**5th International Workshop**

**On**

**"Enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights"**

**Working paper by:**

**National Human rights Committee**

**of**

**the state of Qatar**

**(NHRC)**

**Panel 7**

**Cooperation at the level of the country, including the follow-up recommendations and proposals of the United Nations and regional mechanisms for human rights**

**F**irst, I would like to express my great pleasure to participate in this regional workshop on the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular, the panel that focuses on the "implementation of recommendations" and the role of civil society and human rights defenders. Without implementation, principles, conventions and agreements lose their meaning and credibility which the international community seek to consolidate several decades ago.

As you know, the role played by civil society and defenders of human rights in following-up on the implementation of recommendations of the UN and other regional bodies, differs from one country to another, where defenders of human rights operate within a political, social, economic and cultural framework that affects their performance, the space of ​​freedom available to them, and the statutes governing their activities.

On the one hand, we may find that the government, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seeking to form a working group of all ministries to be responsible for the implementation of the some recommendations, along with strong participation of civil society; on the other hand, we may find that recommendations are left without following-up.

Accordingly, The role of civil society and human rights defenders, can be primarily assessed through learning how to receive special recommendations and the extent of respect and consideration of related proposals.

National legislation of each country should be considered, especially with regard to establishment of civil society institutions and carrying out its powers, most notably independence and immunity; legislation should ensure independence and immunity of activists in this field in line with international standards including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders…etc.  
   
In the same context, I have the pleasure to share the experience of the National Human Rights Committee of the State of Qatar, which I chair, The NHRC is accredited status "A" by the Global Alliance of National Institutions for Human Rights in Geneva, which further promote its influential role in "implementation.

One of the articles of the Decree Law on the organization of the National Human Rights Committee, stipulates that "Ministries, government departments and public institutions shall cooperate with the NHRC in performing its duties and terms of reference.

They shall provide the NHRC with information and data required in this regard.

There is also an article stating that "The NHRC has full independence in the exercise of its human rights activities…"; "members may not be held accountable criminally or disciplinarily before the committee and its subcommittees for opinions or statements on matters within its competence..."  
According to such space of freedom and independence enjoyed by the National Human Rights Committee in the State of Qatar, it plays an active role in following-up the recommendations of international and regional mechanisms, example: As for following-up the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the NHRC submitted the recommendations to the competent governmental authorities through an Action Plan that involved meetings ensuring a continuous and constructive dialogue with the government, this resulted in effective implementation for several concerns including setting-up database for persons with disabilities, as one of the recommendations of the treaty Committee that the was discussed before.

The National Human Rights Committee doesn't work separately, it has established a working group from several institutions of civil society, experts and representative of the government, in order to deliver the message that the implementation of the recommendations of international and regional human rights mechanisms are a shared responsibility that everyone should respect and apply.

Back to the main idea of ​​this panel, challenges, at the level of the country, may be critical and difficult to handle in the form of laws that may constitute obstacles to the work of civil society, and defenders of human rights.

Legislation regulating establishing associations and joining them, peaceful assembly and demonstration, and legislation regulating freedom of opinion and expression and media activities are a very important factors in the implementation of human rights related recommendations.

The question that arises here as is what should be done? And how? one must find a proper environment suitable for the establishment of civil society, provide an appropriate space of freedom, and guarantee immunity and independence.

As for civil society, it should be more practical in follow- up on the implementation of recommendations and proposals of international and regional mechanisms, it has to move away from rhetoric directive approach and using phrases like "Governments should … or so ..", it has to directly communicate with the government, establish a solid relationship of mutual respect and trust in the context of shared responsibility to consider the recommendations, and share with the competent authorities its vision and technical assistance, with the aim to implement any recommendations.

Through our experience in the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar, institutions that don't enjoy flexibility and decentralization, should be close to other entities in the state and consistent with their terms of reference, rather than waiting for the government to do so on its own.

A lesson we have learned is that building bridges of cooperation and dialogue always leads to success, although it takes some time.

Thank you