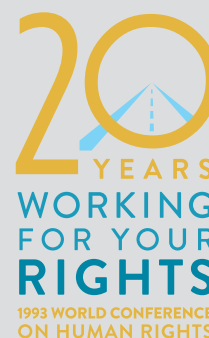


20 years working for your rights



Twenty years ago, an historic document was adopted in Vienna. It clarified the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and committed all States to the promotion and protection of all human rights – not just civil and political rights, but economic, social and cultural ones too, including the right to development. Among many other milestone achievements, the Vienna Declaration led to the creation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and entrusted the High Commissioner with the responsibility of speaking out against discrimination, tyranny and disregard for fundamental values which rob our fellow human beings of their rights to live as equals, in dignity, free from fear and want.

Since then, there have been many advances; indeed, more than people perhaps realize. The fundamental structures for promoting and protecting human rights are largely in place. They include a strong and growing body of international human rights law and standards, as well as institutions to interpret laws, monitor compliance and apply them to existing, new and emerging human rights issues. Today, the conduct of States is more carefully scrutinized than ever before and the expansion of civil society organizations and individual human rights activists over the past 20 years has been truly remarkable. Along with independent national human rights institutions, these organizations form the bedrock of human rights development at the national level. But, it is a matter of deep concern that they are also facing increasing harassment and intimidation in many countries.

The 20 years since Vienna have also seen many setbacks. In many cases, there has been a tragic failure to prevent atrocities and safeguard human rights. Faced with deplorable, large-scale violations, the international community has in many instances been too slow, too divided and too short-sighted in its response to the warnings of human rights defenders and the pleas of victims.

What is crucial is that international human rights laws and standards must now be implemented to make human rights a reality on the ground. All too often, States lack the political will and the capacity to achieve this objective. The Vienna Declaration should be viewed as a blueprint for a magnificent structure that, regrettably, remains only half built.

Women continue to suffer discrimination, violence and persecution. Population shifts fuelled by rising poverty, refugee movements and volatile global economies require us to address and challenge fears of 'the other' as a priority. The exclusion, marginalization and abuse of people on the basis of their perceived race, their indigenous, ethnic or religious background, their colour, gender, caste status, disability, age, health status or sexual orientation, are scourges that the international community must combat.

Conflicts continue to produce horrendous and widespread human rights abuses. Yet authorities are ruthlessly crushing peaceful protests undertaken by people exercising their legitimate rights on an almost daily basis. Strengthening the rule of law and fighting impunity, especially for gross human rights violations, remains a priority.

Economic and financial crises and their consequential responses, increasing competition over natural resources, rising corruption and mismanagement of public resources continue to threaten development and the realization of human rights. In the coming months, it is essential that the international community succeed in establishing a post-2015 development framework that addresses both freedom from fear and freedom from want for all.

In addition to setbacks, complex new challenges have emerged in the 20 years since Vienna. Climate

change and related natural disasters often have a devastating impact on a range of human rights. Global terrorist movements threaten a range of rights, while counter-terror policies also continue to be exploited by some as a smokescreen to attack political opponents. Drones can be used for positive purposes, but armed drones are increasingly fired without due process.

Ongoing vigilance is needed to ensure that new technologies advance rather than violate human rights. Digital technologies, many of which were unimaginable 20 years ago, dramatically improve information sharing and help to magnify the voice of human rights defenders. They can highlight abuses and mobilize support. But we also know that new technologies can be used to facilitate violations of the right to privacy. Mass electronic surveillance and data collection threaten the free functioning of a vibrant civil society.

Regardless of the scale of these changes, our responses to these challenges must be firmly grounded in human rights principles and treaties. Only then will our responses be sustainable in the long term. Existing international human rights law, and international humanitarian law governing the conduct of armed conflict, remain applicable. States must ensure that these standards are implemented and monitored on a regular basis.

Despite 20 years of steady progress, a considerable amount of work remains outstanding as we seek to transform human rights from abstract promises to the practical achievement of genuine equality and dignity for all. OHCHR will continue to work with our partners to seek to prevent human rights abuses. We will speak out against violations. We will continue to ask States to do their part – the biggest part by far – to ensure that the tragic mistakes of the past are not repeated and that the human rights of all are promoted and protected.

We can – and we must – do better. OHCHR's Management Plan 2014-2017 is an important step in this direction. The document before you articulates the Office's priorities for 2014-2017. In charting this course for the future, OHCHR has been guided by the Secretary-General's Strategic Framework for 2014-2015, as well as by the mandates given to the Office by the different intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations. Within this framework, the priorities have been defined through a consultative strategic planning process. We have sought to ensure that our scarce resources are spent on acute human rights issues where we can add value and where we are most likely to make a difference in the lives of peoples.

In addition, the thematic priorities have been defined in a manner which allows OHCHR to work on all



World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna. Post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is created



José Ayala-Lasso



Mary Robinson

1993



1997



sets of rights, in all countries, as one Office. The six Thematic Strategies built around these priorities constitute the backbone of this document. They are interdependent and should be read as mutually reinforcing documents.

One major change from the previous biennium is our “new” thematic priority: “widening the democratic space.” This emphasizes public freedoms, human rights education and the work of human rights defenders and the media. Other pre-existing thematic priorities include: discrimination; the rule of law and impunity; poverty; violence; and continuing efforts to improve international human rights mechanisms. These have been reshaped, based on contextual changes, past experience and lessons learned.

For instance, “human rights in development and in the economic sphere” has a stronger focus on the right to development, the role of the private sector and the rights to land, water and housing. “Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity” spans both conflict and non-conflict settings and emphasizes sexual and gender-based violence, security of the person and human rights in humanitarian action. “Migration” has been a thematic priority for the past four years and this has enabled OHCHR to push forward with a human rights approach to this critical issue. We will continue to work on migration issues by ensuring that migrants

remain in focus within each of the 2014-2017 strategies.

In order to ensure that this challenging programme is implemented in the most effective and efficient way, my Office is undertaking a diagnostic and analytical examination of the distribution of its core functions within its current structure in order to look for ways to improve the alignment between our work processes and structures.

It has been my privilege to guide the work of OHCHR as it has sought to confront many human rights crises and new threats to the rights and dignity of individuals. This Management Plan is my last as High Commissioner. But the OMP 2014-2017 represents a new opening: it is the Office’s first plan that spans four years. I believe that this horizon will enable OHCHR to work for all human rights for all with clear goals and a sense of perspective as it engages with all partners to achieve the set of priority results you will find within.

My best wishes,



Navi Pillay,
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



Sérgio Vieira de Mello



Louise Arbour



Navi Pillay

2002



2004



2008

