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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

## Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

### I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/141, gives an overview of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) from December 2014 to November 2015, as guided by programme 20 of the Strategic Framework of the Secretary General and the thematic priorities indicated in the OHCHR Management Plan for 2014-2017.

2. As at 1 November 2015, OHCHR was supporting 64 field presences, including new offices in Burundi and in Seoul,<sup>1</sup> and signed an agreement with the Government of Honduras to establish an office in that country by the end of 2015. The Kosovo<sup>2</sup> and Togo offices were closed in the first half of 2015.

3. During the period under review, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited the United States of America, Tunisia, Burundi, the Republic of Korea, the Central African Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, Mexico and Brazil. The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Colombia and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights visited Afghanistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Somalia and South Sudan, in addition to undertaking missions to Central Asia, Ireland and Nigeria as part of a delegation headed by the Secretary-General.

4. In 2015, the United Nations celebrated its seventieth anniversary with four major summits that laid down the framework for international cooperation for sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and keeping climate change in check — and

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<sup>1</sup> As mandated by the Human Rights Council to strengthen monitoring and documentation of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

<sup>2</sup> References to Kosovo are to be understood in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



committed itself to making resources available. Those summits showed the international community's ability to come together to identify solutions to global problems and illustrated that human rights are widely recognized as constituting a pillar of sustainable development.

5. At the same time, human rights violations continued unabated. A growing number of conflicts and situations of violence, often resulting from deep-rooted discrimination, long-standing patterns of exclusion and lack of freedoms, continued to haunt many parts of the world. In many places across the planet, racism and hate speech were on the rise, often finding their way into politics.

6. In 2015, new mandates from intergovernmental bodies called for OHCHR to monitor, investigate, report and increase technical assistance, while intensified engagement with United Nations system partners in the security, development and humanitarian fields, in particular those arising from the Human Rights Up Front initiative required additional efforts. Those demands, in a context of complex human rights challenges, underscore the need to increase OHCHR resources so that the Office can adequately fulfil its mandate.

## **A. Strengthening international human rights mechanisms**

7. The work of human rights mechanisms and OHCHR, both at headquarters and in the field, contributed to prevention, early warning and protection efforts. Ways to extend the normative framework so as to enhance protection continued to be explored.

8. Despite persisting resource constraints, OHCHR provided support to all mechanisms and sought to intensify cooperation among them. Through the compilation of global indicators and world maps, OHCHR contributed to making information on States' commitments and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms more accessible.<sup>3</sup> The human rights indicators methodology developed by OHCHR, in collaboration with international human rights mechanisms, was increasingly recognized as an essential tool and a good practice in the implementation of recommendations of human rights mechanisms. OHCHR conducted training on indicators for national stakeholders in many countries, including in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Tunisia.

### **1. Treaty bodies**

9. In 2015, benefiting from the additional meeting time allowed under General Assembly resolution 68/268, OHCHR facilitated the review by treaty bodies of 173 State party reports, the adoption of views and decisions on more than 160 individual communications and eight country visits by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Consequently, most committees reduced their reporting backlogs. The simplified reporting procedure was also adopted by all committees.

10. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted its first views on an individual communication and the Committee on the Rights of the Child received its first complaints under its communications procedure.

11. The number of registered individual communications increased from 170 in 2013 to 250 in 2015, while the number of requests registered under the urgent action procedure of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://indicators.ohchr.org>.

Disappearance quadrupled, from 50 in 2014 to over 200 in 2015. The active use of treaty bodies by individuals alleging human rights violations is positive but needs to be matched with adequate resources to avoid long delays. OHCHR launched an online treaty body case law database (<http://juris.ohchr.org/>) and worked to ensure the webcasting of all treaty body sessions.

12. At their twenty-seventh annual meeting, held in Costa Rica, the Chairs of the treaty bodies formulated proposals for strengthened cooperation with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and welcomed the call by Costa Rica for an academic process of reflection on the future of the treaty body system. The Chairs also endorsed the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals (the San José Guidelines) and recommended them for adoption by all treaty bodies, some of which have meanwhile done so.

13. OHCHR rolled out the treaty body capacity-building programme created through General Assembly resolution 68/268, with national-level activities in over 40 countries. A study and practical guide on national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up was developed. The first subregional training-of-trainers events for government officials took place for the Pacific (in Samoa) and the Caribbean and English-speaking Americas (in Barbados).

14. OHCHR celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The High Commissioner launched the year-long celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the two covenants under the slogan “Our rights. Our freedoms. Always.”

## **2. Human Rights Council**

15. In 2015, as mandated by the Human Rights Council, OHCHR continued to support three commissions of inquiry (on the Syrian Arab Republic, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Eritrea) and conducted investigations and fact-finding missions on Sri Lanka, Iraq and Libya, as well as Boko Haram-related abuses, and carried out a human rights assessment mission to South Sudan. Despite operational challenges, the resulting reports represent independent, impartial and authoritative references.

16. OHCHR organized panel discussions, including on the death penalty, climate change, the effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, unilateral coercive measures, the rights of the child, women’s rights, the right to education for every girl, racial discrimination worldwide, a human-rights approach to good governance and follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. The annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council, in September 2015, focused on gender parity. For the first time, the impact of the world drug problem on human rights was the subject of a panel. OHCHR also organized a number of side events, for example on the application of human rights criteria to the Arms Trade Treaty.

17. The Human Rights Council held an enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights of migrants and a dialogue on the status of negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, and held informal conversations with the Deputy Secretary-General and the High Commissioner.

18. The Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Work of the Human Rights Council covered the participation of 18 government officials in Council sessions.

### **3. Special procedures**

19. The Human Rights Council established two new thematic special procedure mandates: on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism and on the right to privacy. The decision brought the number of special procedure mandates assisted by OHCHR to 55 (41 thematic and 14 country-specific situations).

20. From 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015, OHCHR supported 83 country visits by special procedure mandate holders to 60 States and territories. The mandate holders issued a total of 524 communications to 122 States (439 were joint communications), covering at least 810 individuals, including 157 women. In 2015, special procedure mandate holders submitted over 130 reports to the Human Rights Council, 39 to the General Assembly and issued over 300 news releases and public statements.

21. Through the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures and individually, with OHCHR support, mandate holders participated in the work of the Human Rights Council, contributed to shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and conducted advocacy in relation to climate change, to the situation of refugees and migrants and to the increasing need to regulate and ensure accountability of non-State actors.

22. Cooperation by Member States is critical to the ability of mandate holders to fulfil their mandates. The High Commissioner is pleased that the number of standing invitations by States for visits increased to 115 (including one observer State). Over the years, 167 States (86.5 per cent) have accepted requests for country visits and were visited by at least one special procedure mandate holder.

### **4. Universal periodic review**

23. The second cycle of the universal periodic review continued with the participation of all 42 States as scheduled, focusing on progress made since the previous cycle. States provided voluntary midterm reports on the status of implementation of recommendations and related challenges.

24. OHCHR supported States under review, including through the Voluntary Trust Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance, by funding the travel of 21 delegates (as participants or observers) to the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. OHCHR also facilitated the participation of 97 persons from 30 countries in three regional workshops, in Barbados, Brazil and Fiji. The partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie strengthened parliamentarians' awareness and involvement in the universal periodic review process (by funding the participation of 14 delegates), including through briefings, trainings and regional seminars.

25. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 30/25, in which the Council encouraged States to strengthen national follow-up systems and processes, OHCHR continued to support, including through the Voluntary Trust Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance, the strengthening of standing interministerial structures and the development of national implementation plans and databases for tracking purposes. Enhanced documentation of good practices resulted in increasing requests for technical cooperation. This means that the funding base of the Voluntary Trust Fund needs to be expanded to meet growing demand.

### **5. Progressive development of international law**

26. In September 2015, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention submitted to the Human Rights Council, at its request, the basic principles and guidelines on remedies and

procedures on the right of anyone deprived of his or her liberty to bring proceedings before court, elaborated with OHCHR support. OHCHR assisted the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child in elaborating joint general recommendation No. 31/general comment No. 18 on harmful practices, the first text of its kind to be jointly adopted by two treaty bodies. OHCHR supported the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the elaboration of general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women. OHCHR also supported the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity in preparing a draft declaration.

27. OHCHR supported intergovernmental working groups tasked with considering the elaboration of international regulatory frameworks, including on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of private military and security companies; the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; the human rights of older persons; and transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights.

## **6. Humanitarian funds**

28. In 2015, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture awarded grants totalling \$7.1 million to support redress and rehabilitation for over 57,000 victims in more than 80 countries. It released immediate support through emergency grants for projects providing assistance in Burundi, Jordan, Iraq and Ukraine, to victims fleeing the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and to refugees in Hungary and Serbia. It held a workshop with expert practitioners on the rehabilitation of victims in emergency contexts and their long-term needs.

29. In 2015, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery supported 30,000 victims through 44 projects in 35 countries, despite financial constraints. Despite its dire financial situation, the Special Fund established by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment funded projects in five countries to strengthen institutional capacity regarding torture prevention.

## **B. Enhancing equality and countering discrimination**

### **1. Discrimination of migrants**

30. Migrants, including refugees, in countries of transit and destination now pay the price for the long-standing lack of principled migration governance that builds on human rights at the global, regional and national levels. OHCHR thus sought to integrate a human rights perspective in the global debate on migration, including through advocacy and by co-chairing the Working Group on Migration, Human Rights and Gender of the Global Migration Group and supporting the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The High Commissioner engaged with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration and Development to discuss the way forward regarding the migration crisis. In a statement issued in October, the High Commissioner urged the European Union and its member States to stop viewing law enforcement as a panacea for contemporary migration challenges.

31. OHCHR provided training to personnel of the European naval force charged with countering smuggling in the Mediterranean. In partnership with others, OHCHR trained Tunisian officials on the human rights of migrants. In March 2015, OHCHR launched two publications, one on the economic, social and cultural rights of migrants and the other

entitled *Behind Closed Doors: Protecting and Promoting the Human Rights of Migrant Domestic Workers in an Irregular Situation*, and organized a seminar on the subject of the latter publication. In September 2015, OHCHR launched a short documentary film highlighting the situation of undocumented women migrant domestic workers.

## **2. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**

32. While 2015 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, racial discrimination and xenophobia sadly remain prevalent around the world. All too often hate speech and hate crimes are directed at racial, religious and ethnic minorities. During the reporting period, the High Commissioner condemned increasingly xenophobic and anti-Muslim views in response to the migration “crisis” in some countries of the European Union and drew attention to persistent discrimination against African-Americans and racial biases in law enforcement, criminal justice and other areas in the United States. In December 2015, in Brazil, he opened the first regional meeting of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), which constitutes an opportunity to focus on the themes of recognition, justice and development. OHCHR developed, through a participatory process, guidelines to monitor and document racial profiling. OHCHR also organized a first workshop with Russian and Ukrainian journalists on the issue of preventing and combating incitement to hatred and discrimination in the media.

33. OHCHR sought to address issues relating to racism and discrimination through sport. In collaboration with the Russian Federation, the International Federation of Football Associations and civil society organizations, OHCHR held two events to address challenges in anticipation of the 2018 World Cup and beyond.

## **3. Discrimination on the basis of indigenous or minority status**

34. In follow-up to the outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, OHCHR continued to promote and facilitate the inclusion of indigenous peoples in decision-making at the national and international levels. For example, it supported the preparation of a system-wide follow-up action plan. In Colombia and Paraguay, OHCHR contributed to increasing indigenous peoples’ participation through training and by supporting the development of special protocols.

35. In the framework of the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, OHCHR trained the United Nations country teams in the Philippines and Fiji in 2015.

36. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, OHCHR supported the creation of an educational website against discrimination and assisted the national anti-discrimination commission in establishing an online complaints facility. In Serbia, OHCHR contributed to a new national strategy aimed at the social inclusion of Roma communities.

37. Through different initiatives, including the minority and indigenous peoples’ fellowship programmes, OHCHR strengthened the capacity of minorities and indigenous peoples to claim their rights at home and in international forums. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples — which turned 30 in 2015 — continued to play a crucial role in facilitating the participation of indigenous representatives in international human rights activities.

#### **4. Gender equality and women's rights**

38. On 15 September 2015, the High Commissioner announced his pledge to be a "Geneva gender champion"<sup>4</sup> and committed himself to meeting at least one women's organization during each field visit, among other things. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, OHCHR led a media campaign featuring 12 video profiles of women human rights defenders and a social media component encouraging public solidarity with women human rights defenders. With United Nations partners, OHCHR published a booklet about United Nations support and assistance to counter gender-related killings and launched an information series on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

39. OHCHR sought to address wrongful stereotyping by the judiciary in cases of sexual and gender-based violence (in Guatemala and West Africa). In Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama and Peru, OHCHR promoted the use of the Latin American model protocol for the investigation of femicide among members of the judiciary. In Papua New Guinea, OHCHR trained women human rights defenders and developed a manual on addressing gender-based violence.

40. OHCHR contributed to building national capacities to address issues related to women's rights and gender equality (violence against women, gender stereotyping, access to land and sexual and reproductive health), including for stakeholders from Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the Gambia, Honduras, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. OHCHR also assisted some States in developing or revising family laws and legislation on violence against women (in Belarus, the Gambia, Myanmar, Senegal, Tunisia and Yemen).

41. With national and international counterparts, OHCHR mentored women candidates and parliamentarians in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Niger and Senegal.

42. Capacity-development on gender integration reached some 350 United Nations staff and government and civil society representatives.

#### **5. Discrimination on the basis of disability**

43. OHCHR played a key role in mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, including in the definition of indicators and in terms of data disaggregated by disability.

44. In Georgia, OHCHR provided advice on amendments to the legislation on the legal capacity of persons with psychological disabilities, which were adopted in the spring of 2015. In August 2015, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of Paraguay adopted a national action plan on the rights of persons with disabilities, developed with OHCHR support. In January 2015, again with OHCHR assistance, the Parliament of Tunisia established a special commission for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, following its ratification of a national charter on the rights of such persons.

#### **6. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity**

45. OHCHR supports efforts to counter homophobic and transphobic attitudes through its Free and Equal public education campaign, which continued through 2015 with the release of new videos, factsheets and other materials. OHCHR led campaign events in Austria, Brazil, Cambodia, Cabo Verde, China, El Salvador, Fiji, Mexico, Peru, Senegal,

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<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [www.genevagenderchampions.com](http://www.genevagenderchampions.com).

Timor-Leste and the United States. A campaign video that was launched in May and showcases the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and their contributions to the community, was watched by almost 10 million people online. In Mexico City, the subway system broadcast the campaign for five months on a line used daily by about 400, 000 passengers.

46. In September, OHCHR hosted an expert meeting in Geneva to discuss the specific human rights challenges faced by intersex people — including unnecessary and involuntary surgery and other medical treatments, as well as lack of access to justice and discriminatory practices in education, employment and sport. OHCHR also released a Free and Equal campaign factsheet on human rights and intersex persons, available online.

## **7. Discrimination against persons with albinism**

47. OHCHR held an exhibition entitled “Blanc ebène — White ebony” in March and launched a special website in May ([www.albinism.ohchr.org](http://www.albinism.ohchr.org)).

48. Further to OHCHR advocacy, national strategies to combat violence and discrimination against persons with albinism were developed in Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania. In Malawi, OHCHR supported the Ministry of Justice with a view to bringing perpetrators of attacks against persons with albinism to justice. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture supported organizations providing direct assistance to survivors of attacks and their relatives.

## **C. Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law**

### **1. Transitional justice**

49. In February, OHCHR published *Rule of Law Tools for Post-Conflict States*,<sup>5</sup> in which good practices relating to the management of records and archives in the context of the right to truth were identified. OHCHR sought to strengthen national capacity for the investigation and prosecution of serious human rights violations, for example in Cambodia, Colombia and Guatemala. Together with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, OHCHR prepared a submission (amicus brief) on reparations in relation to the case *The Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga* before the International Criminal Court.<sup>6</sup>

50. OHCHR continued to provide technical advice in relation to transitional justice mechanisms and related national dialogues. For instance, in the Central African Republic, it provided legal advice on the creation of a hybrid special criminal court to deal with serious human rights violations committed since 2003 and, in September 2015, co-organized with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and local authorities an international seminar on the fight against impunity.<sup>7</sup> In Mali, South Sudan and the Sudan (Darfur), OHCHR provided advice on possible accountability and transitional justice arrangements foreseen by peace agreements. OHCHR continued to support the Extraordinary African Chambers in the Senegalese Courts and monitored the trial of Hissène Habré.

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR\\_PUB\\_14\\_4\\_Archives\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_14_4_Archives_en.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc1977022.pdf](http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc1977022.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16372&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16372&LangID=E).

51. In Sri Lanka, OHCHR supported national stakeholders in the initial steps of establishing credible, effective and comprehensive transitional justice mechanisms to deal with allegations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

52. OHCHR supported local initiatives to promote national ownership of transitional justice processes, e.g. in Chad and Mauritania. In Tunisia, OHCHR provided advice the Truth and Dignity Commission, including regarding violations of economic, social and cultural rights. In Colombia, it supported the gathering, through a secure information system, of evidence and the mapping of over 4,500 killings to enable the Attorney-General's Office to prosecute perpetrators of extrajudicial killings, including high-ranking officials. OHCHR advocated for the meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes and reconciliation mechanisms, including in Afghanistan, Guinea, Libya and Tunisia.

## **2. Death penalty**

53. OHCHR continued to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, including by promoting the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. OHCHR launched a new edition of the book *Moving Away from the Death Penalty: Arguments, Trends and Perspectives* and a social media campaign entitled "End executions". It organized a high-level event at United Nations Headquarters focusing on the voices of victims' families and undertook a number of regional initiatives to advocate for abolition. OHCHR published *Moving Away from the Death Penalty: Lessons in South-East Asia*<sup>8</sup> and supported regional events on the abolition of death penalty in Doha and Addis Ababa, in cooperation with the African Union. OHCHR also supported the United Nation country teams in Madagascar and Malawi in implementing projects to advance abolition.

54. OHCHR promoted protecting the rights of individuals facing the death penalty in States that still use it.

## **3. Counter-terrorism**

55. OHCHR co-chaired the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism, which contributes to developing the capacity of law enforcement officials, and issued a number of reports reiterating concerns at broadly formulated national security legislation used to curb otherwise legitimate activities and to target journalists, human rights defenders, minority groups, members of the political opposition and other individuals or groups.

## **4. Administration of justice and law enforcement**

56. OHCHR remained engaged in the review of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, advocating, inter alia, for protection of the right to health of persons deprived of their liberty, provision of guidance on human rights in relation to investigations into the death, disappearance or serious injury of persons while in custody, the scope of application of solitary confinement and access to legal aid. In October, the Office convened an international expert meeting to share good practices on trial observation as a tool to ensure compliance with the right to a fair trial.

57. OHCHR contributed to discussions of the draft handbook of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the management of high-risk prisoners and launched

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://bangkok.ohchr.org/files/Moving%20away%20from%20the%20Death%20Penalty-English%20for%20Website.pdf>.

*Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders* with a view to translating the international human rights framework into practical border governance measures, including in relation to capacity-building, rescue and interception, assistance, screening, identification and referral, as well as conditions for any necessary detention or removal. OHCHR participated in an informal expert group meeting to review a draft model law on legal aid in criminal justice systems in Austria in June 2015. OHCHR contributed to the handbook for parliamentarians *Migration, Human Rights and Governance* launched by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in October 2015.

58. In Uganda, OHCHR continued to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions and the International Crimes Division of the High Court to increase victims' and witnesses' access to justice and protection, especially for children and victims of sexual and gender-based violence. In Mexico, OHCHR supported the Ministry of the Interior in designing a human rights information system. The International Commission against Impunity of Guatemala and OHCHR jointly supported several initiatives to guarantee access to justice and ensure transparency in the use of public funds. In Jamaica, OHCHR, with United Nations partners and the Justice Training Institute, organized a seminar on human rights for resident magistrates and judges of the High Court. OHCHR support to the Department of Justice and the Attorney-General of Papua New Guinea led to the development of a national action plan and the establishment of a committee to address violence related to accusations of sorcery and witchcraft.

59. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and OHCHR provided technical support to the Inspectorate General of the national police, which led to increased capacity to process and address cases of police misconduct. In Fiji and Myanmar, OHCHR provided human rights training to the police, while in Timor-Leste, OHCHR and UNDP supported the national human rights institution to draft and implement a human rights training manual for the police. The Supreme Court of Justice of Mexico developed, in collaboration with OHCHR, a database that includes all international human rights standards as defined by the United Nations and the inter-American human rights systems.<sup>9</sup> In Tunisia, OHCHR and UNDP supported the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Provisional Judicial Body in designing a national plan of action to reform the judicial and prison institutions. In Tunisia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, OHCHR engaged with the authorities to address arbitrary arrests and detention and improve conditions of detention. In Papua New Guinea, OHCHR advised and trained the Ombudsman institution to monitor detention facilities. In the context of the Ebola virus disease outbreak, OHCHR and the United Nations Mission in Liberia successfully advocated for the decongestion of detention facilities through improved management of pretrial detention.

## **5. Constitutional and legislative reforms**

60. OHCHR advocated for constitutional and legislative reforms to ensure States' compliance with international human rights, including in Grenada, Libya, Thailand, Ukraine and the United Republic of Tanzania.

61. OHCHR supported national stakeholders in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Sudan and Uganda to put in place legislative frameworks for the protection of victims and witnesses of gross human rights violations and serious violations of international humanitarian law.

62. Further to OHCHR assistance, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan adopted seven laws, including the Code of Criminal Procedure, integrating international standards related to the

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.bjdh.org.mx](http://www.bjdh.org.mx).

administration of justice and the prevention of torture. With the advice of the OHCHR Regional Office for the Middle East, the code of conduct of Lebanese internal security forces was updated to integrate recommendations of the Committee against Torture. In July 2015, following OHCHR advice, the Parliament of Mauritania adopted a law criminalizing torture and a law establishing a national preventive mechanism against torture.

## **D. Integrating human rights in development and the economy**

### **1. Human rights in development**

63. The Declaration on the Right to Development informed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the new Sustainable Development Goals, which were at the centre of OHCHR development work in 2015. In an open letter dated 27 July, the High Commissioner called upon Member States to ensure that the new agenda was firmly anchored in the international human rights framework. He welcomed that the core objective of the Sustainable Development Goals was to reduce inequalities and realize the human rights of all.

64. OHCHR engaged with Member States in supporting the development of a framework of indicators that was sensitive to human rights and a robust monitoring, review and accountability framework. OHCHR advocated for strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda to be grounded in human rights standards and principles, ensuring not only that “no one is left behind” but also that those “left furthest behind are reached first”.

65. OHCHR undertook preliminary consultations and methodological work to compile global indicators relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals, including through the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities of the United Nations and other international organizations. In October, OHCHR organized an expert meeting to develop guidance on a human rights-based approach to data and statistics, with a focus on disaggregation and inclusive data collection systems. OHCHR contributed to indicators on migrants, with an initial focus on the rights to health, education and decent work. With OHCHR support, the Government of Paraguay designed human rights indicators related to poverty, economic and social rights and social protection.

66. With regard to financing for development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, OHCHR advocacy addressed an open letter to all Member States on integrated human rights considerations and on the right-to-development approach.

67. In terms of mainstreaming human rights in the work of the United Nations development system, OHCHR continued to co-chair the human rights working group of the inter-agency United Nations Development Group. OHCHR updated the guidance note on human rights for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, which provides guidance and practical examples on how resident coordinators and country teams can fulfil their human rights responsibilities, including in the light of the Secretary-General’s Human Rights Up Front initiative.

68. OHCHR engaged in mainstreaming human rights in international institutions that finance development, including the World Bank, with a focus on strengthening the social and environmental safeguard policies underpinning multilateral development banks’ investment lending.

69. OHCHR work on trade focused on a scoping study conducted as part of an ex-ante human rights impact assessment of the Continental Free Trade Area agreement emphasizing agriculture and employment. Based on objective evidence, such assessments

aim at ensuring that negotiations lead to decision-making that complies with human rights. OHCHR provided input on ways to reform the investment treaty system and conducted research on State-investor contracts and human rights.

70. In February, OHCHR co-organized a climate justice dialogue with the Mary Robinson Foundation, as a result of which several States agreed to share best practices and knowledge between human rights and climate experts. OHCHR advocated for human rights considerations to be integrated in the outcome document of the Twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was adopted in December.

## **2. Economic, social and cultural rights**

71. On 15 September, OHCHR and United Nations partners launched an online platform on social protection floors and human rights to provide States and practitioners with tools for implementing the right to social security.

72. OHCHR supported the Judicial Studies Institute of Uganda to roll out a curriculum for judges on the enforcement of economic social and cultural rights.

73. OHCHR held expert consultations in Geneva, in July, to explore the links between violations of economic, social and cultural rights and conflict and to identify the essential elements of an effective early warning system. The consultations were followed by a regional meeting in Bangkok focusing on human rights violations in the context of land-related issues.

74. Forced evictions make millions homeless and landless, increasing poverty. OHCHR developed a factsheet on forced evictions to help all stakeholders to prevent and remedy human rights violations in that context. In Timor-Leste, OHCHR built the capacity of the national human rights institution to monitor the right to adequate housing and to prevent evictions. With the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), OHCHR continued work on eviction impact assessments to enable a realistic estimation of the costs of evictions. Against the backdrop of ever-increasing urbanization, generally accompanied by discrimination and inequalities, OHCHR advocated for the integration of human rights into decision-making on urbanization processes, also in view of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Ecuador in October 2016.

75. OHCHR led the human rights work stream in the preparation of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030), launched in 2015. As a result, accountability and the empowerment of women, children and adolescents so that they can claim their rights are core aspects of the Strategy. OHCHR, with partners such as the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization, produced detailed guidance for health policymakers and national human rights institutions on key considerations in applying a rights-based approach to sexual, reproductive, maternal, new-born and under-5 child health. In Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, those issues were assessed from a human rights perspective and discussed in multi-stakeholder meetings at the national level. In Uganda, OHCHR assisted civil society in developing the capacity to monitor violations of human rights related to sexual and reproductive health.

## **3. Business and human rights**

76. Since the Human Rights Council endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in 2011, OHCHR has supported some States, for instance Malaysia, in developing national action plans on business and human rights and engaged with companies to encourage them to more effectively manage human rights risks incurred by

their operations. However, if the promise of the Guiding Principles is to be realized, greater leadership and more robust action are needed, in particular in relation to accountability and access to remedy for victims of business-related human rights abuses. OHCHR continued to engage in consultations in the framework of its Accountability and Remedy Project.

77. In Cambodia, businesses that had benefited from land concessions and affected communities solicited OHCHR advice to remedy the human rights impact of such processes. In Panama, OHCHR and other United Nations entities facilitated dialogue between a high-level government committee and indigenous peoples' representatives opposing the construction of the Barro Blanco hydroelectric dam. In Colombia, OHCHR assisted several companies and communities in achieving fair solutions to the human rights impact of business operations. OHCHR worked with the regional network of the Global Compact in Central America to integrate human rights in private companies' activities. OHCHR provided support and guidance to government officials, business representatives and other stakeholders in Malawi and Tunisia on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

## **E. Widening the democratic space**

78. In 2015, countries in all regions experienced challenges to the rights to freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, particularly ahead of elections, in the context of counter-terrorism and in the face of social and political protests. In many instances, restrictions were placed on human rights defenders and their families, environmentalists, anti-corruption activists, journalists and opposition leaders or supporters. The persistent reprisals against those seeking to cooperate with the United Nations in the field of human rights were of particular concern. The High Commissioner repeatedly drew attention to attacks on human rights defenders and journalists and OHCHR provided technical advice to authorities on how to enhance protection, including in Guatemala, South Sudan and Tunisia. In Colombia, further to OHCHR advice, the Attorney-General's Office adopted a strategic plan for the investigation of violence against human rights defenders. In El Salvador and Mexico, OHCHR contributed to strengthening the protection mechanism for human rights defenders under attack and under the threat of attack.

79. OHCHR continued to develop the capacity of civil society organizations, seeking to improve protection at the national level through assistance to legal reforms and advocacy against restrictions of public freedoms. It supported an emerging network of women human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the establishment of a regional civil society coalition to counter incitement and promote tolerance. In Timor-Leste, OHCHR supported human rights defenders' dialogue on the establishment of a permanent human rights advocacy network.

80. OHCHR provided advice on the draft law on civil society association in Mauritania, promoting participation of civil society in the process. In Kenya, it advised the Government on a draft policy on public participation. In Uganda, it supported civil society advocacy for the integration of international human rights into the non-governmental organizations bill.

81. OHCHR participated in the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for United Nations Electoral Assistance, advocating for a human rights approach to United Nations electoral assistance. In February, OHCHR and the Carter Center co-chaired a workshop gathering electoral observers and human rights defenders to discuss increased cooperation. In Burundi, Guatemala and Haiti, OHCHR monitored human rights in the electoral context.

82. At the global level, OHCHR continued its advocacy on the protection of the right to privacy and other human rights, including at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly and the Internet Governance Forum.

83. The World Programme for Human Rights Education represents international consensus on the key contribution of effective human rights education to the realization of those rights. The High Commissioner encouraged States to take full advantage of the third phase of the Programme's implementation (2015-2019) to promote human rights training for media professionals and journalists.

84. In Kenya, the Niger, Timor-Leste and Uganda, OHCHR worked towards integrating human rights in the curricula of educational institutions, from primary school to university. In the Russian Federation, nine leading universities from five regions developed, with support from OHCHR, common curricula, including core courses on the United Nations human rights machinery and regional human rights mechanisms.

## **F. Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity**

### **1. Human rights, peace and security**

85. OHCHR interacted with the Security Council on a number of country-specific and thematic issues related to human rights, peace and security, through briefings and consultations.

86. In efforts to further integrate human rights in the United Nations peace and security agenda, OHCHR engaged with the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and welcomed its report. In his subsequent report on the future of peace operations, the Secretary-General reinforced the centrality of human rights and the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping and as a system-wide responsibility.

87. OHCHR and the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Political Affairs and Field Support jointly conducted a review of the implementation of the 2011 policy on integrating human rights in United Nations peace operations and special political missions. The review provided a comprehensive road map, including recommendations for regular public human rights reporting and strengthened human rights training to peacekeeping personnel. As a member of the United Nations inter-agency Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security, OHCHR provided technical support and input to a global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and recommendations on the way forward.

88. OHCHR sought to contribute to a more coherent framework for peace missions on the protection of, for example, children and victims of conflict-related sexual violence. OHCHR supported United Nations peace missions in the Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan in fulfilling their mandates on the protection of civilians. OHCHR launched a report on human rights and the protection of civilians in peacekeeping. In August, the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) established a joint mechanism to share information, address allegations of human rights violations by FRCI elements and improve human rights capacity-building.

89. OHCHR strengthened its cooperation with the Commission of the African Union to further integrate human rights in African Union peace operations. The Office trained the African Union Peace and Security Department and the United Nations Office to the African Union with a view to ensuring that forces deployed by the African Union adhere to international human rights and international humanitarian law, and that United Nations support to the African Union is compliant with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. OHCHR provided technical support to strengthen the human rights capacity of the African Union start-up team tasked

with activating the multinational joint task force mandated by the African Union Peace and the Security Council to support regional efforts to combat Boko Haram.

90. OHCHR also provided advice to United Nations missions and country teams, including in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, on the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy.

## **2. Rapid response and early warning**

91. OHCHR continued to respond to emerging and ongoing crises and deployed teams to assess the human rights situation in Cameroon, the Niger and Nigeria in the context of Boko Haram operations; in the Republic of Moldova, in relation to political instability; in Guatemala and Guinea in the context of elections; and at the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti to monitor the treatment of people of Haitian origin expelled from the Dominican Republic. Owing to financial constraints, the OHCHR contingency fund and rapid deployment roster used for such missions are overstretched. OHCHR monitored the increasing violence and unrest across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, starting at the end of September 2015.

92. OHCHR remained fully involved in the implementation of the Human Rights Up Front initiative, including by providing support and advice both at headquarters and in the field to United Nations partners. OHCHR coordinated the development of the mandatory online course on United Nations human rights responsibilities for all United Nations staff, which was launched on Human Rights Day 2015.

93. Management of information on violations of human rights and broader threats to populations remained critical to the effective implementation of the initiative and to ensuring adequate and timely analysis and response. To that end, OHCHR led an inter-agency task force that put forward options for the establishment of a common United Nations human rights information management system. The Office contributed to defining new headquarters coordination and early warning mechanisms. OHCHR regularly provided country specific human rights and early warning analysis to United Nations system entities and a series of country notes were shared with resident coordinators to guide country-level strategies.

94. OHCHR made greater use of other information sources. For example, it concluded a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme with the aim of expanding its use of satellite imagery to verify human rights information.

95. At the country level, the Human Rights Up Front initiative resulted in enhanced mainstreaming of human rights into United Nations responses by bringing human rights analysis into development assistance frameworks, enabling improved strategies and operating procedures to address human rights risks, drawing attention to long-standing human rights concerns and strengthening human rights advocacy. OHCHR worked with partners, notably the Department of Political Affairs, on a concept for the rapid deployment of multidisciplinary teams to countries where crises may emerge. The first of these teams were deployed during the last quarter of 2015, in Burkina Faso and Lesotho.

96. OHCHR pursued efforts to professionalize human rights monitoring and investigation through the development and update of guidance tools, such as its glossary of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and new chapters of its manual on human rights monitoring. In 2015, OHCHR initiated a review of its casualty recording methodology with a view to improving existing practices. It provided guidance, training, advice and lessons learned exercises to commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and ad hoc OHCHR deployments. Remote training was expanded and tested when the security situation did not allow for on-site training for staff, namely in

Burundi. The OHCHR Human Rights Case Database, an Office-wide professional case management tool, was rolled out to three additional offices and a new module for profiling alleged perpetrators was developed.

### **3. Sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking and related exploitation**

97. OHCHR supported the development and implementation of laws against sexual violence (for instance in Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Iraq (Kurdistan region) and Nigeria); promoting victims' and witnesses' participation in peace processes and reconciliation (in the Sudan (Darfur) and the Central African Republic); and assisting victims of sexual violence (in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, the Sudan and Tunisia). OHCHR sought to strengthen national capacities to investigate sexual and gender-based violence in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and the Sudan. In Kosovo, OHCHR advocated for the allocation of funds to address gender-based violence in the municipality of North Mitrovica and supported the women's caucus in the municipal assembly. Also in Kosovo, through United Nations joint programming, OHCHR supported the development of a draft regulation on the verification of the status of victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

98. The United Nations Mission in Liberia and OHCHR assisted national counterparts to establish centres that provide comprehensive services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. In Mauritania, OHCHR and United Nations partners contributed to enhancing national capacity to address sexual and gender-based violence and provided legal advice on a draft law to combat such violence and better protect survivors.

99. To promote a human rights-based approach to addressing trafficking in persons, OHCHR provided technical and capacity-building assistance to States and civil society groups, including in Belarus and Thailand. In the framework of the International Labour Organization campaign to promote the ratification of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), OHCHR engaged in efforts to raise awareness about forced labour and its linkages with human rights and human trafficking.

100. OHCHR has successfully mainstreamed human rights into anti-trafficking joint policy positions, as in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, and in evaluating responses to trafficking. In September, OHCHR convened an event against trafficking for organ removal in partnership with Belarus, with the participation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

### **4. Humanitarian action**

101. OHCHR remained engaged with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Global Protection Cluster, co-leading the team charged with prioritizing protection. In 2015, a major independent review of protection in humanitarian action was completed.

102. OHCHR led the protection clusters in Liberia (in relation to Ebola), Mauritania and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and co-led them with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Ukraine and the Pacific region. As part of OHCHR efforts to integrate human rights in the humanitarian response of the United Nations to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, three human rights advisers were recruited to support the Humanitarian Coordinator in the country, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis and his deputy. Rapid and surge deployments in the framework of humanitarian action included missions to Nepal (following the earthquake), Ukraine, Mauritania and Yemen. In Rakhine State, Myanmar, OHCHR assisted humanitarian actors in integrating human rights into their response.

## II. Management and administration

103. OHCHR has embarked on a significant organizational change initiative. The initiative will increase efficiency, maximize resources and capacities and align programmatic delivery, so that OHCHR can respond more effectively to the demands and expectations of Member States, United Nations partners and rights-holders. The vision behind the initiative aims to achieve three overarching objectives: to capitalize on the role of OHCHR as the global reference point for human rights standards and mechanisms; to work directly and with partners to turn the recommendations of United Nations human rights mechanisms into changes that improve peoples' lives; and to place a premium on strategic coordination and consolidated partnerships within the United Nations and across the international system.

104. This vision will be achieved initially by shifting existing resources to deliver more efficiently on programme 20 of the biennial programme plan for the period 2016-2017. At its headquarters, OHCHR will consolidate its thematic expertise and redefine terms of reference to more effectively support the human rights mechanisms. OHCHR will strengthen its work in New York in order to better mainstream human rights in the development and peace and security agendas. In addition, regional hubs will be set up to provide OHCHR with a more balanced global presence and facilitate technical cooperation and capacity-building. Any efficiency savings will be channelled towards responding to requests for technical cooperation and capacity-building assistance at the national level. The increased results and visibility that are expected to result from these changes will encourage further investment by Member States in OHCHR, both in the form of voluntary contributions and in the context of the regular budget.

## III. Conclusions

105. **Over the past year, in line with its mandate, OHCHR has, at every level, urged and assisted States to promote and protect the rights of every human being and called for accountability for all violations. OHCHR has continued to monitor and document human rights situations across the world and to provide technical assistance.**

106. **True to the vision laid down in the Charter of the United Nations 70 years ago, and to ensure that human rights are indeed one of the Organization's three pillars, OHCHR has continued to advocate for human rights mainstreaming and capacity-building with the United Nations. The Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative has brought about a reprioritization of the human rights agenda in many situations but more remains to be done for the initiative to be fully integrated into United Nations strategies and actions.**

107. **The significant migration movements currently taking place across the world are a powerful reminder that human rights matter. They demonstrate that human beings will — when their lives are threatened, when their dignity is undermined and when they have no prospects — go to great lengths to look for means of survival, protection and a way out. To enable people to live their lives in peace, dignity and safety, States and the international community have to take human rights seriously and make a more honest assessment of the current deficits that cause these crises.**

108. **OHCHR has a role to play, be it in terms of identifying these deficits or seeking to eliminate long-standing patterns of discrimination or human rights violations, to develop the capacity of State institutions to remedy grievances and to assist in addressing poverty in an inclusive and comprehensive way. Yet, it cannot play this role alone — others too must recognize that offering lip service to human rights and**

**engaging in the kind of international cooperation that “ticks the boxes” is an approach that has outlived itself. It is long overdue for States to effectively implement the universal human rights norms that they have established and committed themselves to over the decades in the context of the United Nations and regional organizations. OHCHR stands ready to assist.**

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