

ANNUAL REPORT | 2010

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INTRODUCTION

2010 – a year of positive change

During 2010, ISHR initiated the implementation of its new three-year Strategic and Action Plan. The new goals and objectives guided the organisation's work throughout the year, particularly in relation to human rights defenders. The global community of human rights defenders has always been the key beneficiary of ISHR's work, and as of the *Strategic and Action Plan 2010-2012*, strengthening defenders' knowledge, capacity and access to human rights mechanisms has become the organisation's *raison d'être*. Support to human rights defenders is no longer a separate activity area, but rather the ultimate purpose of each goal and objective. More detail on ISHR's new *Strategic and Action Plan* is outlined in the background section below.

2010 was a year of new and strengthened leadership for ISHR. Its governing Executive Board was substantially strengthened through the election of six new Board members. They are all internationally recognised human rights experts representing diverse regions but sharing a common commitment to the support of human rights defenders. Brief presentation of our new and old Board members can be found on our website at www.ishr.ch/the-board.

The past year also saw a change of key staff. A new Executive Director joined ISHR in January, bringing with him extensive field experience from a career with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. At the same time, several long-serving ISHR managers moved on to new challenges, but were replaced by high-calibre professionals who have already proven their capacity to uphold the legacy of the outgoing colleagues. Together, recently departed and present team members have successfully implemented the first year of the *Strategic and Action Plan 2010-2012*. They have also drawn up an ambitious activity plan for 2011.

Other changes during 2010 include ISHR's bold move to discontinue the production of the annual *Human Rights Monitor*, replacing it with the new *Human Rights Monitor Quarterly*. In the current, fast-paced human rights environment, with the Human Rights Council meeting three times a year and new mechanisms operating throughout the year, ISHR felt that human rights defenders and the broader human rights community is better served by a more frequent, timely and analytical information product than the comprehensive but lengthy annual publication. Therefore, as of 2010, ISHR alerts defenders of upcoming opportunities to engage with human rights mechanisms and provides analysis of recent UN human rights sessions and important regional developments every three months, through a new and more user-friendly publication.

In terms of thematic priorities, developments in 2010 convinced ISHR of the need to further pursue the protection of human rights defenders and other individuals who cooperate with the UN from attacks and threats as a result of that collaboration. The concerning increase of this phenomenon of reprisals and the lack of effective response by the UN pose a serious challenge to the core mandate of ISHR – to support human rights defenders and their effective engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms. After a series of consultations with key stakeholders, including other human rights NGOs, ISHR has decided to seek the necessary resources for a dedicated ISHR staff person to work as a focal point on reprisals for the NGO community. We hope old and new partners will support us in this endeavor.

BACKGROUND

ISHR's *Strategic and Action Plan 2010-2012*, referred to in the introduction, can be summarised in the goals and objectives below. 2010 was the first year of implementation.

For 2010-2012, ISHR's two main goals are to:

1. Support human rights defenders in effectively engaging with the UN and regional human rights systems to advance respect for human rights

In order to do this, ISHR will ensure that human rights defenders have:

- Increased knowledge of developments, trends and opportunities occurring in the UN and regional human rights systems
- Increased capacity to use the UN and regional human rights systems and to protect their rights in a strategic way
- The practical means to actively participate in the meetings of UN and regional human rights bodies

2. Improve the accessibility of the UN and regional systems to human rights defenders and their response to defenders' concerns

To achieve this goal, ISHR will work to:

- Increase the effective promotion and protection of the rights of defenders by the UN and regional human rights systems' specific mandates on human rights defenders
- Improve the functioning and development of the UN and regional human rights systems and their response to the concerns of human rights defenders

ISHR's services are primarily targeted at civil society human rights defenders and NGOs working at the national level. However, ISHR also considers independent and effective national human rights institutions to be human rights defenders and will support their efforts to collaborate closely with civil society defenders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2010 was a year of change of leadership in ISHR. Six new Board members joined the organisation, a new Executive Director was recruited and several new Programme Managers were hired or internally promoted. Together with the rest of staff, they have implemented the first year of ISHR's *Strategic and Action Plan 2010-2012*. Other important changes include the shift from the publication of an annual *Human Rights Monitor* to a quarterly coverage of developments in the UN and regional systems. Also, during 2010 ISHR developed a new thematic priority area, i.e. addressing the phenomenon of reprisals against those cooperating with the UN, a thematic focus which will be enhanced in 2011.

ISHR's work in 2010 was comprehensive and broad, both in terms of geographical reach, and in the variety and depth of activities undertaken. In Geneva and New York, ISHR undertook comprehensive information sharing, capacity building and advocacy activities. The organisation **monitored key meetings** of the Human Rights Council (the Council) and the Working Group on its review, the universal periodic review (UPR), General Assembly, Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, and various treaty bodies.

The outcome of this monitoring was summarised into a variety of **information materials** – including a brand new ISHR publication, launched in April 2010, the *Human Rights Monitor Quarterly* (the *Quarterly*). The new 40-page publication replaces the former annual *Human Rights Monitor*, and the 'monitor series' (*New York Monitor*, *Treaty Body Monitor*, *UPR Monitor* and *Council Monitor*). The *Quarterly* provides in-depth analysis at more frequent intervals throughout the year, and presents a global picture of developments in the international and regional human rights systems. In addition, the *Quarterly* highlights events, meetings and opportunities for human rights defenders' engagement with the UN and regional systems in the upcoming quarter and beyond.

More frequent news alerts on developments in the UN system were also published on the organisation's website (www.ishr.ch) and sent to an email database of more than 1,900 subscribers. Over the course of 2010, more than 150 news stories, not including the articles prepared specifically for the *Quarterly*, were provided to human rights defenders and other interested parties. An updated *Simple Guide to the UN Treaty Bodies* booklet was also produced.

In regard to **capacity building activities**, in Geneva ISHR conducted three training courses for human rights defenders. These included an Advanced Geneva Training Course (AGTC) for French-speaking human rights defenders, an AGTC focused on the UN treaty bodies and UPR, and a training course for East Asian human rights defenders. ISHR also contributed towards a training course on sexual rights advocacy, organised by human rights organisation CREA.

Advocacy was also central to the organisation's activities. In Geneva, ISHR was involved with other NGOs in advocacy related to: the review of the Council, the strengthening of independent voices in the Council (such as NGOs, special procedures and OHCHR), issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, reprisals against those who collaborate with the UN and its mechanisms, among many other issues.

The NGO Committee (the Committee) of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was a focus for ISHR's advocacy, both in Geneva and New York. There are rising concerns amongst NGOs regarding the lack of due process being followed by the Committee, and concerns it is increasingly being used as a vehicle to 'discipline' NGOs that raise human rights issues at the UN. Through joint letters and statements, and a background paper outlining the functioning of the NGO Committee, ISHR has been actively involved in helping to address this issue.

In New York, another advocacy initiative was involvement in the NGO Working Group on civil society access to the UN. It has become increasingly difficult for NGOs to fully engage at the UN in New York due to restrictions being placed on them, both through procedural and physical changes at the UN headquarters. In 2010, ISHR took on the role of Secretary of the Working Group and was instrumental in enabling the group to organise meetings with the Under-Secretaries-General to raise awareness of access difficulties, and to help develop constructive solutions.

The New York office was also involved in a range of other advocacy activities related to: the elections of Human Rights Council members in the General Assembly, a campaign to have an unjustly-incarcerated human rights defender released from prison in Uzbekistan, the review of the Council, and protection for human rights defenders, among many other issues.

At the regional level, ISHR actively engaged with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). ISHR participated in the 47th and 48th Ordinary Sessions of the ACHPR and was involved in NGO forums prior to both events. The organisation also hosted a side-event at the 47th session, on national legislation relevant to human rights, and the protection of human rights defenders.

A **report summarising key developments** at the 47th session of the ACHPR was produced by ISHR in English and translated into French. Work on a similar report on the 48th session was also started in 2010 and is due for release in the first quarter of 2011.

Numerous **capacity building activities** for human rights defenders were undertaken by ISHR around the world. In Africa, many of these were joint ventures with regional human rights defenders networks and were focused on preparing defenders and civil society for engagement in the UPR of their respective countries. The trainings took place in Niger, Togo (two), Burundi, and Uganda, and catered to human rights defenders from numerous African nations.

A training course organised by ISHR for defenders from the Pacific region focused on the UN system, including how to engage with special procedures, treaty bodies and the UPR.

In Latin America, ISHR was involved in the 11th International Human Rights Colloquium in Sao Paulo, Brazil. A joint project proposal, with the Colombian Commission of Jurists, focusing on follow-up to recommendations issued to the Government of Colombia by special procedures, was also prepared in 2010.

ISHR undertook activities to help address the particular challenges experienced by **women human rights defenders**, through its involvement as a member of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC). In June, ISHR hosted a meeting for WHRDIC members to develop key projects – including a Global Report on the situation of women human rights defenders, due for release at the end of 2011. Work on a manual on how to document violations against women defenders was started and will be completed by mid-2011.

In addition, prior to the 48th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR, ISHR hosted a consultation for women human rights defenders from Africa (and to a lesser extent Latin America and Asia), to discuss the many challenges they face. The consultation provided these defenders with an opportunity to meet with three Commissioners from the ACHPR, including the Chairperson, Special Rapporteur on the rights of women, and Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, to discuss the specific challenges the defenders face.

ISHR was also involved in developing **research and training materials**. A highlight in 2010 was the reactivation of ongoing research on jurisprudence of the African human rights system on issues relating to human rights defenders. ISHR intends to use this research, due to be released in mid-2011, to identify gaps in the protection of defenders by the mechanism, and to focus advocacy on these issues.

Materials developed in 2010 included a training module on the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, to help defenders better understand how to use the guidelines, and a briefing paper on follow-up to UN recommendations made to State parties, in collaboration with the Human Rights Law Resource Centre (Melbourne, Australia). The briefing paper aims to provide human rights defenders with ideas on how to press for the implementation of UN recommendations.

Communicating about ISHR's information products and services continued as a critical support function of the **Communications and Outreach** team. ISHR's visual identity was refreshed in 2010, with the development of a new logo and a variety of new design templates. The new 'look' has been used in a range of materials, including the new *Quarterly* publication and the *Simple Guide to the UN Treaty Bodies*.

The redesigned logo was rolled out onto ISHR's website, which also benefited from cosmetic, structural and content changes in 2010, leading to a significant increase in daily average visitor numbers. The changes included a new 'slide-show' function, to improve the appearance of the homepage and increase the visibility of important articles, and a new Francophone section of the website.

The list of people receiving ISHR's email news updates also grew significantly, so far without a major campaign to drive the increase. This suggests ISHR's news and reporting are meeting a need with its audiences for quality information about developments and engagement opportunities in international and regional human rights mechanisms.

ISHR ventured further into the world of online social media, developing presences on Facebook and Twitter, and continuing to propagate its existing YouTube account with ISHR videos. While there was significant growth in ISHR's online presence in the last 12 months, there remain numerous untapped opportunities in the area of online social media.

ISHR's broad range and large quantity of activities were also strongly supported through the organisation's **internship programme**. Over the course of 2010, some 30 interns were engaged. Most of them took on roles within the UN monitoring team, with internships also undertaken in the regional and national programme, communications, fundraising and training teams. A new internship in the finance unit was also trialed with success. ISHR internships offer excellent learning and career-development opportunities for young professionals.

It has been a challenging year for **development and fundraising**. On the back of the global financial crisis many NGOs, including ISHR, started to experience the tightening of donor budgets. While numerous positive developments enabled ISHR to continue its important work, the financial environment has led to a reduced budget in 2011. However, the organisation's effective work in 2010 means ISHR remains in a good position to continue towards achieving the goals of its *Strategic and Action Plan 2010-2012*.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROGRAMME, GENEVA

Information on the UN System

ISHR continued to monitor key meetings of human rights mechanisms in Geneva. These included:

- The Human Rights Council (the Council) in March, June and September
- The universal periodic review (UPR) in February, May and October-November
- The Human Rights Council Advisory Committee
- The treaty bodies, with the exception of the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- The Ad Hoc Committee on Complementary Standards to ICERD
- The Working Group on the possible elaboration of a new optional protocol to the CRC
- Meetings related to the five-year review of the Council

Important changes were made to ISHR's publications strategy in 2010. These changes consolidated ISHR's move away from narrative and comprehensive reporting on all UN meetings to more analytical and focused reports. The major change in the area of publications was the development of the ***Human Rights Monitor Quarterly*** (the *Quarterly*), which has replaced the annual *Human Rights Monitor* and the 'monitor series' (on the Council, the UPR, the treaty bodies, and New York). The final annual *Human Rights Monitor*, reporting on developments in 2009, was published in electronic form and 2000 print copies in March 2010.

The new *Quarterly* reviews developments, trends and opportunities for human rights defenders in the UN and, to a lesser extent, the regional human rights systems. It was distributed electronically and in printed form (250 copies) in April, July and October. The publication has been used extensively in other ISHR activities in Geneva and the regions, and has been distributed to human rights defenders at the national level and to key stakeholders in Geneva and New York

The second pillar of ISHR's publication strategy, **news pieces and articles** distributed through the web and email distribution system, has also undergone significant development. ISHR continues to provide regular news updates during and in-between sessions of the **Council**, which was of particular relevance in 2010 with the beginning of the review process of the Council's work and functioning. ISHR has published three '*Council Alerts*' prior to each session, and a total of 66 news stories on the Council.

On the **UPR**, 49 news stories were published. Although personal feedback from human rights defenders and the statistics of our web and email distribution service (see Communications and Outreach, p. 20) show their continued utility, ISHR will discontinue publication of news pieces on each country review under the UPR, partly due to human resource considerations. However, the organisation will continue to analyse developments in the mechanism through the *Quarterly*.

In 2010, ISHR published a total of 24 news pieces on key developments in the **treaty body system**. Based on an assessment of the expectations of human rights defenders in relation to treaty body information, ISHR has decided to discontinue reporting on individual country examinations by the treaty bodies. The level of information that ISHR was able to provide in its country reports was insufficient for human rights defenders working on specific countries.

ISHR has therefore also opted to shift reporting on the treaty bodies to the more analytical articles in the *Quarterly*.

A main lesson learnt through ISHR's ongoing needs assessment with human rights defenders was the desire for more **basic information on engagement** with UN mechanisms. While the updated OHCHR handbook for civil society responds to some of these demands, ISHR has updated its *Simple Guide to the UN Treaty Bodies* (the *Simple Guide*), which contains more strategic advice on engaging with these mechanisms. In July, the *Simple Guide* was re-published in a new layout, in both electronic and print form. So far, more than 400 copies of the *Simple Guide* have been distributed and they continue to be handed out at relevant meetings and training courses. A long-standing demand for more **information in French** was also partially fulfilled by translation of the guide.

Capacity Building in Geneva

In March, ISHR conducted the **Advanced Geneva Training Course (AGTC) in French** for 14 participants from nine countries.¹ The course was organised in parallel to the March session of the Council, which enabled the participants to follow first-hand the negotiations on important resolutions, including that on human rights defenders. For the first time, ISHR used a pre- and post-course assessment to tailor the course to participants' needs and evaluate improvements in their knowledge, which showed significant progress. The main lesson learnt from the assessment was that more 'buy in' from participants' organisations is needed, to ensure effective implementation of the knowledge and skills gained. A significant barrier for human rights defenders in all countries is the lack of adequate financial resources. ISHR will therefore include a training session on fundraising in future courses. For the AGTC in March 2011, ISHR will also work to improve the utility of participants' advocacy while in Geneva.

In May, ISHR conducted its **AGTC on the treaty bodies and the universal periodic review (UPR)**. The training was held in parallel to the 44th sessions of the Committee against Torture (CAT) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), and the 8th session of the UPR. Twenty carefully selected human rights defenders from 17 countries attended the course.²

An innovation of the course was the involvement of six former participants, who have been using UN mechanisms in their work. The former participants were provided with a three-day 'train-the-trainer' course, to enable them to effectively share their experiences with the rest of the participants, using adult learning methodologies and participatory approaches to training. Overall, the pilot project of involving former participants was successful, and ISHR will explore how this component can be best integrated in future courses.

In response to ISHR evaluations of the AGTC impact, the organisation began work on a new e-Learning component for the training course. The new component is hosted on the online-learning platform 'Moodle', and allows participants to access introductory learning materials more easily prior to the course. The initiative reduces the amount of time spent on teaching participants basic information, thereby providing more time for practical implementation of key learnings. In addition, it enables participants to get to know each other online, facilitates communication between the participants and ISHR staff, and provides a better follow-up system.

¹ Participants came from Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Togo, and Rwanda.

² Participants came from Austria, Belgium, Burundi, Cameroun, Chile, Guyana, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mongolia, Switzerland, Togo, Uganda, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

In September, in parallel to the 15th session of the Council, ISHR contributed to a training organised by CREA for **human rights defenders on sexual rights advocacy**.

Throughout 2010, ISHR carried out a comprehensive evaluation of the training course for **human rights defenders from East Asia**, which has been taking place in Geneva annually since 2006. Based on face-to-face and telephone interviews with former participants and those who have contributed to the course, ISHR has identified key opportunities for improvement. The preliminary results of the evaluation have been used to partially redesign the 2010 course, which took place in November. The most notable element of this initiative was the redesign of the training sessions. Despite the language barrier, the sessions included a more participatory approach, and more opportunities to practically implement learnings while in Geneva. This enabled participants to take better advantage of networking opportunities and to directly submit information to representatives of diplomatic missions, the special procedures and the treaty bodies.

Advocacy

The primary focus of ISHR's advocacy continued to be the improvement of the response of UN human rights mechanisms to the needs and expectations of human rights defenders. Based on this principle, ISHR's advocacy and coordination with other NGOs focused on the following key areas in 2010:

- Review of the Human Rights Council's work and functioning, with a view to strengthening the body's response to the expectations of human rights defenders
- Strengthening of the role of independent voices in the Council, including NGOs, special procedures and OHCHR
- Sexual orientation and gender identity and strategies for advancing these issues within the UN system
- Reprisals against persons cooperating with the UN
- The reform and improvement of the treaty body system

ISHR participated in a large number of formal and informal meetings with States, UN representatives and NGOs on these and other topics.

On the **review of the Council's** work and functioning, ISHR coordinated an NGO contribution on the structure of the review process. This joint NGO paper was presented to States at an informal meeting in May, and has influenced the way the review process was structured. ISHR also took part in a range of meetings and discussions with the President of the Council, government representatives, and NGOs. During the intergovernmental Working Group session in October, and the ensuing informal consultation process, ISHR actively engaged with a view to improving the outcome document.³

During the 'Bangkok Retreat' organised by the Council's President as part of the review process, ISHR played an active role, continuing its own advocacy and ensuring the transparency of the process through reporting to partners and the wider public.

³ <http://bit.ly/g4kN9B>

ISHR delivered a series of **advocacy statements during Council sessions**:

- In the dialogue with the High Commissioner, regarding human rights defenders and the UPR (March)
- On reprisals against persons cooperating with the UN and the killing of Floribert Chebeya in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (June)
- On the review of the Human Rights Council and the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (September)⁴

At the March session ISHR organised a joint panel discussion with the **Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders** and activists from Colombia, Syria, Congo and Sri Lanka on the protection and security of human rights defenders.⁵ ISHR also worked actively with other NGOs and diplomatic delegations to ensure a strong resolution on protection of human rights defenders.

At the September session, ISHR organised a joint side event on **reprisals** against persons that cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms – with the participation of four defenders who were recently targeted as a result of their engagement with the Council and its mechanisms. ISHR convened the NGO community in Geneva to discuss the issue of reprisals, and also discussed the issue with diplomats, the main sponsor of the relevant Council resolution, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and senior staff in her Office, the treaty bodies and special procedures. ISHR delivered four statements on the issue at regular Council sessions and in the context of the review of the Council. During discussions on the review, several States have adopted ISHR's proposals for more systematic attention by the Council to this issue.

In relation to the **reform of treaty bodies**, ISHR participated actively in the Inter-Committee Meeting of treaty bodies, together with a coalition of NGOs concerned with treaty body reform and improved engagement with civil society across the treaty body system. Together with the coalition, ISHR prepared an 'NGO response to the Dublin Statement on the Process of Strengthening the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body System.' The paper was presented in November, on the one-year anniversary of the 'Dublin Statement' issued by former and present treaty body members.

In 2010, ISHR engaged in discussions with treaty body members on improving NGO access and participation in the work of these bodies. ISHR held an informal meeting with members of the Human Rights Committee, who agreed to explore the suggestion to introduce formal briefings by NGOs before each country examination into their work programme, instead of a briefing by all NGOs on the first day of session. ISHR was involved in the first general meeting between the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and NGOs, and made proposals for enhanced NGO participation.

For the **Inter Committee Meeting of treaty bodies** in June, ISHR coordinated a joint NGO submission on the new optional reporting procedure used by the Committee against Torture. The new reporting procedure replaces State reports with responses to a list of questions.

In July, ISHR organised a meeting between the **High Commissioner for Human Rights**, her senior staff and key NGOs. Issues discussed included the increasing threats to the principle of universality of human rights, the review of the Council, and ways to further enhance collaboration between OHCHR and civil society.

⁴ <http://bit.ly/fPFDS4>

⁵ The event was co-sponsored by nine organisations.

ISHR also organised three meetings between the Geneva NGO community and the Chairperson of the **International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions**. The meetings focused on issues of common concern, such as the review, treaty body reform and reprisals.

Advice and practical support

ISHR continued throughout 2010 to provide technical and strategic advice and support to human rights defenders in accessing the mechanisms in Geneva. This included accrediting partners for UN meetings and advising individuals and NGOs on how to optimise their engagement with the Council, the UPR and treaty bodies.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROGRAMME, NEW YORK

In 2010, the New York office stepped up its collaborative work with other human rights organisations on joint advocacy projects to help improve **access and participation for NGOs at UN headquarters**. ISHR's role as an interlocutor was prompted by worsening trends in the operation of the ECOSOC NGO Committee, along with reduced physical and political space for NGOs at the UN. The work to understand the origins, scale and potential entry points for collective NGO advocacy is now well underway. The office intends to advise and mobilise other NGOs to begin work on strategies to affect change over the coming year.

In the latter part of the year, ISHR also brought together a range of human rights organisations interested in contributing to the General Assembly's work on the **2011 review of the Council**. In this convening role, ISHR organised an NGO meeting with the New York co-facilitators and has kept both New York-based NGOs and the HRC-Net partners abreast of the main developments. This will be another aspect of the office's advocacy work in 2011.

This increased liaison and advocacy work has been made possible in part by the more streamlined reporting style that now applies across the organisation. Rather than a detailed analysis of human rights developments at the General Assembly and Security Council being released once a year, the New York office has regularly contributed articles to the *Human Rights Monitor Quarterly* and published numerous news stories on the website. Many of these web-based articles have tracked major controversies from the Council across to the General Assembly and Security Council, such as the Goldstone report and the Turkish flotilla incident. This ability to 'connect the dots' and analyse new, complex UN processes that span multiple organs has been welcomed by partner organisations and helped to improve ISHR's public profile.

Information

The New York office has been a regular contributor to the new ***Human Rights Monitor Quarterly***. Contributions include the two treaty body sessions that are held in New York, annual session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, review of the Peacebuilding Commission, and developments at the Security Council. The office also co-authored an article with Geneva staff to explain how the General Assembly will conduct aspects of the review of the Human Rights Council, and identify the likely scope and opportunities for NGO input. The analytical article on the human rights developments at the 65th session of the General

Assembly has been published in the first *Quarterly* of 2011, along with a critical assessment of the Millennium Development Goals Summit that opened the 65th session.

The ability of ISHR to provide human rights defenders with timely information on key developments at UN headquarters has also significantly improved through regular postings of news stories on the website. The New York office has been strategic in selecting the issues ISHR covers to avoid overwhelming the organisation's readership. Topics that are relevant to current or future developments at the Council, or likely to be of interest to fellow human rights NGOs and human rights defenders, have been prioritised, including a special focus on women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) defenders. During the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the New York office posted 11 news stories to highlight important debates that were held with special procedures, and to report on some of the most controversial resolutions, such as defamation of religion and country-focused texts. It also released an 'Alert' during the first week of the session to highlight expected developments and controversies. During the last year, ten interns have assisted the New York office with its information work.

Liaison and Advocacy

The New York office maintained an active presence as part of the international NGO community in developing strategic initiatives and responses to strengthen the human rights protection system. Our now well-established partnership with **LGBTI organisations** continued, with the 65th session of the General Assembly producing new challenges and resistance for them. NGOs again turned to ISHR for strategic advice and analytical insights into the dynamics of the session.

Another area of ongoing collaboration was with HRC-Net, which had previously encouraged the office to provide more information on key developments at UN headquarters. A particular topic of mutual interest was the overt politicisation and lack of accountability of the **ECOSOC NGO Committee**. NGOs were generally aware of its discriminatory approach to applications from LGBTI organisations seeking consultative status with the UN. However, as highlighted earlier in this report, a concerning new trend in 2010 was the Committee's growing use of suspension and withdrawal of the consultative status of NGOs that publicly criticised a Member State and became the subject of a formal complaint.

After researching this trend and the three cases for disciplinary action that were before ECOSOC in July, ISHR together with 30 other international, national and regional NGOs wrote to all ECOSOC members, appealing they overturn the draft decisions of the Committee on NGOs to suspend the status of three accredited NGOs. Although this request was not acted upon, it significantly raised awareness amongst NGOs of the problem, and alerted States to the NGO community's willingness to address the politicisation of the NGO Committee. A longer term goal of improving the membership of the NGO Committee was also agreed to by NGOs. Many partner organisations agreed ISHR should prepare a project proposal for funding to coordinate this work in 2011 and beyond. Work on the NGO Committee was ultimately included in the 'reprisals' project proposal that ISHR developed in late 2010.

Another significant area of advocacy work for the New York office was with the **NGO Working Group on UN Access**. ISHR was invited to officially take on the role of Secretary of the Working Group, after having assumed much of the responsibility for drafting correspondence with the UN Secretariat and preparing minutes for the monthly meetings. This secretarial support enabled the Working Group to organise meetings with the Under-Secretaries-General for DESA, DPI and UN Security in the latter part of the year. ISHR participated in these meetings to raise awareness of access difficulties and develop

constructive proposals to address them. The Working Group hopes to hold a public meeting in early 2011 to update the NGO community on its progress, seek feedback on its proposals, and ensure a minimum of consultation with NGOs by relevant departments within the Secretariat. It also hopes to secure the Secretary-General's agreement to convene on an ongoing basis, a high-level, cross-departmental consultation process involving NGOs, to address the systemic problems that hinder NGO access at the UN.

The New York office also worked on the following matters:

- HRC elections in the General Assembly: New York office monitored the election, shared the outcome and initial analysis with HRC-Net, and published a news story online (May)
- Introduction of new ISHR Director to New York Missions: during the Director's first mission to New York, the office organised an informal consultation for him with a cross-regional group of States that ISHR works with, many of whom were donors, to discuss common priorities and upcoming areas of work (June)
- Release of human rights defender Maxim Popov: with a coalition of HIV/AIDS NGOs, ISHR provided strategic input into a campaign for the release of Mr Popov from prison in Uzbekistan. ISHR participated in a successful meeting with the head of UNAIDS to seek the quiet intervention of UN agencies that had supported and funded Mr Popov's work on HIV/AIDS prevention (April-May)
- 2011 Review of the Human Rights Council: Liaised with other New York-based human rights organisations to work collaboratively on the General Assembly's review of the status of the Human Rights Council. ISHR organised a meeting for NGOs with the co-facilitators of the New York review and shared its analysis of the initial informal meetings with interested NGOs. ISHR plans to remain the interlocutor between the co-facilitators and NGOs, and with a number of States that are supportive of meaningful NGO participation in the New York review process (October-ongoing)
- Human Rights Defenders: In conjunction with Human Rights First and the Mission of Norway, organised a parallel event at the General Assembly featuring the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Ms Margaret Sekaggya, and a panel of human rights defenders' activists (October)
- Relationship building and research: Interviewed Missions, NGOs and OHCHR in the process of researching and writing ISHR reports on the General Assembly (November-December); Interviewed NGOs and the Secretariat in relation to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (May); Actively participated in briefings including with the incoming General Assembly President, the new ASG of OHCHR; and in seminars/meetings including on the treaty body review
- Security Council: Participated in meetings with Ambassadors of States on the Security Council through the NGO Working Group on the Council (January-December)

One of the challenges for the office going into 2011 is to build on the impact of the organisation's advocacy work and strengthen its partnerships with other NGOs. This will need to happen in a manner that does not affect the office's ability to fulfil its existing monitoring and reporting work, or its ability to work on other priority activities, such as the review of the status of the Council. However, much of the burden of coordinating and mobilising NGO partners, and ensuring follow-up when joint advocacy work is undertaken, currently falls on ISHR. Although this work load was something the office foresaw when it took on the interlocutor role, it will need to be well managed and some degree of burden-sharing with other NGOs that have the capacity would be desirable.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROGRAMME

Engagement with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

ISHR participated in the 47th and 48th Ordinary Sessions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) held in Banjul, The Gambia. During these sessions and/or at the NGO Forum prior, ISHR provided financial support to some 25 human rights defenders from across Africa for their participation, including representatives of sub-regional human rights defenders networks from East, West and Central Africa. The priority was given to defenders from countries being reviewed at the session: Rwanda, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

At the 47th Session, ISHR actively contributed to discussions at the NGO forum on how to strengthen the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders at the ACHPR. ISHR also organised a workshop with the Special Rapporteur and defenders to discuss the implementation of a resolution, calling for a study on the status of freedom of association in Africa. One of the recommendations resulting from the workshop was to involve defenders in the study and to request ISHR coordinates NGO inputs.

A side-event was organised to focus on national legislation and the protection of defenders. The event provided an opportunity for activists from the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda to share experiences about the effects of national legislation on their work. Activists from Uganda, for instance, shared concerns about the possible adoption of a law imposing restrictions on defenders working on issues of sexual orientation, by criminalising same sex relationships.

In addition, ISHR monitored the main session of the ACHPR and produced an analytical overview of the 47th session. The analysis fills an important reporting gap in relation to the ACHPR and has been widely distributed to partners in Africa and internationally. ISHR issued statements regarding defenders in Africa and the need to strengthen protection mechanisms for them. Interactive dialogues took place, with the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur on women's rights and the Working Group on economic, social and cultural rights of the ACHPR.

During the 48th session, ISHR added its voice to NGO concerns regarding the ACHPR's discriminatory denial of observer status to the Coalition of African Lesbians. ISHR organised a side event on the challenges faced by human rights defenders in the Great Lakes region, chaired by the Chairperson of the ACHPR.

Capacity Building

Africa

In follow-up to a training session held in September 2009, ISHR provided technical and financial assistance towards organisation of a meeting with Rwandan civil society, aimed at developing the UPR submission of civil society in the country. The report was submitted to the UN following the meeting. Unfortunately, Ligue des Droits de la personne dans la région des Grands Lacs (LDGL), the partner organisation facilitating the process at the national level, that helped prepare the draft submission to the UN, became the target of threats and harassment because of the submission. This is an example of the increasingly hostile environment that exists for human rights defenders in Rwanda. The Government of Rwanda has put pressure on NGOs to change the content of the submission, and two activists were

forced to leave Rwanda for safety reasons. This situation has proved the need for ISHR to include a strong focus in its work on the issue of reprisals against human rights defenders who engage with UN and other mechanisms.

In June, at the request of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, ISHR facilitated a workshop in Niger to help defenders prepare for the upcoming UPR of the country. The workshop trained activists in preparation of submissions to the UPR and developed advocacy skills. As a result of the workshop, participants prepared a draft submission on behalf of civil society. The draft text was shared with other groups and defenders for their consideration and input, and finalised and submitted to the UN at the beginning of July on behalf of a broad civil society coalition.

From 19-23 July ISHR, along with the West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, ran a workshop in Togo to train advocacy 'focal points' from the Network. The 'focal points' are key persons within NGOs and coalitions on the matter of using and engaging with the UN mechanisms. The objective of the workshop was to increase defenders' use of the UN and African systems, by building capacity within the region. Participants developed action plans for strengthening their advocacy within the UN and African systems.

From 27-29 July ISHR organised a three-day seminar, in collaboration with the Togolese Human Rights Defenders Coalition and OHCHR, to help prepare Togolese defenders for the upcoming UPR of their country in 2011. Participants adopted a civil society 'strategy of engagement in the UPR', detailing the activities civil society will undertake in the context of the UPR review, including written submissions, advocacy and follow-up. The implementation of the strategy is on-going and is being supported by the OHCHR.

Another training course was organised in Burundi from 17-20 August to strengthen civil society's engagement in the follow-up of UPR recommendations. The course brought together activists from DRC and Burundi, and focused on practical measures to ensure implementation of UPR commitments by their governments. Defenders further developed a draft document, in which they outlined suggestions for implementation of commitments acquired by their respective States. Once finalised, these documents will be used as an advocacy tool with the governments of the DRC and Burundi, and will help maintain pressure on these governments to implement their commitments.

In August, ISHR facilitated a training course in Kampala, hosted and financed by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network. Participants came from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. The focus of the training was civil society engagement with the UPR at all stages of the process. This included effective civil society input, advocacy approaches, means to follow-up recommendations, and an exchange of best practices from the region and beyond. Participants prepared action plans for their initial or on-going engagement with the UPR, which included building broader civil society constituencies to engage in the process.

Americas

In 2010, ISHR developed an ambitious joint project with the Colombian Commission of Jurists focused on the follow-up of recommendations issued by special procedures. The project was submitted for EU funding. ISHR also continued to collaborate and work with CONECTAS. ISHR is interested in working in partnership with CONECTAS to organise regional training courses focused on the use of the UN system. In October ISHR participated in the CONECTAS-organised 11th International Human Rights Colloquium in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The six-day event focused on the challenges faced by civil society in engaging with regional and international human rights mechanisms.

Asia

ISHR organised a training course for defenders from the Pacific region, held in Fiji from 6-10 September, in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and the OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific. The course focused on the UN system, including the use of special procedures, treaty bodies and UPR. The training was attended by 33 human rights defenders from numerous countries in the region. It helped defenders identify human rights issues in the region that merit more attention, including their own protection and safety. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders participated in the training and was able to discuss with the defenders their protection needs and situations. The Special Rapporteur was also able to meet with authorities in Fiji, in particular the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to raise her concerns about the safety of defenders in the country.

Additionally, ISHR has undertaken an independent evaluation on how to strengthen its engagement with the Asia Pacific Forum (APF). This independent evaluation was completed in March 2010 and the results will be used mainly to review ISHR's engagement with APF in 2011, but also to inform the nature of some activities in the region in 2011. This evaluation was shared with key partners in the region and to relevant donors.

Women Human Rights Defenders

ISHR continues to play an active role in the Women Human Rights Defenders' International Coalition (WHRDIC). A meeting was hosted by ISHR for WHRDIC members in June 2010 to develop key projects. The projects included the production of a Global Report on the situation of women human rights defenders, which will take place in 2011 and will draw on data and joint analyses of WHRDIC members. It is hoped the Global Report will provide complementary analysis to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders' upcoming report on women human rights defenders, and provide an important focus on challenges faced by these defenders and necessary steps to safeguard their work. ISHR also continues to be involved in another WHRDIC project, developing a manual on documenting violations against women human rights defenders, which is due for completion by June 2011.

Prior to the 48th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR, ISHR invited 25 women human rights defenders from across Africa, along with several from Latin America and Asia, to a consultation on the challenges faced by women human rights defenders. During the event defenders were able to meet with three Commissioners of the ACHPR – the Chairperson, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of women and the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders – to discuss ways the mandates and the ACHPR can better respond to the needs of these defenders.

In addition, the consultation provided participants with the opportunity to identify key objectives on promoting the work of women human rights defenders, which can help guide the definition of strategies between activists. This consultation also provided the opportunity for ISHR to consult with participants over several approaches being developed in the WHRDIC manual on documenting violations against women human rights defenders.

Back in Geneva, ISHR's activities on behalf of women human rights defenders included the preparation and delivery of a statement on the threats faced by women human rights defenders, sometimes justified in the name of tradition and culture, at the OHCHR meeting held on traditional values underpinning international human rights. ISHR continues to engage with WHRDIC partners in ongoing and emerging human rights debates.

Other Activities

Technical advice and support to defenders

ISHR has continued to provide technical advice to defenders on several issues related to UN and regional human rights mechanisms. Technical advice and financial support were provided to WOREC (Women's Rehabilitation Centre). This was to assist in preparation of a national consultation of women human rights defenders with the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, held in November 2010.

Further to a UPR workshop – held in 2009 in Kinshasa, DRC – on the engagement of NGOs in the review of the country under the UPR, ISHR continued to provide technical advice and financial support to defenders from the country. This included advice on engaging with the mechanism during the review in December 2009, and the adoption of the outcome report in March 2010.

A workshop held in August 2009 in Rwanda, on NGO participation in the 2011 UPR review of the country, is being followed up by ISHR through provision of technical advice and financial support to defenders. This support will enable defenders to submit information to the UPR on the human rights situation in Rwanda.

Research and training materials

In 2010, ISHR reactivated its ongoing research on the jurisprudence of the African human rights system on issues relating to human rights defenders. This research aims to serve NGOs who engage with the African human rights system on defenders' issues to better understand the approach of this mechanism towards human rights defenders and therefore strategically inform their work. ISHR aims to use this research to identify gaps in the protection of defenders by this mechanism and to focus our advocacy on addressing these specific areas.

To help defenders to better understand and use the European Union Guidelines on human rights defenders (the EU Guidelines), ISHR will shortly finalise a training module on the content and scope of the EU Guidelines and how defenders can use them.

In collaboration with the Human Rights Law Resource Centre (HRLRC), ISHR has been developing a briefing document on follow-up to UN recommendations made to State parties. Drawing on diverse case studies, this paper aims to provide human rights defenders with ideas on how to press for the implementation of UN recommendations, through national human rights mechanisms, engagement with the media, and strengthening NGO cooperation, amongst other approaches. ISHR aims to publish the paper in the second quarter of 2011, and it is envisaged the publication may be updated in the future. Material from the briefing will be incorporated into ISHR training activities, and will contribute to the wealth of experiences ISHR can share with activists to inform their work.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

In 2010 ISHR Geneva engaged a total of 30 interns, with a maximum of 12 interns at any given time, to help the organisation carry out its activities. The majority of interns were involved in the work of the UN monitoring team, with interns also assigned to the communications team, training team, fundraising team, Regional and National Human Rights Defenders Programme, and finance unit. ISHR recruited a further six interns to start in January 2011.

Recruitment

ISHR receives a steady stream of applications from young activists seeking to develop a variety of skills and gain professional experience. ISHR internships have an excellent reputation and are competitive. The creation of specific recruitment tasks has proved useful in selecting high calibre interns.

ISHR still receives most applications from interns from Western countries, who can afford to take up the unpaid internship. In order to ensure a more equitable geographical representation, the ISHR fundraising intern developed an internship brochure in the hope of securing funding for future interns, especially those coming from less developed countries. The brochure also includes success stories of former interns who have gone on to work in the field of human rights.

The interns are predominantly female and the average age is around 23-25 years. However, a recent trend has seen the age of interns drop to as young as 18-21 years, possibly due to young people feeling more pressure to complete internships from a younger age, in order to succeed in increasingly competitive employment markets.

In 2010, ISHR collaborated with the University of Michigan for the fourth year, providing an annual internship with a legal focus. The organisation is currently in negotiations with Essex and York Universities in the UK, and York University in the US, to set up similar agreements.

Intern Contributions

A year into the creation of ISHR's publication the *Quarterly*, interns continue to be trained in the reporting procedures which require more of an analytical focus than before. The communications intern took the lead in the creation of an ISHR video detailing the work of ISHR's training courses, which included recording success stories and testimonies from key stakeholders. The Regional and National Programme intern carried out research activities on the EU Guidelines and assisted in the preparation of ISHR's activities with the ACHPR and in West Africa. The creation of a finance internship proved to be very successful, both as a way for young graduates to gain professional work experience and to ease the burden on the Finance Officer. The training intern was instrumental in assisting with the preparation of Geneva and regional based training courses.

Personal and Professional Development

Maintaining and effectively managing the ever-growing internship programme, to ensure proper supervision and mentoring takes place, continues to be a challenge for ISHR. In spite of this, ISHR continues to provide interns with excellent professional development and training on the United Nations system as well as guidance on careers.

In 2010 the organisation invited key speakers, including treaty body committee members, university lecturers, lawyers and former interns working in the field of human rights and development, to deliver presentations on their work and offer career advice. ISHR remains committed to the peer-to-peer learning approach, whereby more experienced interns deliver many of the training sessions during the intern induction week and act as 'buddies', which provides a mutually beneficial learning opportunity.

The intern coordinator (a role performed by the Training Specialist) continues to keep in touch with more than 130 former interns, providing references and assisting them with their enquiries. Their professional activities once they leave ISHR are compiled for a 'success stories' section on the ISHR website. ISHR has launched an e-mail group for former interns in order to facilitate networking, share job opportunities and keep up-to-date with their activities and progress for future success stories.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Website, News Reports and Email Communications

In 2010, ISHR's comprehensive website continued to be one of the organisation's central platforms for communicating with external stakeholders. The website hosts regular news stories and publications on the Human Rights Council, UPR, treaty bodies, General Assembly, and Security Council. It also features comprehensive background information and details of upcoming opportunities for NGO participation. Automated emails feed the news updates to a database of more than 1900 people, depending on their specified preferences.

In 2010 ISHR's website benefited from dramatic improvements to its appearance, in accessibility to new audiences, and increased visitor numbers. A new 'slide-show' component on the home page has both improved the page's appeal to visitors and the visibility of important news stories. The launch of a Francophone section of the website, in June, was a significant achievement. The Francophone section contains resources and reports on the African human rights systems, including the ACHPR and the NGO Forum. These important resources will continue to be added to, and the breadth of French materials and news stories extended in 2011.

As a result of these initiatives and other activities, the list of those receiving email updates from ISHR has increased by more than 20 percent over the course of the year. In addition, in the 6 months to October 2010, the average daily number of visits to ISHR's website increased by approximately 60 percent.

Online Social Media and Videos

ISHR's first foray into online social media started in May 2010 with the launch of an organisational Facebook page and Twitter feed. In the eight months the Facebook page has been active it has attracted some 400 fans, with approximately 200 monthly active users. Approximately 100 people follow ISHR's activities through Twitter.

Integration of social media platforms with ISHR's website and email communications is progressing, and in 2010 Facebook 'Like' buttons were added to news stories to improve socialisation of the stories ISHR produces. Both ISHR's Facebook and Twitter pages now

also benefit from being automatically updated when news stories are issued via email, helping to keep content fresh and up-to-date.

ISHR's YouTube channel continues to be updated with statements made at Human Rights Council sessions. A video capturing the mission and methods of ISHR's training courses was developed in 2010, and this has also been added to YouTube.

ISHR hopes to develop additional videos, telling the success stories of individual human rights defenders who have attended ISHR trainings, in 2011. There also remain a huge number of other untapped social media opportunities, especially within the Facebook and Twitter platforms, to improve ISHR's online presence. Many of these will be explored and implemented in 2011.

Visual Identity and Branded Publications

In 2010, ISHR developed a new visual identity for the organisation, which has now been effectively used in a wide range of collateral and publications, including in the design of the new *Human Rights Monitor Quarterly* publication. The new design, templates and guidelines are encompassed in a section of the website available only to staff. New templates will be added in 2011, and an audit will be conducted by the communications intern to ensure all out of date branding has been replaced.

The *Quarterly* continues to receive excellent feedback from readers, with small changes being made each issue to continually improve the quality and relevance of the publication. Through particular funding for translation work, and the start of a French-speaking communications intern, in 2011 the *Quarterly* will start to offer selected articles in French (in addition to the English original).

Another branded publication developed in 2010 is an organisational leaflet to succinctly summarise the mission, vision, values and core activities of ISHR in printed form.

Information Technology

In 2010 ISHR brought more of its technology up-to-date to improve staff efficiency. Nine new PCs were purchased for staff, and interns computers were upgraded with the disused staff computers. In addition, a new printer, scanner, fax machine was acquired to replace the previous old and unsatisfactory one. This new IT equipment has made a difference in allowing staff to work in a more efficient manner, by reducing the need for ongoing IT helpdesk intervention.

DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

In 2010, ISHR had 26 donors, consisting of 11 foreign ministries, development cooperation agencies and other governmental bodies, and 15 foundations and other grant-making NGOs. Despite the worldwide economic crisis and a leadership transition, ISHR averted financial shortfalls and implemented its activities relatively unabated.

During the period from the beginning of January to May 2010, when ISHR's former Director had departed, the Director ad interim was hired, and finally the permanent Director was appointed, there was reluctance by donors to support new activities until the leadership

question was resolved and there was more organisational certainty. Fundraising during this time therefore focused on ensuring ample cash-flow for ongoing activities by requesting donors accelerate their pre-agreed subsidies and grants ahead-of-time.

Since the arrival of the new permanent Director in May 2010 a number of new, multiyear contracts with donors were signed. Thus, retrenched confidence in ISHR's programmes and activities was demonstrated by the willingness of donors to continue their giving. However, the global financial crises has had a clear negative effect on ISHR's ability to maintain its traditional funding level, and a number of key staff positions could not be filled in 2010 due to financial constraints. It is noteworthy and of concern that the budget developed for 2011 is 13.5 percent lower than 2010.

FINANCE

ISHR's accounts are managed internally by the organisation's two part-time Finance Officers. Throughout 2010, cash flow was closely monitored against expected grants and budgeted expenditures. It was reviewed with the Director and Manager of Development and Fundraising on a monthly basis.

ISHR submits its annual accounts to the independent external auditors, PriceWaterhouseCoopers. A copy of the 2010 audited report is available upon request.