



**Third Glion Human Rights Dialogue (Glion III, May 2016):  
human rights implementation and compliance: turning international norms into local reality**

**Concept Note**

The development of international human rights norms is seen as one of the great success stories of the UN. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the international community has moved to create a comprehensive global code of human rights norms governing practically every area of the relationship between the individual and the State.

But what are the real world, practical, tangible implications of the global code of norms set down in international human rights law? The primary responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights lies with States, but do States comply with the standards and obligations that they themselves have set down and ratified? What are the principal UN mechanisms that seek to move States towards deeper compliance? What do States do with the recommendations generated by the main human rights mechanisms (e.g. Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, Universal Periodic Review – UPR)? How do States seek to transform international norms into local reality and do they succeed? How do the Human Rights Council and the wider international human rights system support States (e.g. through capacity-building) to strengthen implementation and compliance?

In 2006, the then Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, called on the Human Rights Council to lead the international community “from the era of declaration to the era of implementation.” As the Human Rights Council marks its 10<sup>th</sup> and the two human rights Covenants their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, there are important signs that UN Member States are increasingly turning their attention to the question of **implementation**, and how best to support it. 2016 therefore offers an important opportunity for a process of inclusive and collective reflection on remaining gaps, lessons learned, and best practices and how to replicate them.

There are also signs that the international community is moving to strengthen its ability to use evidence of serious non-compliance with obligations under international human rights law – i.e. evidence of emerging patterns of gross violations of human rights – as ‘early warning’ signs of potential crises, and as signals that the UN should act to **prevent** further violations and thereby a further escalation of the crisis. Yet while there appears to be broad agreement about the value of a preventative (rather than reactive) approach, and while there also appears to be agreement that the Human Rights Council should be central to any UN prevention strategy, there is little agreement (or, seemingly, understanding) about what ‘prevention’ actual is – what does it mean in practice and what are the tools or mechanisms needed to do the job.

The third Glion Human Rights Dialogue (Glion III), organised by Norway and Switzerland, with the support of the Universal Rights Group, and to be held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016, will look to provide an informal space for considering such questions. Glion III will take a **bottom-up approach** to the issues

of implementation and prevention. Regarding the former, how do States implement UN human rights recommendations? How does the international community seek to support them in that regard? And, how can implementation be strengthened in the future? Regarding the latter, what is 'prevention'? What is the role of the Human Rights Council? And what tools does the Council need/have in order to play an effective prevention role?)

### **Policy dialogues ahead of Glion III**

Ahead of the third Glion Human Rights Dialogue (Glion III), during February and April, URG co-convened a series of informal policy dialogues (under the Chatham House rule) together with a number of supportive State delegations in Geneva. These policy dialogues were designed to allow early consideration and exchange of views on certain key questions related to 'on-the-ground implementation' and 'prevention.' Key conclusions, ideas and proposals would then be fed into Glion III itself.

This year, four policy dialogues were organised. They were:

- How can the international community better support States to strengthen implementation on the ground? Hosted by the Permanent Mission of Thailand, Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February.
- UPR third cycle: strengthening implementation, follow-up, reporting and measurement. Hosted by the Permanent Mission of Turkey, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February.
- Effective prevention by the Human Rights Council: what is it, does the Council possess the tools to do the job, and how to make it work in practice? Hosted by the Permanent Mission of Mexico, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April.
- The experience of States with implementation: identifying and replicating domestic good practice on implementation, coordination and reporting. Hosted by the Permanent Mission of Morocco, Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April.

The Universal Rights Group is pleased to present, attached to this concept note, a short summary of the outcomes of each of the four policy dialogues. This is not intended to be an exhaustive report of the meetings, but rather an effort to identify key points, ideas and proposals, so as to provide food for thought for participants at Glion III.