

## [National policies protecting human rights defenders should be enacted](#)

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(Geneva) - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should support states in undertaking legislative and policy reforms to establish national laws and policies in line with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, said the International Service for Human Rights yesterday in a [statement](#) to the panel discussion on national policies and human rights.

Legislation in line with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is necessary to bridge the gap between international standards accepted by states and the domestic realities faced by defenders, the statement said.

The statement highlighted the need for the OHCHR to assist states in replicating emerging good practices in integrating human rights, and protections for human rights defenders, into national policies. Current examples of good practice include national laws for the protection of human rights defenders in [Côte d'Ivoire](#) and Mexico, consultation with civil society on human rights defender law in Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone, National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights in [Finland](#) and Human Rights Defender Guidelines in [Ireland](#), Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

The Council convened the [Panel discussion](#) following the submission, at its 27<sup>th</sup> session, of the OHCHR's report on [Technical Assistance and Capacity-building Options for Integrating Human Rights into National Policies](#). The panel focused on identifying good practice methodologies, lessons learned and examples of technical assistance provided by the OHCHR in integrating human rights into national policies.

The panellists stressed the importance of civil society participation in policy development. Gianni Magazzeni, Chief of Branch (Americas, Europe and Central Asia) at OHCHR, commented that an effective national human rights plan must provide for civil society cooperation. Héctor Cárdenas, Minister and Executive Secretary and Ministry of Social Action in Paraguay, highlighted the critical role civil society plays in ensuring that people are aware of, and how to access, their rights. In referring to the funding for national policies, Vitit Muntarbhorn, Professor of Law and former Special Rapporteur [on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#), confirmed that access to funding for civil society had to be provided in line with the "rights up front" policy promoted by the United Nations.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers shared their countries' experiences, best practices and challenges. France underlined the crucial role played by civil society in identifying recommendations by human rights mechanisms in mainstreaming human rights in national policies; the National Human Rights Council of Morocco referred to the successful participation of civil society in a draft action plan in Morocco; and the Republic of Congo confirmed the participation of civil society in the elaboration of national policies promoting human rights for the most vulnerable groups.

In the same way that ISHR identified the fundamental role national human rights institutions play in protecting defenders, their work, and promoting public support, Mr Magazzeni's stated that national human

rights institutions are crucial in increasing national ownership of plans and policies.

ISHR's statement built on this by recommending that the OHCHR support states in legislatively mandating and adequately resourcing dedicated human rights defender focal points within their national human rights institutions, established in conformity with the Paris Principles.

In closing the discussion, Rytis Paulauskas, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations Office and panel moderator, again underlined the importance of engaging civil society actors and national human rights institutions in the adoption of national policies.

The OHCHR will prepare and submit to the Council a summary report on the panel discussion before the Council's thirtieth session.

A video of the statement is available [here](#).

ISHR