

## CONCEPT NOTE

### GANHRI ANNUAL MEETING – KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

#### Addressing women's and girls' human rights by applying NHRIs' mandate and functions under the Paris Principles: NHRIs' experiences, lessons and practices

Tuesday, 5 March 2019  
10 to 13 hours, Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

#### Background

As national institutions with a broad human rights mandate and functions in line with the United Nations Paris Principles, NHRIs can make significant contributions to promoting and protecting human rights of women and girls.

The United Nations Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles) outline minimum standards for NHRIs, including a broad human rights mandate, autonomy from government, independence, pluralism, adequate resources and adequate powers of investigation.

NHRIs are vested with a broad set of functions and powers which generally include research, legal and policy advice; education and promotion; monitoring; investigating; handling complaints; cooperating with other national, regional and international organisations; and interacting with the judiciary.

Each of these functions can be leveraged to make distinctive and valuable contributions to promoting and protecting women's human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

At their 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference held in Amman, Jordan, in 2012, NHRIs from all world regions adopted the Amman Declaration, resolving to prioritise and mainstream women's human rights across their activities, with a view to establishing sustainable interventions to achieve gender equality. To this end, the Amman Declaration identifies a

series of contributions that NHRI can have by applying their mandate and functions to promote and protect women's human rights and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Specifically, NHRI contributions may include:

- NHRIs can undertake **education, promotion and awareness-raising activities** on the human rights of women and girls, gender equality and relevant international standards, to promote awareness of rights and redress mechanisms available to victims of human rights violations. Many NHRIs have developed targeted campaigns relevant to the national context and engage and collaborate with a variety of actors, including women and girls, schools, civil society, media, business, government, and the judiciary to sensitise them to gender-based discrimination and other violations of women's and girls' human rights and to enable them to use international human rights for advocacy, litigation or in their daily work.
- **Protection strategies** should address the particular needs and challenges of women and girls in the national context, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. To this end, NHRIs can investigate into situations, gather sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, monitor progress and report thereon to national, regional and international levels. NHRI should also address any obstacles that women may face in accessing justice, including, where available, the NHRI's own complaints handling mechanism. Furthermore, NHRIs can help ensure that judicial mechanisms and other remedies of the State are gender-responsive addressing the specific needs, rights and vulnerabilities of women and girls. As identified in both the Amman Declaration and the Marrakech Declaration - adopted by the 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference of NHRIs in 2018 - NHRIs have an important role in the protection of women human rights defenders, who may face gender-specific risks because of who they are and because of the type of rights they work on.
- NHRIs provide legal and policy **advice to governments** in areas of legal drafting and reform, gender mainstreaming and policy development, and gender-responsive budgeting. Regular and constructive interaction with policymakers in areas such as legal reform, gender mainstreaming and policy development, and gender-responsive budgeting can have significant impact in ensuring that gender aspects are high on the agenda across all government departments. Participation in the development of national action plans and monitoring of their

implementation through the NHRIs' independent expert lens can promote a comprehensive approach, whilst identifying remaining gaps.

- NHRIs can build fruitful **collaboration and partnerships** in their work on women's and girls' human rights. Civil society actors are critical partners as they often have specialized knowledge, access to individuals that the NHRI may not reach, and additional human or financial resources to support activities. NHRIs can build collaboration with other national bodies – particularly those specialized on women's rights where they exist – by exchanging information, referring complaints, strengthening a human rights-based approach, and by collaborating on reports, trainings and joint advocacy.
- NHRIs can significantly leverage their domestic work by **engaging with regional and international mechanisms** on women's human rights and gender equality, including within the UN system. This includes reporting to these mechanisms on the national situation and monitoring the implementation of outcome recommendations at the national level. As part of their overall strategy to promote and protect women's human rights, NHRIs can prioritise and promote the human rights of women and girls and gender equality across their engagement with all international and regional human rights mechanisms, such as the treaty bodies, the UPR, and the processes for review and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
- NHRIs can develop their **organisational culture and tools** to maximise the NHRI's effectiveness in addressing women's and girls' human rights. In line with the Paris Principles, NHRIs must ensure that their composition is pluralistic and that the NHRI is accessible to all stakeholders including women and girls. As highlighted in the Amman Declaration, NHRIs should prioritise women's human rights and gender-related aspects in all stages of their work including planning, decision-making, and policy and programme development. To strengthen their outreach and coordination with women and women's rights organisations, some NHRIs have designated focal points on women. NHRIs should have adequate budget and resources to ensure they can address women's and girls' human rights in a meaningful and impactful manner.

## Objectives

Seven years on from the commitments made by NHRIs at their 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Amman, GANHRI's Annual Knowledge Exchange will be an opportunity to take stock of how NHRIs in all regions are making an impact in addressing women's and girls' human rights and promoting gender equality by applying their unique mandate and functions.

The meeting will be an opportunity to share initiatives, experiences, lessons, and collectively identify good practices, and remaining challenges.

The meeting will bring together participants from NHRIs from all regions, and their partners from the UN and civil society, and will also be open to Member States.

The Knowledge Exchange will focus specifically on

- **Promotion** – What strategies are effective to raise awareness about structural gender-based discrimination, and to develop positive narratives about women's human rights and the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls? How can NHRIs best advise parliament and government on measures to strengthen women's human rights? How do NHRIs respond to the attack by populist and authoritarian governments on women's human rights and gender equality? How can NHRIs engage the spirit of the women's movement in 2019 to deal with rise of populist attacks?
- How can NHRIs engage other actors, including business, media, the UN system, and civil society, to amplify messages and reach a broad audience?
- **Protection** – How can NHRIs apply investigatory, monitoring, complaints handling and reporting functions to address women's and girls' human rights? How can NHRIs contribute to the protection of women human rights defenders?
- **NHRI organisational culture** – How can NHRIs strengthen their organisational culture to strengthen their work on women's rights? How can NHRIs ensure they are pluralistic in their composition and accessible to women, across the work they do?
- **Cooperation** – How can NHRIs cooperate with civil society organisations and other national bodies to address women's rights? How can NHRIs leverage their domestic work on women's rights by engaging with international and regional mechanisms such as CEDAW, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Sustainable Development Goals?

## Further details

The Knowledge Exchange will be interpreted into the four GANHRI languages Arabic, English, French and Spanish. For further information please visit [www.ganhri.org](http://www.ganhri.org) or contact the GANHRI Geneva Representative Katharina Rose ([k.rose@ganhri.org](mailto:k.rose@ganhri.org)).

## DRAFT AGENDA

10.00 - 10.05	<b>Opening</b> - Welcome by the GANHRI Chairperson or delegate
10.05 - 11.00	<b>Session 1 – Promotion strategies</b>
11.00 – 12.00	<b>Session 2 - Protection strategies</b>
12.00 – 13.00	<b>Session 3 – Cooperation and NHRI organisational culture</b>