new forms of cooperation

* It was proposed that regional mechanisms and international mechanisms should reflect on how the could work together when they both receive information which could form the basis of an inquiry.
* Recommend for a mechanism to be in place where individual complaints to the TB could be shared with regional mechanisms including GREVEO to guide it in the process of its evaluation especially on WHRDs.
* The regional and human rights mechanisms to play a significant role working with CSOs to facilitate implementation of the various recommendations emanating in particular in Cameroun.
* The need for awareness raising, solidarity with global movements, dialogue with states to create an enabling environment for women and CSOs were highlighted.
* It was also recommended for training for CSOs on women rights as a critical component in ensuring protection and promotion of women’s rights.
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* In summation as Mr. Johan Friestedt said and the general view of the panel, “There are existing frameworks, suggest moving from “frameworks to teamwork”.

 **Report of discussion**

* Ms. Pramila Patten, Member of CEDWA

Ms. Patten spoke about the work of the CEDAW Committee focusing in particular on their interaction with NGOs, including the individual complaints, inquiry procedures, completed 3 inquiries, Mexico, Canada and the Philippines. There are also a number in the pipeline. Close cooperation with NGOs working on women’s rights and women human rights defenders, including in the area of shadow reports, oral presentations throughout the State review process. See the role of NGOs as central to the work of the Committee. NGOs are also invited to provide suggested recommendations

CEDAW also holds lunch briefings for NGOs a day before the State review.

The Committee works with the NGOs in the elaboration of their general recommendations. Recognises the finanicail constraints of NGOs and are increasingly encouraging social media.

Sensitive to the work of women human rights defenders, who may be subject to gender specific threats and violations. CEDAW has expressed concern in a number of concluding observations.

Have worked on women in detention, forced sterilisation,

Interacts closely with NHRIs and have adopted a statement on the links between CEDAW and NHRI.

Overall, the Committee only interacts with ASEAN system but would welcome interaction with the regional mechanisms including the ACPHR.

* Mr. Johan Friestedt, VAW, CoE

Council of Europe spoke about the Istanbul convention (22 states have ratified) and engagement with SR VAW. The Istanbul convention is the most comprehensive convention on women, he detailed the contents and why this is so. GREVIO has been set up to monitor the 22 states who have ratified it including ensuring consistency of reporting to CEDAW so as to reduce inconsistencies and to ensure synergies between State reporting under the Istanbul convention and the CEDAW Convention.

GREVIO has similar inquire system as CEDAW, and it reviews States reports, when revieing countries, it also looks at information from all UN mechanisms inlcuidng CEDAW. (This is a good practice)

The information receive for instance in the review of Austria contributed immensely to GRAVIO review of the country.

GREVIO has a dedicated website for NGOs on how they can engage with the GREVIO including upcoming state reports.

As part of its review procedure, GRAVIO undertakes visits to the actual country that it is reviewing. This enhances the quality of information and allows GRAVIO to meet with a wide range of stakeholders including with those who may not be able to attend the review. During these visits, GRAVIO engages with UN HR mechanisms. Reflect on how GRAVIO and CEDWA could work together when they both receive information which could form the basis of an inquiry.

Although GREVIO does not have individual complaint procedures, they use those coming out of the UN HR mechanisms to guide their work on specific countries.

Recommend for a mechanism to be in place where individual complaints to the TB could be shared with GRAVIO to guide it in the process of its evaluation especially on WHRDs.

There are existing frameworks, suggest moving from “frameworks to teamwork”.

* Eric Mback, Member, Golden Grace Association, Cameroun

Focused on the situation of women in Cameroun and on the work of the Golden Grace Association. The association is made of young single women, who have personal experience of gender based discrimination. The work of the institution is to combat discrimination, promotes female entrepreneurship and education for girls. Referred to a number of laws and institutions, as well as Cameroun’s ratification of the CEDAW and the Maputo protocol, despite these, poverty, and moral delinquency. Spoke about what the organisation in collaboration with UN mechanisms, with other international partners and with regional mechanisms are doing to support these women.

Would like to work with the mechanisms for the implementation of the various recommendations emanating from the UN on the area of human rights

* Ms. Hannah Forster, Executive Director, the African centre for democracy and human rights

Her presentation focused on how to enhance CSO participation in reg and int. HR mechanisms. Stressed the suspicion that CSOs are viewed generally as evidenced by the latest resolution in June at HRC which recorded 2 thirds of absentia. The practice and process of enhancing CSO engagement is an illusion, many face challenges in participating in the work of regional and int. HR mechanisms. This is despite the commonalities between those working on human rights and those of the mechanisms. She used the ACHPR to illustrate the opportunities for CSO participation, including observer status to CSO, there is also opportunity at the level of the AU to access ECOSOC status, in the rules of procedures, good practice – ACPHR grant observer status to organisations which are not recognised in their own countries as long as they satisfy the criteria of the ACPHR. This is excellent for HR ngos who are often not recognised by their national governments.

On the situation of women human rights defenders, there is an excellent document from the ACHPR which can be used for advocacy, the contents of which came from field visits. The commission now has a mechanism to look at the situation of WHRDs. Rights to peaceful assembly and association also face a particular challenge for women and other vulnerable groups, e.g. LGBTI

Recommend awareness raising, solidarity with global movements, create dialogue with states to create an enabling environment for women and CSOs.

Training for CSOs on women rights is critically important. Spoke about advocacy around LGBTI with the ACPHR. It took a number of years, started in 2008, they targeted several people in the Commission, faced challenges, but today they encourage people to look at the report of the WHRDs and to associate themselves. There is a reference group and a draft action plan which they can share. Campaigns have to be consistent, not statistic and people have to have the knowledge and skills.