



Concept Note

Theme: Human Rights Based Approach to the Implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 - The Role of National Human Rights Institutions

1. Background to the SDGs and NHRIs

At the beginning of the new millennium (2000), world leaders gathered at the United Nations to shape a broad vision to fight poverty in its many dimensions including low incomes, chronic hunger, gender inequality, lack of schooling, lack of access to health care, and deprivation of clean water and sanitation, among others. That vision, which was translated into eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), remained the overarching development framework for the world for 15 years. Through the concerted global, regional, national and local efforts, the MDGs achieved some great successes, for example halving the likelihood of a child dying before their fifth birthday.

However, many countries did not make sufficient progress, particularly on environmental sustainability, and thus it was widely recognized that additional work was required to achieve the ultimate goal of ending extreme poverty in all its forms. Further, there was consensus that the scope of the MDGs needs to be broadened to reflect the challenges the world faces today. This led to the adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations in September 2015.

The 2030 Agenda covers a broad set of 17 SDGs and their 169 targets to serve as the overall framework to guide global and national development action for the next 15 years. The Agenda is firmly grounded in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties and instruments including the Declaration on the Right to Development. The Human Rights Guide to the SDGs developed in 2015 by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) states that 156 of the 169 targets (more than 92%) are linked with human rights instruments and labour standards. The Guide, therefore, reaffirms that human rights and the 2030 Agenda are tied together in a mutually reinforcing way, and human rights offer a legally binding framework as well as guidance for



the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Conversely, the SDGs can contribute substantially to the realization of human rights.

The Agenda covers economic and social rights in seeking to end poverty (Goal 1) and hunger (Goal 2), and ensure access to health care (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), water and sanitation (Goal 6), as well as decent work and economic growth (Goal 8). For civil and political rights, the Agenda establishes a clear link between peace, security, justice and sustainable development within Goals 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). The role of NHRIs is explicitly recognized, with the existence of an independent national institution being an indicator under Goal 16. The Agenda demonstrates the need to address inequalities as provided in Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 10 which focuses on income inequality, exclusion and discrimination. The Agenda has to a large extent covered persons facing vulnerabilities and makes specific mention of persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples and children in some of the targets.

Drawing from their mandate, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) are uniquely placed to contribute to the national implementation processes of the SDGs in diverse ways. The 12th International Conference of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) whose focus was “The Sustainable Development Goals: What Role for National Human Rights Institutions?” underlined that NHRIs are uniquely placed to play a bringing role between stakeholders and promote transparent, participatory and inclusive national process of implementation and monitoring of human rights and identified some of them *inter alia*:

2. An overview of Africa’s Agenda 2063

Africa’s Agenda 2063 provides the plan for Africa’s structural transformation. The Agenda aspires an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law. This is listed in seven aspirations for “the Africa we Want” as follows: (1) A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; (2) An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa’s Renaissance; (3) An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; (4) A peaceful and secure Africa; (5) An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics; (6) An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth; and (7) Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.

These aspiration is set to be achieved through its two goals: entrenching democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law; and establishing



capable institutions and transformative leadership. The former prioritizes on: democracy and good governance; and human rights, justice and the rule of law. While the latter prioritizes on: institutions and leadership; and participatory development and local governance.

The Agenda 2063 builds on other legislative, policy and institutional developments which have been formulated to address the myriad challenges facing the people. It is however regrettable that the principles of freedom, equality, justice and dignity remain elusive in many aspects and for specific categories of the population. The recent years have been characterized by incidences of assault to fundamental human rights such as the freedom of peaceful association, right to information, freedom of the media and corruption that undermines social and economic rights.

Notwithstanding the special focus on women rights by the African Union human rights in the year 2016, many women in Africa significantly continue to face human rights violations, such as domestic violence, harmful traditional practices, many which fail to acknowledge the rights of women especially in relation to inheritance, sexual violence and abuse, equal access to education and enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights.

The gap between legal rights and expectations, on the one hand, and the prevailing practices and behaviours embodied in social and cultural norms, on the other hand, pose a fundamental challenge for accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment¹. The phenomenon cuts across other groups of the population who face vulnerabilities and exclusion at varying degrees due to social attributes such as age, abilities and social status, particularly youth, children, persons with disabilities². Recognizing the important role of NHRIs in promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, the NANHRI, spearheaded the development of a Guide to support NHRIs in monitoring implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)³. The focus on PWDs and other categories of the population who face exclusion is relevant and is intrinsically linked to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs and Agenda 2063. The two are crucial for the realization of balanced development processes underpinned by the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.

¹ UNDP, Africa Human Development Report 2016 pp. 92

² 1999-2009 was the first African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, established by the African Union to encourage the full participation, equality and empowerment of people with disabilities in Africa, and has been extended to 2010 – 2019.

³ As a follow up, the Malawi Human Rights Commission was supported to develop a plan of action in order to utilize the Guide for monitoring implementation of the CRPD in Malawi.



3. Rationale for the Conference

The Declaration adopted during the ICC Conference (Mérida Declaration) calls for the organization of workshops on human rights and sustainable development in each region, to develop regional action plans that will also identify and address NHRIs' capacity needs.

It is against this background that NANHRI proposes to organize its 11th Biennial Conference, bringing together its 44 member NHRIs to interrogate their role in implementation of the SDGs using human rights based approaches. During the conference African NHRIs will reflect on the outcomes of the afore-mentioned ICC International Conference, which rightly observed that, while NHRIs continue to address issues that are crucial to the Agenda in their regular work, strengthening their technical and financial capacity is an effective means of promoting the realization of the Agenda. Mérida Declaration notes that NHRIs are uniquely placed to play a bridging role between stakeholders and promote transparent, participatory and inclusive national processes of implementation and monitoring.

With the aim of promoting deeper commitment of NHRIs towards an enhanced role in the realization of the global and continental agenda, the 11th NANHRI Biennial Conference will enable the representatives of member NHRIs to closely interrogate the afore-mentioned roles in relation to their mandate outlined in the legislation which establish them, resources available (including partnerships) and ongoing programmes. The Conference will provide an opportunity to take stock of the efforts made by NHRIs to integrate the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in their work, and how they have contributed to the national mechanisms initiated to implement the Agendas, particularly in the integration of HRBA for the realization of inclusive and broad-based development outcomes. The Conference will put particular attention on Goals 5, 10 and 16 since they resonate with most of the functions of NHRIs in their efforts to address inequalities and discrimination, and promote inclusion in line with the Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063 clarion call 'leave no one behind'.

4. Expected outcomes

The Conference is expected to result to accelerated realization of the SDGs and the Africa's Agenda 2063 through effective contribution of the NHRIs



5. Conference Objectives

The overall objective of the conference is to contribute to the realization of socio-economic rights covered by the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063 through effective participation of African NHRIs.

The specific objectives are:

- i. To sensitize NHRIs on their role in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, and the Agenda 2063, in reference to their mandates and the link with the two Agendas;
- ii. To take stock of the contribution of NHRIs in the national implementation processes of their agendas, their successes and limitations;
- iii. Develop a regional action plan to define the strategies and tools required for NHRIs to effectively engage in implementation of the two Agendas; and
- iv. To set up a regional working group on the two Agendas, in collaboration with other regional, sub-regional and global initiatives.

6. Expected Outputs

- i. Enhanced understanding of the role of NHRIs in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, and the Agenda 2063, in reference to their mandates and the link with the two Agendas;
- ii. A mechanism established to coordinate the work of NHRIs on SDGs, in collaboration with other regional, sub-regional and global initiatives;
- iii. Strengthened collaboration among and between NHRIs and other actors working on implementation of the two Agendas on the continent; and
- iv. Documented lessons on the role of NHRIs in implementation of the two agendas.

7. Conference Format

The conference sessions shall entail: presentations, panel and plenary discussions as well as group work sessions.