**Workshop on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights**

**Geneva, 4 and 5 October 2016**

**Rapporteur Panel 2. Procedural aspects of cooperation between United Nations, Regional Human Rights Mechanisms, Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders**

**Current practices/arrangements**

1. The Panel answered to the question of **how mechanisms at the Universal and Human Rights Systems engage** with civil society and human rights defenders. Panelists provided an overview of legal frameworks and political arrangements set up to promote and enhance the involvement of various stakeholders on the work of the Human Rights Council, Treaty monitoring mechanisms and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Arab Human Rights Committee and National Human Rights Institutions. The panel also highlighted conclusions of the consultations held at different regions including Africa, Americas, Asia, and Europe.

2. The Panel underlined **current scenarios of engagement** at the universal and regional level such as:

1. The Universal Periodic Review by the Human Rights Council;
2. The Social Forum, the Forum on Minority Issues and the Forum on Business and Human Rights set up by the Human Rights Council;
3. Reporting procedures before the human rights treaties bodies;
4. Processes to develop jurisprudence of the treaty bodies mechanisms –Days of General Discussion and preparation of General Comments;
5. The strengthening process of the Treaty Bodies system and the capacity building programme which involves regional organisations on workshops for government authorities;
6. Reporting procedures before regional organizations like the African Union Commission, the Arab Human Rights Commission, the Inter-American System on Human Rights.

3. Panelists also pointed out the **legal frameworks** that facilitate engagement of different stakeholders including:

1) The processes conducted by the ECOSOC to recognise consultative status to civil society organisations;

2) The guidelines for civil society on their participation throughout the Universal Periodic Review process;

3) Guidelines, adopted by Treaty Bodies, to facilitate participation of civil society and National Human Rights Institutions on periodic review processes.

4) The ratification by regional organizations of core human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities already ratified by the European Union and most recently by ASEAN.

5) The Addis Ababa framework that guides the special procedures on Africa; and

6) The San Jose guidelines on reprisals adopted by the Treaty bodies chairs in 2015 in Costa Rica.

**Challenges**

4. While different legal frameworks recognise the role of the civil society and national human rights institutions on the work of human rights bodies, the Panel identified some **aspects that need to be reinforced**. For instance, although **the recognition of consultative status** before the ECOSOC –that is a requirement to take part on mechanisms at the Human Rights Council, the processes to obtain such status could be lengthy and resource consuming. **National human rights institutions** recognised the value of the current arrangements to attend dialogues between the treaty bodies and State parties’ governments and make written submissions during the examination of State’s party reports. However, they asked for ways or means to receive feedback from treaty bodies about their inputs that further improve their performance at the universal level.

5. **Other issues of concern** in relation to the current mechanisms are the narrow resources to take part on different procedures, lack of knowledge about the existing procedures, the underrepresentation of women on international bodies, reprisals against NGOs upon the participation on different international scenarios, lack of interpretation on different languages including sign languages, acts of intimidation against human rights advocates and defenders, antiterrorism legislation stigmatizing human rights defenders, and the lack of harmonized procedures among different mechanisms.

**Recommendations**

6. Taking into consideration the results of the consultations at the regional level and the discussions during the panel, the recommendations to enhance the current arrangements could be summarised as follows:

**From the regional consultations:**

1. Prioritise strategic interventions and engagement with human rights mechanisms;
2. Support for victims to access the human rights systems;
3. Reinforce protection measures imposed by the human rights mechanisms on human rights defenders;
4. Strengthen the role of civil society organizations on providing *Amicus Curiae* and bringing cases before the regional human rights courts;
5. Focus on common topics of interest at different regions such as violation of human rights of women, rights of minority groups, gender identity and sexual orientation, human rights of children;

**From the Panel**

1. Implement recommendations of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in its report on “Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned” (A/HRC/32/20). Those recommendations include provide for participation for civil society on non-discriminatory basis and expand transparency of human rights mechanisms through means such as webcasting of public meetings.
2. Take part in the preparation of the report on procedures and practices in respect of civil society involvement with regional and international organisations, the contribution of civil society to their work, challenges and best practices. This report implements the Human Rights Council Resolution on Civil Society Space (A/HRC/RES/32/31).
3. Promote strategic management of resources and expectations when engaging with international human rights bodies and mechanisms;
4. Engage on the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review and the follow up mechanisms of the recommendations at the national and international level. Actions on this realm include: Monitor implementation of recommendations and engage with state institutions in order to support compliance of recommendations; engage and advocate before potential recommending States during the review; raise awareness among the public about the Universal Periodic Report; identify and suggest assistance needed, cooperation with regional mechanisms, in order to effectively implement the recommendations; promote meaningful and inclusive consultation of civil society with the State party under review; engage with national human rights institutions and other actors to promote implementation of UPR recommendations.
5. Continue efforts to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities to the work of human rights treaty bodies;
6. Strengthen measures to ensure gender balance on the composition of international bodies.
7. Take part on the 2020 review process of the treaty bodies system to be conducted following a decision by the United Nations General Assembly.

Geneva, 5 October 2016