



ENGAGING WITH INTER-GOVERNMENTAL MECHANISMS ON THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Fact Sheet 1

National human rights institutions: Trusted partners for change

NHRIs are uniquely positioned to drive sustained change at the national level by:

- 1 Monitoring and reporting** on the human rights situation in their country.
- 2 Providing advice** to government and the parliament.
- 3** Receiving, investigating and resolving **human rights complaints**.
- 4** Delivering **human rights education** for all sections of the community.

With a unique mandate set out in law, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) play a vital role to promote and protect the rights of all people, especially those most vulnerable to human rights violations. With strong powers and being independent from government, they are a cornerstone of an effective national human rights protection system.

A key role of all NHRIs – set out in the UN-adopted Paris Principles – is to engage with the United Nations and regional bodies.

NHRIs support the work of international and regional bodies by providing independent and reliable information and analysis.

They propose recommendations that can be made to their State to improve the human rights situation in their respective countries.

Another role of NHRIs is to promote and monitor implementation of recommendations made to their State by international and regional mechanisms.

Promoting NHRI engagement with regional bodies

While NHRIs have long-standing engagement with the United Nations – through the Human Rights Council, human rights treaty bodies, the special procedures and mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review – their interaction with regional bodies in the Asia Pacific has been more limited.

However, with many critical human rights issues requiring urgent country-to-country cooperation, NHRI engagement with regional bodies has never been more important.

The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), through its Sub-Committee on Accreditation, states that:

“NHRI participation in regional and international coordination bodies serves to reinforce their independence and effectiveness overall ... This may lead to collectively strengthening each other’s positions and contributing to resolving regional human rights issues.”

In addition, the Human Rights Council identifies collaboration with NHRIs as one of the most important factors determining the effectiveness of regional mechanisms, especially through “coordinating and strengthening the [regional] arrangement’s decisions and increasing the likelihood of compliance”.

Strengthening regional strategies to counter climate change

One of the most urgent issues facing communities in South-East Asia and the Pacific is the impact of climate change and environmental harm. It is a priority both for NHRIs and regional inter-governmental mechanisms.

At the 2020 GANHRI Annual Conference, NHRIs from all regions pledged to work individually and collectively to promote human rights-based climate action.

They agreed to use their unique human rights mandate to add value to national, regional and international approaches to counter the impacts of climate change and environmental harm.

“NHRIs can help promote much more effective, informed and participatory climate action – action that can benefit people’s rights and preserve the environment.”
Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

At the regional level, NHRIs can strengthen the important work of inter-governmental mechanisms by:

- **Collecting and sharing community-level information and experiences**, including good practice approaches from civil society groups and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples to promote the right to a healthy environment.
- **Contributing independent, high-quality human rights analysis to support regional policy development** on climate change and the right to a healthy environment.

- **Advising government on implementing recommendations from regional mechanisms** in laws, regulations, policies and procedures, as well as monitoring the progress of implementation.
- **Promoting community awareness of regional strategies** to address climate change and environmental harm through a comprehensive human rights education program.
- **Engaging with business leaders** to outline the practical measures they can take to respond to climate change, promote the right to a healthy environment and support communities affected by their operations.
- **Building connections between regional bodies and the international human rights system**, including with key UN agencies, forums and human rights special procedures.
- **Engaging in regional and international processes** to promote human rights-based action on climate change, including in relation to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

NHRIs have a well-deserved reputation for independent, high-quality human rights analysis and policy advice. They have extensive and trusted relationships at the national, regional and international level to drive the change process. They are ideal partners for regional inter-governmental mechanisms in their efforts to counter the human rights impacts of climate change and environmental damage.



ASIA PACIFIC FORUM
ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS IN OUR REGION

Established in 1996, the Asia Pacific Forum is a coalition of 25 NHRIs from all corners of the region. We support the establishment and strengthening of independent NHRIs, recognising the powerful role they play to promote and protect human rights across the Asia Pacific.



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