

[Participation of national human rights institutions at UN will close implementation gap on the ground](#)

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(New York) - ***National human rights institutions should soon be able to participate alongside States in the work of the United Nations following the passage of an important resolution at the UN in New York today.***

National human rights institutions (NHRIs) are independent institutions established to monitor, promote and protect human rights at the national level and to ensure that State law, policy and practice complies with international human rights law.

In adopting a resolution on NHRIs by consensus, the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, responsible for human rights and humanitarian affairs, has spoken as one for the first time to encourage UN mechanisms and processes to facilitate and enhance the participation of A-status NHRIs in their work.

Introducing the draft resolution, the Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN, Ambassador Harald Braun noted that the resolution shifts the discussion on participation of NHRIs in the UN 'from 'if' to 'how''.

The resolution was developed and adopted in line with recommendations set out in a [major report prepared by ISHR in June which were then reflected in a subsequent report prepared by the UN Secretary-General](#) in October 2015.

Closing the implementation gap between international human rights and national realities

This year's resolution garnered more co-sponsors than ever before - 90 States in total - evidence of the degree of support for NHRIs and the potential of their role in the UN. During the adoption several States spoke in support of the resolution, with the UK noting the importance of 'strong and independent NHRIs' and Australia noting the 'valuable expertise' that NHRIs bring to multilateral discussions. Australia emphasised that how enhanced engagement by NHRIs with the UN can strengthen implementation of international human rights law at the national level. Many other States also supported the resolution, with Russia noting that it expected NHRIs to 'contribute significantly to the work of the UN in accordance with their mandate.'

'This resolution is a significant step forward in terms of closing the gap between international human rights standards and their national implementation,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw.

'NHRIs are uniquely well placed to provide information and advice to the UN about human rights situations on

the ground, and to then work with civil society and States to implement UN recommendations to improve such situations. We thank Germany for leading the development and negotiation of this resolution, and in pushing so many States to acknowledge and take steps towards greater participation of NHRIs in the UN,' Ms Openshaw said.

Human Rights Council provides 'model' for UN-wide participation of NHRIs

A-status NHRIs - those meeting the standards of independence and effectiveness set by the so-called 'Paris Principles' - are required to cooperate with the UN. Enhancing participation will be a means to facilitate and maximise the value of that cooperation. The participation of NHRIs in the UN is currently most advanced at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, where A-status NHRIs can submit written statements and also make oral statements while the Council is in session. The unique status of NHRIs - locating them between States and NGOs, as State-instituted but independent bodies - is reflected in the order in which A-status NHRIs intervene in Council debates.

During the adoption of the Third Committee resolution, Australia noted that 'we continue to look at the Human Rights Council as a model of best practice' and noted that this practice should be emulated in the General Assembly, ECOSOC, treaty monitoring bodies, and other UN mechanisms.

Further steps needed to combat reprisals against NHRIs

The adopted resolution also includes an important reference to reprisals and intimidation against NHRIs and their respective members and staff, noting they should not face 'political pressure, physical intimidation, harassment or unjustifiable budgetary limitations'. In accordance with the resolution, 'States should promptly and thoroughly investigate cases of alleged reprisal or intimidation' against members or staff of NHRIs or individuals who cooperate or seek to cooperate with them.

Of the 90 States co-sponsoring this year's resolution several of the new co-sponsors have A-status NHRIs, including Ghana, Jordan and Qatar, while other new co-sponsors, such as Iraq, Senegal and Sri Lanka, have B-status NHRIs. A small handful of traditional co-sponsors did not co-sponsor this year's text, including India, which noted that NHRIs should 'keep their unique role in the national human rights architecture.'

'NHRI participation now has Third Committee approval. We have every expectation the General Assembly plenary will unequivocally endorse this decision and from there individual UN bodies, mechanisms and processes will take steps to ensure that NHRIs can participate in their processes,' Ms Openshaw said.

The Third Committee resolution will be considered for adoption by the General Assembly plenary in early December.

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