Building Inclusive Societies:
The Role of NHRIs in Promoting, Protecting, and Monitoring the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Event hosted by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)
With the co-sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Australia, New Zealand, and Timor-Leste, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the International Disability Alliance (IDA)

Date: 23 September 2024
Time: 14:00–15:00 CEST
Venue: Palais des Nations, Room XXV

Concept Note

Persons with disabilities are entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. Yet, they continue to encounter significant barriers. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Convention or CRPD), adopted in 2006 and entered into force in 2008, marked a 'paradigm shift' from traditional charity-oriented and medical-based approaches to disability to a model based on human rights.

Whilst the obligation to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities lies with States, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) are pivotal in supporting efforts to promoting, protecting, and monitoring the human rights of persons with disabilities, in close consultation with persons with disabilities, and civil society.

Many NHRIs are formally designated by their States as independent monitoring mechanisms under Article 33(2) of the CRPD. Even when NHRIs do not have this formal mandate, they make use of their broad human rights mandate to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others, which can include:

- making recommendations to governments and parliament for reforming legislation and policy affecting persons with disabilities;
- raising awareness and conducting research on the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities, and reporting to regional and international bodies on the national implementation of the UN CRPD;
- monitoring and reporting on the treatment of persons with disabilities in care institutions; and
- investigating individual complaints.

NHRIs due to their broad mandates are uniquely placed to address intersectional discrimination, which disproportionately affects persons with disabilities who face multiple barriers based on factors such as gender, race, age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. NHRIs can be a voice to help ensure that persons with disabilities are visible in areas like climate change, where they are disproportionately impacted, and in torture prevention and accountability efforts, as mentioned in the Kyiv-Copenhagen Declaration. NHRIs advocacy for inclusive policies supports the SDGs, fostering the integration of persons with disabilities into development strategies and reducing inequalities globally.

The human rights of persons with disabilities is a priority for the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). GANHRI provides vital support to NHRIs by offering technical assistance, facilitating capacity-building, and fostering the exchange of peer learning and good practices among members as well as with partners, including through its Working Group on Persons with Disabilities. GANHRI also works closely with states to advise in the process of designation and strengthening of their monitoring frameworks, taking into due account the Paris Principles, as required under article 33 II of the Convention, to ensure independent, pluralistic and well-resourced mechanisms and institutions.

GANHRI and the CRPD Committee have long emphasized NHRIs' essential role in monitoring CRPD implementation, urging States, in a joint declaration, to ensure that NHRIs designated under Article 33(2) are independent and adequately resourced. The 2023 OHCHR Practical Guide for National Monitoring Mechanisms further underscores that NHRIs, consistent with the Paris Principles, must maintain independence and collaborate closely with civil society, particularly organizations of persons with disabilities.

At this 57th session of the Human Rights Council, the Permanent Missions of Australia and Timor-Leste are proposing a resolution to highlight the crucial role NHRIs play in promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, especially as the 20th anniversary of the CRPD approaches. It presents an important opportunity to renew international support for independent, pluralistic, and effective NHRIs in line with the Paris Principles.

Objectives

1. **Showcase NHRI Experiences**: Highlight how NHRIs from various regions are promoting, protecting, and monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities, with a focus on their national and international engagement.
2. **Strengthen Partnerships**: Facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing among NHRIs, states, the UN and international mechanisms, particularly regarding the implementation of the Convention.
3. **Promote Inclusive Policy Development:** Encourage states to adopt and implement inclusive national policies that address intersectional discrimination and include persons with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, and political life.

Format and Accessibility

The side event will be a panel discussion with both in-person and virtual participation, ensuring accessibility for a wide audience.