DRAFT Concept note

Second informal meeting of development partners (Oslo+1) on:

International support for the national implementation of UN human rights recommendations, including as a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

10 May 2019, Stockholm

On 10 May, Sweden, with the support of the Universal Rights Group (URG), will host a second informal meeting of development partners on strengthening international support for the national implementation of international human rights obligations and commitments, and (by extension) for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 'leaving no one behind.'

This is the second informal meeting on the subject. The inaugural meeting was held in Oslo, Norway, in April 2018. The comprehensive [report](#) of that meeting captures a number of important observations and lessons learned and provides a base-line and a point of departure for this second meeting.

This second meeting also provides an opportunity to follow-up on new developments, to include stakeholders not present in Oslo to give their perspective and to establish common ground and voice for the messages important to bring to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development.

A new human rights 'implementation agenda'

Through its human rights 'implementation mechanisms,' particularly the Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Special Procedures,

the UN regularly assesses the degree to which States are fulfilling their human rights obligations and commitments, and provides recommendations to help move governments towards improved compliance. Taken together, these UN human rights recommendations provide an important contribution to a 'blueprint' for human rights, democracy and rule of law reform (including to combat corruption), based on the State's own obligations and commitments.

Across governments, bilateral development agencies, multilateral development partners, NGOs, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and UN experts, there is a growing interest in the way States translate international human rights recommendations into national policies, laws and practices, the challenges they face and how the wider international community best can support them in that task.

The new 'implementation agenda' includes a number of key elements:

1. **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**
   The agenda is anchored in international human rights norms, seeks to realize human rights for all, and must be implemented in accordance with States' international obligations. According to research conducted by the Danish Institute for Human Rights, over 90% of the SDG targets are grounded in international human rights law. Therefore, by implementing, monitoring impact, and reporting on human rights obligations and SDG commitments in an integrated manner, States can benefit from the synergies between the two, and reduce their reporting burden.

   In January 2019, pursuant to resolution 37/24, the Human Rights Council convened a high level inter-sessional meeting on how the UN's human rights pillar might best support the realisation of the SDGs. The outcome of that meeting (report HRC/40/34) will be fed into the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for the SDGs.

The HLPF will focus on e.g. SDG 16 which is particularly relevant if we want to address the importance of accountable and inclusive institutions, democracy and the rule of law to closing the gap between human rights aspirations and human rights realities, and to promoting and protecting human rights. How can we better use SDG 16 as a point of departure in all ODA and stress that inclusive governance has an intrinsic value, because it is intimately linked to democracy and human rights?

2. International support for implementation of human rights

Strengthened delivery of international human rights technical assistance and capacity building support is crucial to the success of the evolving human rights 'implementation agenda.' But equally important is applying a Human Rights Based Approach to development i.e. mainstreaming human rights in ODA to other sectors and thematic areas.

The Human Rights Council's mandate (set by GA resolution 60/251) underscores the importance of delivering or mobilising technical assistance and capacity-building support. In 2019-2020 'item 10 reform' is likely to feature prominently on the Council's agenda. In that context, States will consider a number of key questions, including: How can we further strengthen the delivery and effectiveness of technical capacity in this area? And how can we ensure other actors, particularly development actors, as well as NHRIs and NGOs, are involved in such processes?

With a reformed UN, how do we ensure that Human Rights are at the heart in supporting States development agendas? Is Human Rights up Front given the focus it deserves?

Barriers to implementation of international human rights obligations and commitments are also linked to lack of political will. One aspect to consider is the global trend of closing democratic space and increasing authoritarianism often reflected in deterioration of the rule

of law and threats to the freedoms of association, expression, and peaceful assembly affecting e.g. civil society and journalists online and offline and minorities. How can we be more effective in counteracting closing democratic space through ODA? Are there effective responses? Another aspect to consider is corruption as an obstacle to development and consequently to implementation of human rights obligations and commitments. What do we know about effective approaches and measures that counteract corruption?

3. **Implementation at national level of human rights obligations**

National mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up (NMIRFs) represent a concrete initiative to take forward human rights implementation and monitoring at country level. These government structures work by streamlining the coordination and implementation of all UN (and often regional) human rights recommendations, across all parts of the State. They also allow States to measure progress and impact in real-time, and in a holistic, inclusive and transparent manner. NMIRFs also help States streamline and simplify reporting obligations, and thus reduce the overall reporting burden.

In a number of countries, NMIRFs have put in place information technology solutions (based on a national database of recommendations) to help coordinate implementation actions, track progress, measure impact, and facilitate periodic reporting. Examples include: SIMORE Paraguay, IMPACT OSS, and OHCHR's new National Recommendation Tracking Database.

Stakeholders at national level include Governments, but also the National Human Rights Institutes (NHRI), parliaments, judiciary and civil society. Many NMIRFs are accessible to, and proactively engage with, parliaments, NHRIs and national civil society. An increasing number have also begun to link human rights implementation and impact with relevant SDG targets and indicators.

4. Measuring implementation and impact, and reporting

During the High Level Panel on Human Rights Mainstreaming at the 37th session of the Human Rights Council on 28th February 2018, the OECD DAC Chair stated that there was 'US$ 145 billion in official development assistance in 2016' and that 'bilateral projects labelled as human rights projects [accounted for] around 700 [of that amount]'. How do we measure the results and impact of these projects? And how can we measure the results and impact of applying a Human Rights Based Approach to ODA financed programmes in other sectors and thematic areas not labelled as human rights projects? How do we know that this ODA supported the implementation of States' obligations and commitments, and responded to their own human rights priorities? Can we be sure that the projects did not have a negative impact on human rights, especially for marginalised individuals in society? Can OHCHR's work on human rights indicators help us translate information from Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and the UPR into an accessible and credible system for assessing the implementation of human rights obligations, and the impact of that implementation? How can we help improve accountability and strengthen the capacities of domestic actors, including parliaments, NHRIs and NGOs, to effectively oversee/monitor and measure implementation?

5. Partnership

There is a growing focus, among development actors, organisations representing national parliaments (e.g. the IPU), NHRIs civil society and academia, about their role in promoting, monitoring and independently reporting on the implementation of human rights obligations and commitments. Moreover, new strategic partnerships are also at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. How can these two movements complement one another and exchange emerging good practice?