

**Fifth International Workshop for National Institutions for the
Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
(Rabat 13 - 15 April 2000)**

The Rabat Declaration

The participants at the Fifth International Workshop for National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, held under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohamed VI in Rabat, capital of the Kingdom of Morocco, from 13 to 15 April 2000, in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, adopted the following declaration.

1. They note with satisfaction the significant growth, since the Fourth International Workshop, held in Mérida, Mexico, in November 1997, in the number of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights in all regions of the world. They note the importance of efforts made by these institutions to conform to the Paris Principles (adopted unanimously by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1992 and annexed to the United Nations General Assembly 48/134 of 20 December 1993) and to undertake an expanded range of activities, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations and defenders of human rights, as well as with the whole civic society, in order to improve the public appreciation of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, education in these rights and the values of peace, justice and tolerance. They hail the strengthening of regional co-operation between national institutions, notably in the form of meetings, such as those, held in Marrakech, Morocco (April 1998), Durban, South Africa, (June/July 1998), Kandy, Sri Lanka (June 1999), Manila, Philippines (August 1999), Tegucigalpa, Honduras (September 1999) and Strasbourg, France (March 2000). The participants take note of the conclusions drawn at these different meetings.

2. They invite states, which do not yet have independent human rights institutions to set up such bodies in conformity with the Paris Principles, in order to strengthen the protection of human rights and consolidate the rule of law.

3. They express their gratitude to Mrs Mary ROBINSON, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for the actions she has taken to promote the recognition of national institutions in conformity with the Paris Principles within the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. They are keen to see the consolidation of the specific role of national institutions in the Commission's work and in the appropriate United Nations forums, alongside member states and non-governmental organisations.

4. They recall that the Declaration and Plan of Action of the United Nations Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 stressed the specific role of national institutions in the fight against racism and wish to be in a position to participate fully at the next World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Discrimination, in accordance with the precedent established by the Vienna Conference.

5. They highlight the important role that national institutions must play in the fight against all forms of discrimination, and in particular against racism, by participating in particular in the preparation, at both national and regional levels, in the next World Conference on Racism. Given the re-emergence and extension, noted in numerous countries, of various forms of racial discrimination, especially against immigrant workers and their families, the activities of national institutions in the countries concerned are of prime importance to fight against this discrimination. In this regard, they request all States to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1990).

6. They call upon national institutions to continue their activities to promote and protect women's and children's rights, in accordance with existing international treaties and conventions, the ratification of which by all states should have the highest priority, and also in accordance with the values of dignity, justice and equity. They would like national institutions to remain vigilant to continue the fight against the abuse of the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities, who are very often among the most vulnerable groups in society. They wish to see these national institutions capable of assisting political and legislative bodies in the development of appropriate law and practices.

7. Furthermore, the fight against poverty and the effective enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by all persons, constitute priorities for action by national institutions.

8. They welcome, with interest, the comments and observations made regarding cultural approaches which in different regions of the world, concern the effective implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, considered to be a moral horizon for humankind. Diverse cultures and civilisations can contribute to the universality and indivisibility of human rights and enrich the Universal Declaration as well as the implementation of its principles and ideals. They commit themselves to increased vigilance with regard to violations of human rights, wherever they are committed.

9. They encourage all States to ratify all treaties relating to human rights and to ensure that the Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in Rome in July 1998, comes into force rapidly.

10. They reiterate their appreciation of the support given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the activities of national institutions, and urge that resources available to her be increased so that this support can be strengthened, in particular, for regional and international meetings of these institutions, to assist their co-operation efforts. They hail, in addition, the courageous action taken by the High Commissioner to defend human rights.

11. The participants express their deep gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI for having honoured this Fifth International Workshop with his high patronage, thereby demonstrating his commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights, as well

as to the consolidation of the rule of law. They thank the Consultative Council for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco for the very efficient organisation of this Fifth International Workshop.