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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/170](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report at its seventy-eighth session on the implementation of that resolution, including on best practices among national human rights institutions.

The report covers the period from August 2022 to July 2023. It contains information on the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish and strengthen national human rights institutions; support provided by the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to national human rights institutions; cooperation between such institutions and the international human rights system; and support provided by the Office of the High Commissioner to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and relevant regional networks.

* [A/78/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 29 of General Assembly resolution [76/170](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report at its seventy-eighth session on the implementation of that resolution, including on best practices among national human rights institutions. The report outlines activities implemented during the period between August 2022 and July 2023.
2. The General Assembly, in the preamble to its resolution [76/170](#), referred to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which reaffirmed the important and constructive role played by national human rights institutions, in particular in their advisory capacity to the competent authorities and their role in preventing and remedying human rights violations, in disseminating information on human rights and in education in human rights.
3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly recognized the important role of the United Nations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in assisting the development of independent and effective national human rights institutions, guided by the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). It also recognized the potential for strengthened and complementary cooperation among the United Nations, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and its regional networks and national institutions.
4. In paragraph 9 of the resolution, the General Assembly encouraged all Member States to establish effective, independent and pluralistic national institutions or, where they already exist, to strengthen them for the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and welcomed the growing number of States establishing national human rights institutions in line with the Paris Principles, including as one of the means for accelerating and guaranteeing progress for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to national human rights institutions

A. Advisory services and capacity-building

5. Within OHCHR, the National Institutions, Regional Mechanisms and Civil Society Section is the focal point for the coordination of the activities to establish and/or strengthen national human rights institutions. Together with its field presences, other United Nations system entities, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and regional networks of national institutions, OHCHR assists Governments in establishing national human rights institutions and/or contributes to building the capacity of such institutions. In that context, OHCHR works closely with regional intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.
6. OHCHR provides technical and legal assistance to States and national institutions, in particular regarding constitutional and legislative frameworks relating to the establishment, nature, functions, powers and responsibilities of such institutions. It also conducts and supports comparative analysis, technical cooperation projects, needs assessments and evaluation missions to establish national human rights institutions or strengthen their capacity to discharge their mandate effectively.

7. During the period under review, OHCHR provided advice and/or assistance in the establishment and/or the strengthening of national human rights institutions in Bahrain, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burkina Faso, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Djibouti, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mauritania, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, the Niger, Panama, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Tajikistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). In some cases, assistance was provided jointly with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other partners.

1. Africa

8. OHCHR, through its regional offices for Central, East, Southern and West Africa, the OHCHR country offices in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, the Niger, the Sudan and Uganda, the human rights advisers to the United Nations country teams in Burundi, Eswatini, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the human rights components of the United Nations peace missions in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan (in Darfur), provided advice on and assistance in the establishment or strengthening of national institutions.

9. In October 2022, OHCHR supported the National Independent Human Rights Commission of Burundi in monitoring places of detention, with the aim of improving conditions of detention and respect for the rights of persons deprived of their liberty.

10. In August and September 2022, OHCHR conducted joint monitoring field missions with the National Human Rights Commission of Burkina Faso, documenting 19 cases of human rights violations and abuses. OHCHR provided training to the Commission, setting out practical guidance to enable the Commission to participate in and inform the universal periodic review and voluntary national review processes, including through the submission of reports.

11. In September 2022, OHCHR cooperated with the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms of Cameroon to support the organization of a round table aimed at creating a space for dialogue among stakeholders on the challenges faced by media in promoting democracy.

12. In April and May 2023, OHCHR supported the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties of the Central African Republic through workshops for its new Commissioners, covering human rights monitoring and reporting, the promotion of economic, social, and cultural rights, written submissions to treaty bodies and in the context of the universal periodic review, as well as the implementation of projects to promote human rights. OHCHR also supported awareness-raising activities with stakeholders aimed at improving the Commission's visibility and the promotion of its mandate.

13. In January 2023, OHCHR provided technical support to the National Human Rights Commission of Chad for a training session on legal and judicial assistance and on the protection of victims and witnesses of human rights violations, including gender-based violence. OHCHR also supported the Commission in discharging its mandate as the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and is supporting the

institution in the drafting and submission of reports on the implementation of the universal periodic review recommendations of the Human Rights Council.

14. In September 2022, OHCHR collaborated with the National Human Rights Council of Côte d'Ivoire in the evaluation of the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. In November 2022, OHCHR supported the Council to raise awareness about the work of the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, resulting in a road map for the strengthening of collaboration between the Committee, the Council and civil society. OHCHR supported the Council through workshops as a means to advocate the ratification by Côte d'Ivoire of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

15. In February 2023, OHCHR delivered a workshop for the National Human Rights Commission of Djibouti, the Interministerial Committee in charge of monitoring international and regional instruments to which Djibouti is a State party and the National Agency for Persons with Disabilities that was aimed at equipping participants with relevant knowledge to engage meaningfully in the universal periodic review process.

16. In October 2022, OHCHR organized a technical workshop in Equatorial Guinea with members of the three existing human rights institutions, as part of preparations for the establishment of a single institution in line with the Paris Principles.

17. In February 2023, in Eswatini, OHCHR provided legal advice on the draft human rights bill to integrate the Anti-Corruption Unit with the Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration Integrity, in line with the third cycle universal periodic review recommendations accepted by the Government.

18. OHCHR supported the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission through training for its staff for the presentation of submissions to treaty bodies. OHCHR provided technical support to promote the development of a rights-based transitional justice policy. In August 2022, OHCHR and the Commission convened a multi-stakeholder consultation on the human rights situation of internally displaced persons, resulting in an action plan that is currently being implemented. OHCHR also provided advisory services on the establishment and operationalization of the Ethiopian Women Human Rights Defenders Network, as well as financial support aimed at the translation of materials to support its human rights awareness campaigns.

19. In February 2023, OHCHR provided technical support to the National Human Rights Commission of the Gambia in identifying best practices towards the abolition of the death penalty. Through technical and financial support from OHCHR and UNDP, the Commission conducted capacity-building activities for its staff on the implementation of the recommendations made by the national Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission. In the framework of the PROMIS (Protection of migrants: justice, human rights and migrant smuggling) project, OHCHR allocated a grant to the institution for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights of migrants to increase migrants' awareness of legal issues, provide them with legal assistance and improve their access to legal remedies.

20. In August 2022, OHCHR provided support to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights in the operationalization of the Human Rights Election Monitoring Hub and supported the deployment of human rights monitors across the country in the electoral context. OHCHR supported the Commission through trainings of the National Police Service aimed at strengthening their knowledge of human rights-based policing and the prevention of violence against women in elections. OHCHR also provided technical assistance to the Commission for the development of an indicator on violence against human rights defenders.

21. In September 2022, OHCHR supported the Independent National Commission on Human Rights of Liberia to conduct a training for transitional justice focal points across various government institutions aimed at further enhancing their knowledge of the Liberian transitional justice process. In December 2022, OHCHR facilitated a session on peaceful elections organized by the Commission and carried out regional trainings in communities to improve skills and knowledge about elections monitoring and violence prevention through a human rights-based approach.
22. In October 2022, OHCHR provided support to the Human Rights Commission of Malawi for the organization of trainings on the United Nations human rights mechanisms for participants from Government, Parliament and civil society. Participants agreed to follow up on State reports to treaty bodies and establish a national mechanism for reporting and following up on the implementation of recommendations.
23. OHCHR collaborated with the National Human Rights Commissions of Mauritania and the Niger in their efforts to improve relations between internal security forces and local communities, as well as to strengthen the respect and protection of human rights by internal security forces.
24. OHCHR provided capacity-building support to the National Human Rights Commission of Mozambique, on issues of business and human rights, internally displaced persons, monitoring of places of detention and durable solutions in the context of armed conflict. OHCHR supported the Commission in monitoring missions focused on the human rights impacts of natural disasters and in participating in workshops and field missions to raise awareness on the mandate of the Commission as the national mechanism for the prevention of torture.
25. OHCHR provided technical support to the National Human Rights Commission Human Rights of the Niger to investigate allegations of human rights violations committed in October 2022 in Tamou, and to engage with international human rights mechanisms. In the framework of the PROMIS project in the Niger, OHCHR provided specialized training on the topic of human rights at international borders for members of the Commission.
26. OHCHR provided technical assistance to the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria towards formalizing a partnership between the Commission, the National Statistical Office and government agencies involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
27. In October 2022, OHCHR supported the National Commission for Human Rights of Rwanda by conducting capacity-building workshops for its members and staff on international and regional human rights protection mechanisms. OHCHR also collaborated with the Commission on a project aimed at the drafting of a law regulating business and human rights in Rwanda.
28. OHCHR supported the Human Rights Commission of Senegal to conduct research on the knowledge and implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, aiming at the development of a national action plan on the issue.
29. In January 2023, the OHCHR regional office for Southern Africa supported the South African Human Rights Commission by organizing a workshop on the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). The workshop was aimed at speeding up the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol and the establishment of a national preventive mechanism.

30. OHCHR conducted capacity-building activities for members of the Human Rights Commission of South Sudan, including workshops on international human rights and humanitarian law. OHCHR supported the Commission in the organization of public awareness and education activities on human rights concepts and the mandate of the Commission.

31. In collaboration with the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance of the United Republic of Tanzania, OHCHR mobilized persons with disabilities in Dodoma, Iringa and Morogoro to participate in consultative meetings organized within the framework of a study-based health sector analysis to assess the inclusion of persons with disabilities in budget processes.

32. In August 2022, OHCHR collaborated with the Human Rights Commission of Uganda in organizing a capacity-building workshop for the Ugandan People's Defence Forces regarding the respect of human rights standards in elections.

2. Americas and the Caribbean

33. OHCHR, through its regional offices for South America and for Central America, the OHCHR country offices in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, the human rights advisers to the United Nations country teams in Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, and technical cooperation projects in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), El Salvador, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), provided advice on and assistance in strengthening national institutions through the activities described below.

34. From August to October 2022, OHCHR supported the Ombudsperson of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, in consultation with the Special Force for the Fight against Violence, to review a protocol for victim assistance. OHCHR and the Ombudsperson coordinated efforts for the inclusion of international standards in the first public policy of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on reparations for serious human rights violations. OHCHR provided technical support to the institution in its monitoring capacities and conducted joint field deployments to monitor conflicts and document the situation of women deprived of their liberty, as well as to follow up on the implementation of national legislation to protect women against political violence.

35. OHCHR collaborated with the Ombudsman of Colombia in developing self-protection plans for communities and human rights organizations to promote preventive and protective actions for social leaders and human rights defenders.

36. OHCHR provided technical assistance to the Human Rights Ombudsperson of El Salvador through trainings on methodology and instruments to collect information during visits to prisons, and in reviewing and updating the institution's gender equality policy and the guides and protocols used by medical care units for women who are victims of violence. In February 2023, OHCHR organized a workshop for officials and staff of the institution on the Paris Principles, and on ways to implement the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

37. OHCHR provided support to the Ombudsman of Guatemala on the implementation of a landmark Constitutional Court ruling which recognized the right to culturally relevant maternal and newborn health of Mayan, Xinka, Garifuna and Ladina women, and the rights of midwives as mediators between the ancestral health system and the State health system. Support was also provided in relation to international human rights mechanisms to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. OHCHR collaborated with the institution in

monitoring cases of human rights violations and in the implementation of a project in the Polochic Valley that is aimed at preventing and reducing agrarian conflicts.

38. OHCHR supported the Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras to hold a high-level inter-institutional round table for the development of indicators and the implementation of monitoring methodologies to measure the impact of the suspension of human rights protection since the introduction of the state of emergency on 6 December 2022. OHCHR provided technical support to the institution to strengthen the capacities of 100 members of its staff on human rights mechanisms with a focus on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and persons with disabilities. OHCHR supported the Commissioner towards the development of draft laws on the rights of persons with disabilities and on serving sentences, the latter aiming at the prevention of torture and ill treatment in the national penitentiary system.

39. In February 2023, OHCHR supported the Ombudsperson of Panama in the establishment of the National Observatory on LGBTIQ+ rights, which held its first meeting in April 2023 to discuss its main functions, priorities and coordinating arrangements. In March 2023, OHCHR provided technical support to the institution for the elaboration and implementation of a tool to monitor the human rights situation of migrants in the border areas of Darien and Chiriquí Provinces.

40. In October 2022, OHCHR supported the National Human Rights Institution of Uruguay with the delivery of training to 25 of its members aimed at improving the planning capacity of the institution.

41. OHCHR collaborated with the Ombudsperson of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in facilitating trainings on human rights compliance for public servants on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights (August 2022) and on the rights of persons deprived of liberty (March 2023).

3. Asia and the Pacific

42. OHCHR, through its regional offices for South-East Asia and for the Pacific, the OHCHR country offices in Cambodia and in Seoul (covering the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), the human rights advisers to the United Nations country teams in Bangladesh, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar (based in Bangkok), Nepal, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste, and the human rights component of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, provided the following advice on and assistance in the establishment and/or strengthening of national institutions.

43. OHCHR provided legal advice to the authorities of Cambodia on the establishment of a Paris Principles-compliant institution, focusing on key areas, including the selection and appointment process of its members, functional immunities, the mandate and the budget, with a view to guaranteeing independence.

44. In February 2023, OHCHR, in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), facilitated a virtual dialogue between the National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls on gaps and challenges in using the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to advance the rights of women and girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

45. In October 2022, OHCHR provided advisory services to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia in organizing consultations on the national baseline assessment on business and human rights for the national action plan on business and human rights. The consultations focused on impact, gaps and challenges in the

implementation by the Government and businesses of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

46. In February 2023, OHCHR, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), supported the work of the Human Rights Commission of Maldives on the human rights of migrants in the country, through training workshops.

47. OHCHR collaborated with the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines in the framework of a technical working group on civic space and civil society that discussed activities to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders. The group also considered a mechanism for engagement between civil society and government officials.

4. Europe and Central Asia

48. OHCHR, through its regional offices for Europe and for Central Asia, the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, the human rights advisers for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as for the South Caucasus, and the human rights component of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, continued to provide advice on and assistance in the establishment and/or strengthening of national institutions, as set out below.

49. In August 2022, OHCHR advocated a transparent, impartial, and merit-based process regarding the selection and appointment process of the Ombudspersons of the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. OHCHR facilitated the engagement of the Institute with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, during her country visit in January 2023.

50. In December 2022, OHCHR and UNDP conducted a capacity-building event for 28 newly appointed regional staff of the Commission for Human Rights of Kazakhstan, focusing on international standards, the functions of national institutions and human rights issues, including child rights.

51. OHCHR provided support to the Ombudsperson of Kyrgyzstan to develop a human rights monitoring tool for the population affected by the border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in September 2022. That support was focused on issues of relocation and evacuation, livelihood sustainability and discrimination.

52. OHCHR collaborated with the Ombudsman of North Macedonia on strengthening its capacities as a national monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

53. OHCHR supported the Office of the People's Advocate of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of a memorandum of understanding with the Equality Council and National Bureau of Statistics through providing consultancy on the development of new methodology-based indicators for fundamental rights. The memorandum was aimed at strengthening human rights-based collection, disaggregation, dissemination and analysis of data and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

54. OHCHR provided technical assistance to the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro to establish an independent monitoring mechanism under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. OHCHR facilitated the engagement of the institution with the universal periodic review and helped the institution to brief Member States with diplomatic missions in Montenegro on key human rights concerns affecting persons in detention and held in institutions.

55. In November 2022, OHCHR cooperated with the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation by organizing workshops for staff members, including newly appointed regional human rights commissioners, to enhance their knowledge regarding the functioning of United Nations treaty bodies and available complaints procedures.

56. In August 2022, OHCHR collaborated with the Human Rights Ombudsman of Tajikistan on legislative amendments to bring the institution in compliance with the Paris Principles. Between October and December 2022, OHCHR conducted workshops on the United Nations human rights mechanisms, on the implementation of treaty body recommendations and on raising awareness about the reporting processes, aimed at human rights focal points from various State bodies. In March 2023, OHCHR organized a training for 22 staff members of the institution to enhance their capacities on equality and non-discrimination.

57. In October 2022, OHCHR supported the national institution of Turkmenistan with a capacity assessment conducted as part of the tripartite partnership between OHCHR, UNDP and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. In November 2022, OHCHR held an awareness-raising round table on the role of national institutions and law enforcement agencies in the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

58. In March 2023, OHCHR provided technical advice to the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights during the amendment process of the institution's enabling law to bring it in line with international standards. In June 2023, OHCHR, UNDP and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions conducted a capacity assessment exercise for the institution aiming at strengthening it as a protection mechanism in the context of the war.

59. OHCHR continued providing the Ombudsperson of Uzbekistan with advice on engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as on standards for human rights monitoring. In March 2023, OHCHR delivered a webinar for the institution on the universal periodic review process and shared good practice examples of national institutions' reports under that mechanism.

60. OHCHR collaborated with the national institution of Kosovo¹ on outreach activities aiming at promoting its mandate. OHCHR worked with the institution and the Office of the Language Commissioner to promote language rights and organized sessions with a view to resolving language rights-related complaints. OHCHR also cooperated with the national institution and the Kosovo Agency for Statistics in operationalizing an agreement between them, focusing on promoting a human rights-based approach to data and the development of human rights indicators.

5. Middle East and North Africa

61. Through its regional office for the Middle East and for North Africa, the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, the OHCHR offices in the Syrian Arab Republic (based in Beirut), Tunisia and Yemen, as well as in the State of Palestine, the human rights adviser to the United Nations country team in Jordan, and the human rights components of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, and technical cooperation projects in Saudi Arabia, OHCHR

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

continued to provide advice on and assistance in the establishment and/or strengthening of national institutions.

62. In October 2022, OHCHR provided training to staff members of the Commission for Human Rights of Iraq, which was aimed at increasing their awareness of human rights in the digital sphere and capacity to minimize or respond to threats posted online. Between November 2022 and May 2023, OHCHR collaborated with the Commission to facilitate a round table and workshops on minority rights to raise awareness and increase the understanding of the human rights challenges faced by minorities in different regions of Iraq.

63. OHCHR supported the Higher Committee for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Tunisia regarding its engagement with the universal periodic review and continued to engage towards the improvement of the institution in line with the Paris Principles.

B. Support to regional and subregional initiatives by national human rights institutions

1. Africa

64. In June 2022, the OHCHR regional office in West Africa, jointly with the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, organized the fourth regional consultation of national human rights institutions in West Africa, seeking to enhance their independence in the implementation of their mandates, including by promoting inclusive electoral processes.

65. In October 2022, OHCHR, in collaboration with UNDP, supported the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions in the organization of the fifth national human rights institution forum, gathering representatives from 20 institutions. The forum discussed the right to development in the context of the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, and in relation to monitoring its impact on other human rights. OHCHR also supported capacity-building activities organized by the Network to raise the awareness of national institutions in the region regarding the human rights risks and opportunities of the Agreement and on other human rights issues.

66. In December 2022, the OHCHR regional office for Southern Africa collaborated with United Nations Population Fund in organizing a regional workshop on strengthening the engagement of national institutions in advancing accountability for sexual and reproductive health and rights and preventing harmful practices. The workshop provided a platform for best practices and experience-sharing among institutions from 10 countries.

67. In December 2022, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Africa organized a subregional workshop on the establishment and strengthening of national institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles.

2. Americas and the Caribbean

68. In August 2022, OHCHR held a regional forum with the Central American Council of Ombudspersons aimed at identifying key regional challenges and opportunities that States face in implementing recommendations by United Nations human rights mechanisms on deaths and disappearances of migrants, as well as on access to justice for migrants and their families in Central America and Mexico.

69. Through the project entitled “Responsible business conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean”, OHCHR engaged with national institutions at the regional level through capacity-building and by fostering collaboration and promoting the exchange of practices and peer learning related to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and on an authorized global standard on how to prevent and address adverse human rights impacts that involve companies. In 2022, a regional gathering among institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on the margins of a regional forum on business and human rights, with 12 institutions represented.

3. Asia and the Pacific

70. OHCHR facilitated the participation of the Commissions of Indonesia and Malaysia in regional consultations on violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis, and on the rights of Indigenous women and girls.

71. In February 2023, OHCHR, along with the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, UNDP, the League of Arab States and the Ministry of Interior of Qatar, co-organized the International Conference on Climate Change and Human Rights in Doha, where national institutions from across the world shared their experiences and best practices in addressing the human rights implications of climate change.

72. During the reporting period, OHCHR delivered trainings to the Commissions of Maldives and Nepal on the exercise of the right to participate in public affairs and on human rights standards in the context of elections.

4. Europe and Central Asia

73. In November 2022, OHCHR supported a workshop for Ombudspersons of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan within the framework of the Central Asia Support Initiative of the national human rights institutions regional platform. Participants discussed priority thematic issues and capacity-building priorities, including the accreditation process through the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms, the roles of national institutions in promoting and protecting human rights in the context of emerging regional challenges, climate change and violations of human rights by businesses.

C. Contributions to international initiatives supporting national human rights institutions

1. Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions

74. In accordance with article 6 of the Statute of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, general and Bureau meetings, meetings of the Subcommittee on Accreditation and international conferences of the Global Alliance are held under the auspices of, and in cooperation with, OHCHR. OHCHR has therefore continued to assume the function of the secretariat of the Global Alliance. In 2022, the Bureau meeting of the Global Alliance was held on 27 and 28 October, and the session of the Subcommittee was held from 3 to 7 October. In 2023, the Bureau meeting was held on 14 March, and the annual meeting of the Global Alliance was held from 14 to 16 March. All meetings and sessions were convened in person.

75. The Subcommittee’s first session of 2023 was held from 13 to 17 February and from 20 to 24 March. The National Institutions, Regional Mechanisms and Civil Society Section supported the introduction of an online segment to supplement the in-person part and to improve the working methods of the Subcommittee.

2. Subcommittee on Accreditation

76. OHCHR, in its capacity as secretariat of the Subcommittee on Accreditation, continued to provide substantive support, technical advice and secretariat services. With its institutional knowledge and guiding role in developing the general observations and the rules of procedure of the Subcommittee, OHCHR continued to assist with a view to enhancing the credibility of the accreditation process. The presence of OHCHR during the decision-making of the Subcommittee continued to ensure compliance with the established rules of procedure and contributed to its transparency, impartiality, fairness and rigour.

77. During the period under review, the Subcommittee reviewed 29 institutions, 15 of which were accredited with “A” status, 3 with “B” status, and the accreditation for 5 institutions was deferred.

3. Fellowship programme for staff of “A” status national human rights institutions

78. Since 2008, OHCHR has maintained a fellowship programme for staff of “A” status national human rights institutions. The programme has allowed national institutions and their staff to strengthen their mandate in line with international standards, as it is designed to provide beneficiaries with a better understanding and appreciation of the universal human rights system and to familiarize them with the work of OHCHR. During the reporting period, staff from the institutions of El Salvador, Georgia, Kenya and Malaysia participated in the fellowship programme.

79. Participants have acknowledged that the fellowship programme was useful in strengthening their professional knowledge and institutional capacity, in particular in interactions with the international human rights system. They have expressed the need for the further progressive development of the programme, including systematic peer-to-peer learning, exchange of experiences, best practices and lessons learned, as well as direct interaction with their colleagues in other “A” status institutions at the country level. It would therefore be highly beneficial for the scope of the fellowship programme to be expanded in order to include study tours at the country and local levels. The much-needed expansion of the fellowship programme cannot be achieved without additional resources.

III. Best practices among national human rights institutions

80. The General Assembly, in paragraph 29 of its resolution [76/170](#), requested the Secretary-General to report, among other things, on best practices among national human rights institutions.

81. Accordingly, on 2 March 2023, OHCHR requested national institutions to provide input on their best practices by 1 May 2023. Contributions were received from the national human rights institutions of Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Croatia, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), the Niger, Poland, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Türkiye and Ukraine, as well as the National Commission for Human Rights of Pakistan, which is not yet accredited.

82. The People’s Advocate of Albania contributed to the process of drafting the National Plan for European Integration 2023–2025 and the preparation of the contribution by the Government of Albania to the General Report on the Activities of the European Union for 2022. In December 2022, the institution co-organized a round table on the inclusion of survivors of sexual violence and trafficking in the improvement of the justice system.

83. The Ombudsman of Argentina has engaged on business and human rights activities, including through trainings of its staff. Within the framework of the project entitled “Responsible business conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean”, OHCHR supported the institution in the creation of a working group to strengthen the institution’s role nationwide in the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of business activities, which resulted in the elaboration of the Framework Protocol for Ombudsperson Institutions in Business and Human Rights.

84. The Human Rights Defender of Armenia participated in the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions of the Human Rights Council. The institution submitted reports and written communications to treaty bodies and other mechanisms, and provided its recommendations, opinions and concerns on draft laws regarding human rights and freedoms initiated by the Government.

85. The Australian Human Rights Commission embarked on *Free and Equal: An Australian Conversation on Human Rights* and released statements on priorities for reform and legal protection for human rights. The Commission launched an initial scoping report for a national anti-racism framework in order to develop a strategy to tackle racism and promote racial equality. In October 2022, the institution welcomed the adoption of the legislative amendment in relation to the Commission, which ensures that the processes for the selection and appointment of members of the Commission are compliant with the Paris Principles.

86. The Ombudsman of the Plurinational State of Bolivia has worked with government institutions to promote respect for and the protection of human rights in relation to various issues, including education, health, child labour and human mobility. The institution has also strengthened working relations with United Nations system entities such as the United Nations Children’s Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, IOM and UN-Women.

87. The Ombudsman of Croatia monitored the situation of human rights defenders and raised awareness of the importance of ensuring adequate conditions for their work. The institution has also provided submissions to treaty bodies and special procedures of the Human Rights Council and the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, and continued to advocate the ratification of international human rights instruments.

88. The Danish Institute for Human Rights developed an online monitoring framework, with a monitoring tool known as the right to defend rights, to assess the enabling environment for human rights defenders at the national level, on the basis of international human rights standards. That framework has been piloted by national institutions and human rights defender networks in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America as part of efforts to enhance the protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms in their national contexts.

89. In August 2022, the National Human Rights Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo organized a capacity-building seminar for law enforcement officers. The Commission visited police stations to monitor the conditions and the rights of detainees. In December 2022, the institution organized an exhibition to promote and disseminate information on human rights to the general public.

90. Between July 2022 and March 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR organized consultations on transitional justice with over 800 conflict-affected individuals in several regions of Ethiopia, after which key preliminary findings and recommendations were published. In October 2022, the Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education to teach human rights in national primary and secondary education.

91. The National Human Rights Institution of Finland developed an online database for efficient human rights monitoring on 20 themes and over 100 sub-themes, which will be used to collect relevant monitoring information and provide a base for statements and reports. The institution launched its Young Experts Programme to strengthen the voice of young people in human rights discussions and to increase youth participation in the work of the institution.
92. The German Institute for Human Rights has established two national rapporteur mechanisms that focus on gender-based violence and human trafficking. The institution has also developed frameworks for documenting relevant court decisions and legal developments in both areas.
93. The National Commission for Human Rights of Greece established the Recording Mechanism of Incidents of Informal Forced Returns, which is aimed at promoting and consolidating the respect for the principle of non-refoulement. The Commission and the office of Greenpeace in Greece also facilitated the visit of the Senior Women for Climate Protection to raise awareness about climate justice movements and actions taking place worldwide, as well as cultivating a broader framework for dialogue for civil society around the climate crisis, human rights and vulnerable groups. The Commission prioritized the promotion of gender equality through educational activities, promotional campaigns and scientific reports focused on combating gender stereotypes.
94. The Ombudsman of Guatemala created an observatory to provide information on the human rights situation in the country through a platform linked to its website. The institution has also engaged with the business sector to promote compliance with human rights in the operations of companies established in the country.
95. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights continued to lead the dissemination of the national action plan on business and human rights among key stakeholders and is co-leading the development of the country's national action plan on albinism. The Commission continues to evaluate the social health-care protection systems and makes recommendations to enhance health-care services for vulnerable and marginalized groups. The Commission developed an election monitoring strategy and held high-level dialogue meetings and training sessions for key actors in the context of the 2022 general elections.
96. The National Commission of Human Rights of Mexico has engaged in a missing persons programme that addresses current cases of missing persons and individuals whose whereabouts are unknown. Throughout 2022, a total of 1,005 complaints were received. Furthermore, a traffic light system has been created to analyse, make visible and evaluate the State's compliance with international human rights recommendations.
97. The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights has investigated individual complaints relating to alleged discrimination by the Tax Administration and launched an ongoing programme aimed at eliminating prejudice and discrimination by government authorities.
98. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka established a rapid response team to assist on arrest cases relating to peaceful assembly and conducted investigations and inquiries into the unlawful dispersal of assemblies. In March 2023, the Commission launched guidelines for police officers on protecting transgender persons.
99. The Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye signed memorandums of understanding with universities, public institutions and associations to share knowledge and experiences on the protection and promotion of human rights.

100. The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights participated in a project on gender-sensitive inclusion of persons with disabilities in the humanitarian response in Ukraine.

IV. Support provided by the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to national human rights institutions

101. In the Asia and the Pacific region, UNDP supported the following national human rights institutions:

(a) The National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia to promote the adoption of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and their implementation in national policies and regulations;

(b) The National Commission for Human Rights of Pakistan in building its capacities towards compliance with the Paris Principles;

(c) Commission representatives of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan to share experiences and lessons learned in promoting business and human rights;

(d) The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand in the promotion and protection of human rights through awareness-raising, peer-to-peer learning and capacity-building on monitoring, investigations and reporting.

102. In Europe and Central Asia, UNDP supported the national institutions of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine with activities such as training sessions, capacity-building and public awareness-raising.

103. In the Middle East and North Africa, UNDP supported the operationalization and strengthening of the national human rights institution of Lebanon as an independent institution for the promotion and protection of human rights in line with the Paris Principles.

104. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP supported the Ombudsperson of the Dominican Republic in the implementation of a digital module to promote the efficient handling of complaints, and in the development of their strategic plan.

V. Cooperation between United Nations human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions

A. Human Rights Council

105. OHCHR continued to support the engagement of national human rights institutions with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms in coordination with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

106. During the fifty-first and fifty-second sessions of the Human Rights Council, and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Council, which enable the participation of national human rights institutions that are fully compliant with the Paris Principles, 16 institutions delivered 45 statements (11 in writing and 34 by video), participated in general debates, organized parallel events and interacted with special procedure mandate holders.²

² See the supplementary information to the present report, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/nhri/A-78-64-Annex1.pdf>.

1. Universal periodic review

107. OHCHR continued to encourage the participation of national institutions in the universal periodic review process, given the important role they can play in follow-up and in the development of tools to monitor and assess the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations.

108. Following the provisions of Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 and General Assembly resolution 65/281, the stakeholders' reports under the universal periodic review include a section dedicated to contributions from "A" status national human rights institutions.

109. In November 2022, nine "A" status and two "B" status national human rights institutions submitted reports for the stakeholders' report to the forty-first session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. In February 2023, at the forty-second session, seven "A" status institutions submitted inputs. In May 2023, five "A" status institutions submitted input for the stakeholders' report to the forty-third session of the working group.³

110. In February 2023, three online briefings (in English, French and Spanish) for national human rights institutions were held in preparation for the forty-fourth, forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

111. OHCHR also continued to support States through the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review. Projects were supported for the establishment or strengthening of national institutions in Belize, Lesotho, the Marshall Islands, Mozambique, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

2. Open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights

112. In October 2022, two national human rights institutions participated through oral interventions in the eighth session of the open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights.

B. United Nations treaty bodies

113. OHCHR continued to support the engagement of national human rights institutions with United Nations treaty bodies. OHCHR, as the secretariat of the treaty bodies, liaised with national institutions of States under review to encourage them to provide written or oral information and to attend the sessions of the treaty bodies. Moreover, the National Institutions, Regional Mechanisms and Civil Society Section of OHCHR transmitted the relevant recommendations and concluding observations of the treaty bodies to national institutions. It also continued to draft briefing notes on the activities of national human rights institutions for the attention of the members of treaty bodies.

114. The treaty bodies reviewed 110 State parties that have national human rights institutions. In total, 75 institutions submitted written information and 30 provided briefings to the treaty bodies.⁴

³ See the supplementary information to the present report, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/nhri/A-78-64-Annex2.pdf>.

⁴ See the supplementary information to the present report, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/nhri/A-78-64-Annex3.pdf>.

115. In comparison with the previous reporting period, there was a significant increase of 62.7 per cent in the submission of information by national human rights institutions to treaty bodies and an increase of 73.3 per cent in the number of briefings.

116. Treaty bodies continued to provide national human rights institutions with information notes, advice and tools to facilitate their effective engagement in the implementation of the recommendations of the treaty bodies and invited representatives of those institutions to their meetings.

C. Other United Nations mechanisms and processes

117. In April 2023, 15 national human rights institutions participated in the eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons in their respective States.

118. In February and March 2023, OHCHR, in collaboration with the Danish Institute for Human Rights and One Ocean Hub, organized a webinar series for national human rights institutions on their role in the protection of the rights of fish workers. The webinar raised awareness of the opportunities for national institutions to engage with human rights mechanisms and to collaborate on the implementation of their recommendations.

119. In the context of support to the Compliance Framework Project of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, OHCHR continued to work with national human rights institutions to involve them in the establishment of local coordination platforms between key partners, training workshops on human rights monitoring, reporting and advocacy by civil society, and in accountability efforts at the national level for alleged human rights violations. Furthermore, OHCHR involved national institutions in its continued support to the executive secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel for the development of a regional strategy on the protection of civilians.

VI. Recommendations

A. Recommendations to Member States

120. In line with indicator 16.a.1. of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which requires the existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles, Member States are encouraged to establish national human rights institutions with a broad mandate to promote and protect all human rights, functioning in compliance with the Paris Principles. In this regard, Member States are invited to seek technical support and advice from OHCHR in the process of drafting the founding legislation for national human rights institutions, as well as in building and strengthening the capacity of these institutions.

121. Member States should continue to provide financial contributions to OHCHR to ensure the continuation of high-quality technical cooperation assistance for the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions. Additional resources are needed, inter alia, for the continuation and expansion of the fellowship programme currently offered by OHCHR to staff of “A” status national human rights institutions in order to include further activities, including study tours aimed at the peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and experience with “A” status national human rights institutions at the country level.

122. Member States are encouraged to take the necessary measures to protect the staff of national human rights institutions and individuals who cooperate or seek to cooperate with them against threats and harassment. Any cases of alleged reprisals or intimidation should be promptly and thoroughly investigated, and the perpetrators brought to justice.

123. Member States should take the necessary measures to ensure that the staff of national human rights institutions enjoy functional immunity from civil and criminal proceedings for action taken in an official capacity and in good faith.

B. Recommendations to national human rights institutions

124. National human rights institutions should discharge their mandate to promote and protect all human rights in full compliance with the Paris Principles as part of the accountability and protection mechanisms at the national level.

125. National human rights institutions are encouraged to seek advisory services and technical cooperation from OHCHR to enhance their capacity, with a view to performing in line with international standards, namely the Paris Principles and the general observations of the Subcommittee on Accreditation.

126. National human rights institutions should continue to engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms and encourage their respective Governments to ratify international and regional human rights instruments, harmonize national legislation with international norms, as needed, as well as to implement the recommendations emanating from these mechanisms.

127. National human rights institutions are encouraged to strengthen their collaboration with national statistical offices to improve the collection, disaggregation and analysis of data in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
